The Caught Taught Sought Framework in Physical Education Teacher Education

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As I transitioned from teaching physical education (PE) to leading initial teacher education (ITE) I have intentionally designed my PE teacher education (PETE) curriculum to reflect a broad pedagogical vision. Central to this pedagogical approach is the intentional emphasis on character education, not as an add on, but as a guiding principle shaping meaningful, personally relevant and movement-oriented learning and teaching in PE. This self-study draws on my chosen teacher education pedagogy, the 'caught, taught, and sought' framework (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022) refined to prepare trainee teachers specifically for teaching PE.

As a gatekeeper to the profession, I am responsible for designing learning experiences that equip my trainee teachers to have meaningful future impact, through high-quality teaching that fosters significant and lasting learning (Askildsen and Løndal, 2023). Central to this is character education. My 'why' stems from the belief that PE still fails many young people. Despite progress in reducing, for instance, ableism, elitism, and sexism in the subject (Lynch, Walton-Fisette and Luguetti, 2021) PE remains disproportionately focused on performance (DfE, 2025). Many young people lack a sense of belonging in PE, and for them the subject can feel uncomfortable or negative. While physical competence and sporting achievement are important, they should not be the sole measures of success in PE. By embedding virtue-oriented pedagogies into the PETE curriculum, I encourage trainees to challenge these norms and explore values-driven practice that meets diverse pupil needs and fosters a genuine sense of belonging through physical activity. Character education shifts PE teachers' attention from noticing the most skilled to promoting and recognising virtue action, just as much. This approach broadens the definition of success beyond physical ability and highlights the character pupils show as they learn in PE, in turn fostering a more inclusive and meaningful vision of PE for all young people.

The curriculum described here-in is a purposeful shift from a focus on content knowledge orientation to a wider appreciation of process-focused practice that promotes young people's flourishing through PE (Herold and W, 2010). Whilst I am not dismissing the importance of developing well-rounded subject content knowledge as a base from which pedagogical content knowledge can grow (Shulman, 1998) the recent Curriculum and Assessment Review (DfE, 2025) validates the forward-thinking intent of my PETE curriculum, solidifying its relevance and timeliness in sharing my practice.

My PETE curriculum is intentionally ambitious. Recognising that teaching lies within the variable domain (Biesta, 2019) a broad dissection of subject-specific pedagogies (Casey and Kirk, 2020) including character education early in the training year, strengthens trainee teachers' readiness and agency in their practice. Such exploration of 'the whole' (Biesta, 2019) affords for the question, 'what is the ideal PE experience,' to be continually dissected, deepened and expanded over the course of the year. This broad exposure enables trainees to draw greater connections of the 'what', the 'how' and the 'why' (Biesta, 2019) and begin making informed pedagogical decisions aligned with their personal teaching philosophy from the outset. However, learning to teach, not least a conceptual shift from more familiar and traditional teacher-led pedagogies to student-centred practice, is challenging (Silva, Farias and Mesquita, 2021). As addressed by Casey and MacPhail (2018) student-centred approaches to PE require a reconceptualisation of teaching; and character education pedagogies are no different. This is especially challenging because trainees all have different starting points.

So why introduce character education pedagogies, rather than keep things simpler for trainees at the start? Previously, when I have waited to introduce character education pedagogy until semester two some trainees missed the opportunity to enact them, especially in placement schools where character education is valued highly. For that reason, the caught, taught and sought framework offers a stage appropriate and scaffolded structure, from which trainees begin to develop a greater understanding of character education pedagogy and transfer this understanding to practice, successfully from the outset, regardless of their starting point or school placement context.

However, achieving this is no small feat; "Teacher. educators. must. develop. new. approaches. for. preparing. ordinary.people?.in.an.extraordinarily.brief.amount.of.time" (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009., p15). A well-designed PETE curriculum must therefore balance depth, with breadth, and organise learning to ensure that a solid theoretical underpinning informs practice. In this PETE curriculum, the taught component introduces the theoretical principles of character education and their relevance in PE. Caught reinforces this through

immersive learning experiences, helping trainees see theory in practice, while sought allows trainees to intentionally apply this learning in low-stakes practice.

Contemporary teacher education is practice-based (Grossman, 2018). However, a scientific obsession (Biesta, 2019) with the dissemination and the mirroring of granular practice has of late risked deskilling the agency and opportunity for meaningful pedagogical decision making and context judgement of the learner teacher (Hordern and Brooks, 2023). Aligned with Grossman's (2018) call to rebalance practice with critical thinking, the caught, taught, sought framework enables trainees to understand the theory of teaching, observe it in action, and apply it deliberately, supporting reflection and professional judgement. Moreover, recognising that teaching is an art rather than a science (Biesta, 2019), the framework offers a more integrated way for trainees to engage with the varied dimensions of effective teaching (Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald, 2009). This helps trainees design PE learning experiences aligned with their own teaching philosophy and learners' needs, rather than simply replicating the narrow practices suggested in regulatory policies (Hordern and Brooks, 2023; DfE, 2024).

In a practice-based curriculum, Grossman (2018) suggests that teacher educators focus in on a set of core practices. Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald (2009) define a core practice as high leverage actions, recur frequently in teaching, can be enacted and mastered by trainees across contexts, preserve the complexity of practice, and are research-based with potential to improve pupil achievement. I argue that in PETE, character education should be understood as a core practice, raising the profile of these implicit and typically hidden curricula benefits of PE to be more central and explicit to a young person's PE experience (Brunsdon and Walker, 2021). Crucially, positioning character education as a core practice recognises teachers' moral aspirations for joining the profession, strengthening their professional identities and their recognition of themselves as teacher of character (Bower et.al., 2023; Thompson and Maile, 2020). My caught taught sought approach builds on the value of core practices while pushing back against overly prescriptive, reductionist models of teacher education (Hordern and Brooks, 2023). Instead of promoting a 'tell-and-do' approach, it emphasises teacher agency, enabling trainees to make informed judgments grounded in theory and practice (Thompson and Maile, 2020). By examining character education deeply, trainee teachers gain the confidence to bring their own personality, authenticity, and passion into their teaching. This positions character education not as an add-on, but as a foundation for meaningful, reflective, and person-centred teaching.

In summary, the taught, caught and sought framework is a rethinking of how we prepare PE trainee teachers for the profession. The framework responds to concerns that university based teacher education is challenged to offer meaningful practice-based curricula (Korthagen, 2010), and instead bridges the gap between the development of conceptual knowledge and understanding of what character is and its place in PE, with the practical tools (i.e. the practices, strategies and relationships) that teachers may enact (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009). Furthermore, by considering the taught, caught and sought framework as a scaffold to develop teacher practice, each step offers multiple opportunities to engage in and enact the chosen core practice of character education, contributing to greater clarity and fluidity with character education practice (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009).

First encounters with character education: character caught

I intentionally plan a curriculum that encompasses ›educational.experiences.in.and.out.of.the.classroom.that. equip.[trainees].with.the.language‽knowledge‽understanding‽skills‽and.attributes.that.enable.[their.own]. character.development.[and.that.of.their.pupils]" (Jubilee Centre, 2017 as cited in Arthur, Fullard and O'Leary, 2022). Within this caught part of my curriculum, I lean on a range of strategies, activities and resources that promote the learning of, and teaching through, character education in PE. For example, discussion and enquiry-based learning as well as practical experiences (Arthur, Fullard and O'Leary, 2022) that connect strongly with the subject of PE.

The PETE curriculum begins by acknowledging trainees starting point. As anticipated, trainees lean heavily towards sport, performance and skill-oriented language (Figure 1), mirroring the education shift towards measurable outcomes. This gives me a foundation from which I can challenge trainees' assumptions about the nature and purpose of PE and education more broadly (Biesta, 2019).

Figure.7

Through structured critical inquiry grounded in the virtue of curiosity, trainees examine key policy documents, their own and peers' PE experiences, pupil-voice testimonies (from Mathe, 2022), and a table-tennis taster centred on 'positive social interaction' to explore what these sources suggest about the purpose of PE. Prompted by questions such as "What.is.the.purpose.of.PE?.What.constitutes.a.quality.school.PE.experience?‹ .trainee teachers are encouraged to reflect on the often-competing views of what makes effective PE..I begin here to probe the teacher's role in the moral, ethical, and social development of young people, and to reinforce that our work extends far beyond simply delivering information (Bower et.al¡?2023; Thompson and Maile, 2022).

Although I don't yet explicitly label it 'character education' I embed virtue literacy intentionally and pose questions that prompt the moral and civic dimensions of teaching to emerge. To conclude the theoretical discussion on the purpose of PE, I share this perspective:

> »What.if.I.said.PE.contributes.to.personal.and.collective.flourishing·.what.does.this.mean?
>
> Prompt¿PE.should.enhance.a.young.person's.motor.competency?enjoyment.of.movement.and
>
> foster.resilience?cooperation?creativity.and.empathy‹¡

Day one concludes with a practical demonstration of this statement. Trainees step into the role of learners during an ultimate frisbee lesson. Each progression is linked to a specific virtue, so as trainees develop their skills and understanding of the game, they also implicitly experience character in action. Trainees start to notice, and name virtues, drawing connections between PE and character education. Character begins to be caught, as the following trainee reflections illustrate:

"My goal is to help student reach their full potential while providing the holistic benefits that come from participation in physical activity. I want to emphasise both character development and motor competence, ensuring that students grow not only physically but also personally. Above all, I aim to be a positive role model, making a lasting difference not only in the lives of the students I teach, but also within the wider school community".

"I hope to work towards being a teacher that promotes inclusive PE practices that creates an environment where students of all backgrounds and abilities can feel successful [...]. In addition to building physical competency, I also hope to use PE to facilitate the wider development of students to promote pro-social values and opportunities for them for them to flourish. For example, through crafting lessons, aims such as improved resilience, communication skills and perseverance can be promoted".

"I want to become the type of PE teacher that inspires someone and (hopefully) helps to change their life [...] I believe PE and sport helped to change my life and as a role model I want to do the same for all young people"

"I will look into how [PE] can impact the lives of students by helping them learn and discover who they are and how this can help them have success in all parts of life"

Character more formally taught:

Character education is first introduced through caught experiences and then moves to taught experiences, but the caught, taught, sought framework is not strictly linear; the three elements are interconnected and mutually supportive (Bower et. al¡? 2023). Thus, learning activities are sequenced to be coherent and interconnected, enabling trainees to build a stronger foundation of the components of virtue (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022).

The second practical session focused on explicitly taught character through parkour. The session had two taught intentions:

- To teach trainees a broader view of character development in PE.
- To model how practical skill development and character education can be taught in unison.

PE teachers find it hard to let go of sport driven pedagogies and move towards pupils-centred pedagogies (Stern et. al¡?2021). Like ultimate frisbee, parkour is an emerging activity in which few trainees have expertise. This lack of prior knowledge places all trainees outside their comfort zone and creates an authentic learning experience. Trainees must explore unfamiliar movements and think critically about navigating space, whilst performing in front of peers they met only the day before. The scene is set as a case study story »How.does.it.feel.to.be.a.learner. in.PE‹.(Arthur, Fullard and O'Leary, 2022). This purposeful discomfort is framed as an opportunity to empathise with pupils who lack confidence in PE, fostering understanding of their experience.

Aligned with the development of parkour skills, trainees progress through lesson phases that purposefully encourage the practice of specific virtues (Figure 2). I intentionally steer away from performance virtues, such as determination, resilience, and teamwork, which typically dominate conversations surrounding character and sport. This decision aims to promote a deeper connection between PE and character education and broaden trainees' virtue literacy beyond familiar performance-based virtues (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). Instead, I prioritise the moral and intellectual virtues of curiosity, courage, and creativity.
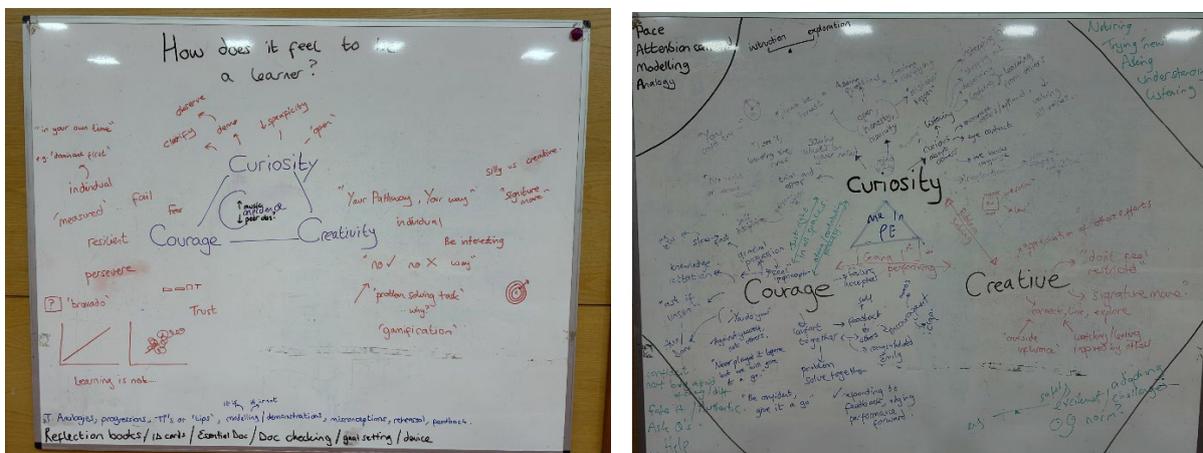

Figure.8

Trainees begin by exploring the space with curiosity, then demonstrate courage by attempting more challenging precision jumps, and finally integrate creativity by designing a signature move and pathway through the space. Praise is intentionally precise, public, and directed at the virtues being practised rather than the technical quality of parkour movement. The lesson concludes by spotlighting virtue practice (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022), emphasising that their personal commitment to curiosity, creativity, and courage enabled their parkour success (Figure 2). I emphasise success from virtue practice, not parkour performance, enabling all participants to experience a sense of achievement. We then take time for virtue perception by recognising how the same virtues are essential to their development as trainee PE teachers, making this parkour session personally relevant and more meaningful to the trainees through character education (Beni, 2021; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022).

I intentionally follow this practical experience with some independent and meaningful reflective learning (Arthur, Fullard and O'Leary, 2022) an intentional strategy that can increase the motivations of teachers to embed
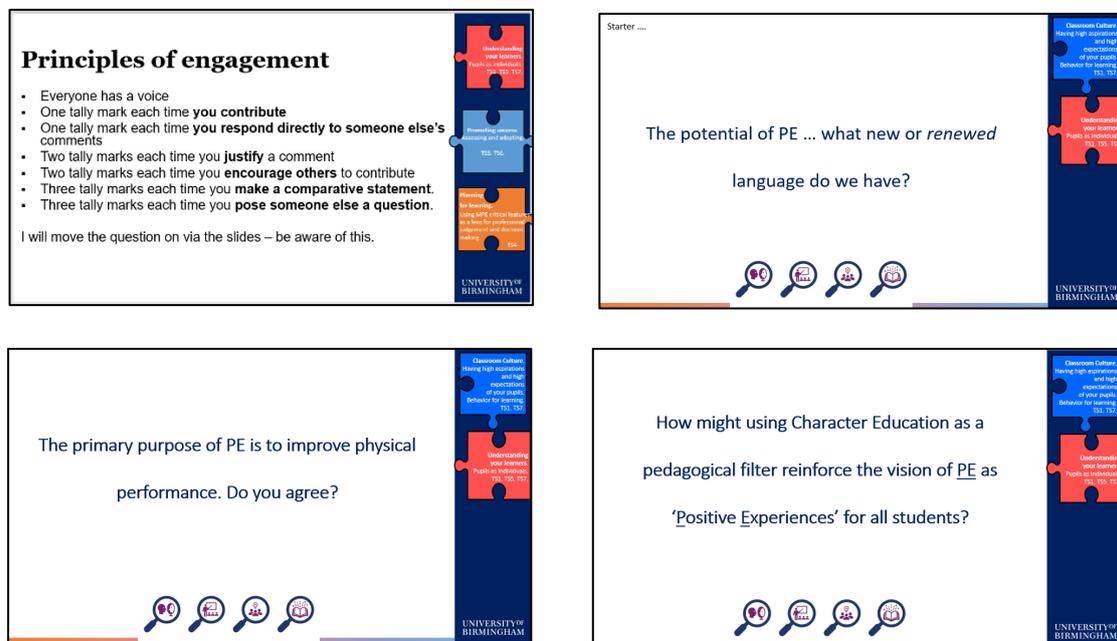
character education into their practice (Thompson and Maile, 2020). Trainees are tasked to reflect on the holistic and transformational benefit of PE and are supported with additional resources (Figure 3) to challenge their thinking.

Figure.9

This continued enquiry and reflection seeks to deepen trainees' virtue perception, knowledge and understanding (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022) and recognise the responsibility of PE teachers to teach moral and intellectual virtues alongside performance virtues. Engaging with this tension further develops trainees' moral awareness, helping them see that, as PE teachers, their role in motor skill development is as important as shaping pupils' character and supporting the broader purpose of education. This practically grounded flipped learning approach (Østerlie and Bjerke, 2023) precedes the explicitly taught theory of character education.

Figure.0

The sequencing of character caught into character taught, is deliberate. It helps the theory of character resonate more effectively, while allows me to use limited teaching time efficiently and keeping the subjects practical nature central (Herold and Waring, 2010). Starting with practical sessions also positions me as a practitioner first, enhancing the authenticity of my approach and helping me connect with trainees more quickly (Lim, 2022).

To keep trainees accountable for their learning, dialogic pedagogy is used. As a developing community of practice, trainees are encouraged to express their reflections using their newly acquired virtue literacy and subject-specific terminology, guided by a set of key questions and dilemmas (Figure 5). This open conversation is framed around communicating with research-informed insight, enabling the practice of virtues for professional flourishing (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009). Trainees begin to use virtue literacy tightly knitted to their newly acquired language of learning (Biesta, 2019).

Figure.❶

The final question (Figure 5) is captured through individual reflection, which trainees share on a discussion board. Their contributions indicate an immediate motivation and appreciation for the value of character education in PE, as well as an early awareness of the potential impact of this on learners.

»Character.education.places.student.flourishing.and.the.development.of.wider.character.virtues.as.a.core. objective.of.positive.PE.experiences¡.This.can.help.to.create.positive.and.personally.relevant.PE.experiences. for.all.students?as.all.pupils.will.be.able.to.feel.success.and.access.these.objectives.of.improved.character. virtues?even.if.they.aren✗.able.to.excel.through.physical.performance.skills‹¡

»From.the.reading.I.have.become.aware.that.✗Learning.to.Move✗and.✗Moving.to.Learn✗are.distinctly.different. and.are.influenced.hugely.by.the.teacher's.role?the.student.role.and.the.learning.environment.all.of.which. interact.to.facilitate.holistic.development‹¡

I also ask trainees to comment on any perceived barriers to implementing character education in PE, as an initial step towards enacting virtue-oriented practice.

»Lack.of.teacher.knowledge.and.also.a.lack.of.time.or.flexibility.alongside.the.school's.interpretation.of.the.national.curriculum‹

»Teachers.require.lots.of.experience.of.teaching.as.well.as.knowledge.of.the.topic?individual.students.and. the.group.as.a.whole.and.I.don't.have.this.and.might.not.have.this.as.a.trainee‹

»A.barrier.of.this.is.the.assessment.pressure.where.PE.is.judged.by.physical.outcomes.therefore.character. traits.are.harder.to.assess.formally‹

Anticipating these responses, I plan to address these limitations by intentionally moving away from character taught and instead foster a learning environment where character is more explicitly caught through narrated practical teaching (Grossman, 2018). Shifting from character taught to character caught supports the need for teacher educators to focus on pedagogies of enactment, rather than relying solely on reflection and investigation

(Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009) so that trainee teachers feel more equipped for practical implementation of educational theory (Korthagen and Wubbels, 2001). Much as this trainee reflects:

»I.love.the.mix.of.theory.with.practical.learning?being.able.to.experience.how.this.theory. looks.in.a.PE.context¡.This.has.been.very.useful.for.school.placements*‹

Character is caught:

In this PETE curriculum, caught moments focus on helping trainees develop their own vision of what character education looks like in practice. To address time constraints (Herold and Waring, 2011) opportunities to model how expert practitioners can foster a culture of character within PE lessons are prioritised (Arthur, Fullard and O'Leary, 2022; Bower et.al¡?2023; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022).

Contemporary approaches to teacher education utilise 'representations' of practice (Grossman, 2018; Korthagen et.al¡?2006) which play an important role in connecting theory to practice. Video analysis has become common place in education settings for this reason allowing for footage to be paused, discussed, re-watched and dissected (Grossman, 2018; Lemov, 2021). In principle, this depth of reflection can strengthen opportunities for virtue literacy, specifically the shifting from virtue perception, knowledge and understanding, towards acquiring virtue reasoning and practical wisdom (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). However, having trialled video analysis specifically in PE, it became evident that footage captured was significantly affected by environmental constraints such as sound quality, lighting and limited visibility of the full teaching space. Consequently, recordings did not adequately reflect the depth of quality PE and character development taking place, limiting the reflection. Therefore, I make caught character education visible to trainees during live, professional representations of practice.

The first practical representation is a badminton lesson built around the driving question: »What.are.marginal. gains?‹¡.As a familiar sport within most school PE curricula, badminton provides a more realistic and transferable context than the earlier ultimate frisbee and parkour sessions. Using a simple rally task to establish personal bests, learners perfect key skills and knowledge (e.g., grip, clears, serving, doubles rules) while reflecting on how small adjustments influence progress. Trainees wear two hats during this representation of character practice: one as a learner of badminton, the other as a trainee teacher.

As learners of badminton, I pause the lesson and prompt both skill and virtue-based reflection, for example:

- Which.technical.tweaks.improved.your.personal.best?

- What.virtues.supported.your.marginal.gains?

- Did.competitiveness.test.your.integrity?

Typical connections to virtues such as resilience, curiosity, problem-solving, and integrity emerge.

As trainee teachers, I pause the lesson and ask trainees to 'step out' of their learner role and notice my deliberate practice as a teacher (Fletcher-Wood and Farndon, 2021). This live narration and decomposition of my decision making helps develop their professional vision for character education (Grossman, 2018). For example, I narrate how to seamlessly spotlight character virtues during natural transition points, so that connecting virtue knowledge and understanding enhances, rather than interrupts, the active nature of a PE lesson. By making my choices explicit in the moment, rather than reflecting afterwards, I increase the likelihood that trainees will transfer these practices into their own teaching (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009). Thus, character is more authentically 'caught' in real time, in teaching environments that reflect trainees will enter. At the start of their professional journey, these caught moments are especially significant for developing their understanding and practice of character education in PE.

The ability to notice and decompose practice relies upon the foundation of language (Grossman, 2018) in this instance, virtue literacy (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). This caught opportunity strengthens

virtue literacy met during the taught components of the curriculum. However, modelling practice is more impactful when a range of representations are offered (Grossman, 2018). A stronger opportunity for a quality representation, is a live PE lesson with secondary aged children.

Character is largely caught through role modelling (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). Collaboratively teaching gymnastics to Year 7 pupils with my trainees, serves as a deliberate case study for caught character practice because of the significant contextual challenges it presents for all PE teachers (McVeigh and Waring, 2021). A command focused teaching style is often used in gymnastics to ensure safety, underpinned by a 'physical education-as-sport-technique' model (Kirk, 2009), where the focus is on mastering isolated skills, and success or failure is judged by visible performance outcomes.

Shifting to a pupil-centred approach that emphasises moral and intellectual virtues through gymnastics represents an important reconceptualisation for trainees to engage with (Casey and MacPhail, 2018). Part of caught character education in teacher education, is trainees accessing the why behind an expert's decision making. We firstly reflect on why character-oriented pedagogies matter in gymnastics. I encourage trainees to consider their own, and pupils, likely diverse experiences of gymnastics and to recognise common barriers such as fear, low confidence and embarrassment alongside stereotypes linked to gender, culture and ability (Lynch, Walton-Fisette and Luguetti, 2021; McVeigh and Waring, 2021). Equally, trainees acknowledge that gymnastics offers specific opportunities for fundamental movement development, body awareness and virtues underpinning rehearsal and performance, that other parts of the curriculum cannot. Precisely because of these benefits, pupil-centred pedagogies are crucial for ensuring that all pupils, not only the most confident or physically competent, feel a sense of belonging and can flourish in gymnastics lessons. Trainees begin to recognise how character-led pedagogies can motivate pupils to look forward to gymnastics lessons, rather than avoid it or feel discouraged. Therefore, this representation of gymnastics illustrates how learning and meaning can develop from pupil-centred pedagogies without diminishing the importance of practical subject content knowledge (Harold and Waring, 2010).

The relationship between pedagogical choice and practice rarely unfolds as research suggests (Korthagen, 2010), and pupil-centred pedagogies add further uncertainty because learning and progress often develop in non-linear, unpredictable ways (Casey and MacPhail, 2018). This caught character moment models the practical dilemmas teachers face in PE and character education. For example, where to integrate character into the flow of the lesson, how to balance teacher talk with movement and when to spotlight certain virtues. By collaboratively teaching a group of pupils we had never met, I demonstrated that vulnerability and experimentation are integral to professional growth, modelling a teacher's responsibility to apply the right theory, in the right way, at the right time (Korthagen, 2010). What trainees observe are strategies, practical tools, and concrete examples of how character-led pedagogies translate into practice (Grossman, 2018; Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009). For example, a simple, but effective use of the whiteboard as a "say what you see" tool within a lesson (Figure 6, with pupil names removed).
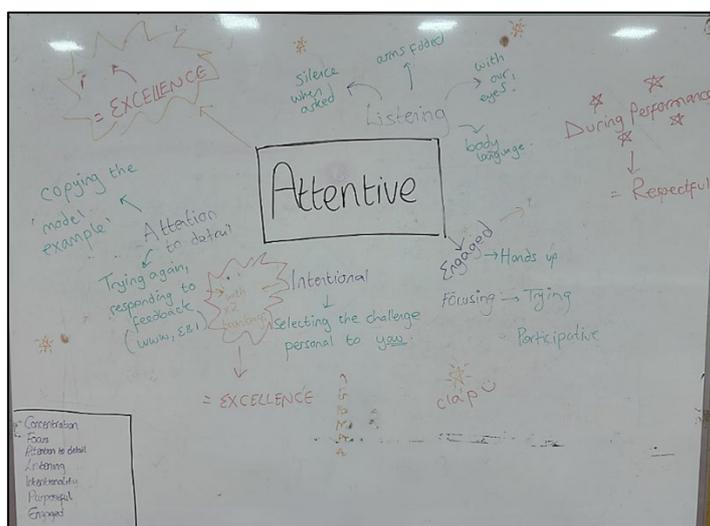

Figure.❷

This caught moment reflected authentic challenges, such as I did not know pupils' prior attainment in gymnastics, motivations for PE, or baseline understanding of character education. This allowed me to model real-time dilemma's (Bower et.al¡?2023). For example, when a pupil gave an incomplete definition of creativity, I probed for a stronger response by asking for synonyms (e.g., flair) and examples in sport (e.g., Messi's dribbling) to build greater understanding of what creativity is and is not. The dilemma narrated in this moment to trainee teachers, was whether this infringed on practical time, or could have been addressed through an individual conversation with the pupil rather than with the whole group. This dissection was important, because the unique educative value of PE is that learning is through movement (Larsson and Nyberg, 2016) and as it stands, how pupils are assessed (DfE 2025). Character education should carefully complement the physical nature of the subject, not replace it. The primary objective should be in the physical domain, and a combination of any of the other 3 domains (IPLA, 2022). In this PETE curriculum, it is argued that character education can complement the domains of physical literacy.

A good teacher is one who demonstrates pedagogical phronesis in their teaching of young people (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2015). These representations through caught scenarios are effective because they offer a window into eliciting the thinking of a character teacher during live teaching (Grossman, 2018). Whilst 'stepping out' of the lesson (Grossman, 2018), I repeat the same phrase "say what you see" and offer prompts so that trainees attend to the structure (my what) and reasoning (my why) behind my decisions. Prompts include "what did I do? Why here, how does this support learning". Trainees begin to recognise that my decisions are deliberate (Fletcher-Wood and Farndon, 2021) and not always pre-planned. This real, whilst short, encounter with character education in PE, offers a starting point for analysis (Korthagen, 2010) as we then shift our reflections to 'what next', in recognition that character education is ongoing, not a one-off intervention.

In teacher education, character caught is also shaped though role modelling of professional reflection (Bower et. al¡?2023). Collective reflection is a powerful tool to support the shift from theory to application in professions such as teaching (Golaghaie et.al¡?2018). Driscoll's structured reflection model ('what, so what, now what'; as cited in Golaghaie et.al¡?2018) is used to support trainees in a collaborative, discursive environment.

Trainees named the 'what':

> "Character education feels more inclusive because it is an opportunity for everyone to feel successful in PE... [when a pupil feels successful it can] ... increase enjoyment and consequently the likelihood of participating in PE for life".

Recognised why this matters with, 'so what':

> "This pedagogical perspective benefits pupils as it puts them at the heart of their own learning and enables a feeling of success".

> "Character education encourages individuals to take responsibility of their own learning and participation in the lesson".

And begin to connect this into practice, 'now what':

> »It's.important.to.not.overload.the.pupil.and.teacher.by.adding.too.much.in?it.needs.to.be.just.right‹¡

This reflective approach to case-based learning helps trainees start to recognise the complexity of character teaching and engage with multiple perspectives to strengthen their developing professional vision (Grossman, 2018). In response to the 'now what' reflection, a key challenge in teacher education is enabling trainees to translate their university learning into effective practice during placements. While caught learning promotes noticing and reflection in authentic settings (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009; Grossman, 2018), sought learning provides deliberate opportunities to apply these practical tools, allowing technical and intellectual components to align (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009; Korthagen, 2010). Together

with the taught elements of the PETE curriculum that build conceptual knowledge and understanding of character practice, this integrated approach enriches trainee learning across university and school-based settings (Herold and Waring, 2010) and helps bridge theory into practice (Shulman, 1998).

Knowledge for teaching is strengthened when it is coupled with knowledge from teaching (McDonald et.al¡? 2014), supporting Grossmans (2018) argument that a range of representations support trainee teachers in developing fluency in complex practices such as character education (Arthur, Fullard, and O'Leary, 2022). Sought learning in partnership schools complements this by enabling trainees to learn from experts beyond myself, fostering their practical pedagogical wisdom and refining how they might support pupils' character development (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2015; 2022). These sought curriculum ingredients are deliberately designed to allow trainees to develop their own approaches to virtue-oriented practice, shaped by diverse experiences and contexts (Beni, 2021).

Character is sought:

Grossman (2018) suggests that opportunities for trainee teachers to enact specific elements of practice with a high degree of support, and under conditions of reduced complexity, enables a more effective engagement with the core practice. Grossman (2018) refers to these opportunities as 'approximations of practice'. In this PETE curriculum, these approximations form a sought approach to character education. In a university ITE context, school partnerships enrich the PETE curriculum by exposing trainees to diverse approaches to character education. In this sought phase, trainees immerse themselves in a partnership school's ethos and department curriculum, and plan to teach lessons in that setting. This not only provides both caught and sought experiences of character education in action but also increases the chance for trainees to see more contemporary practice that may not be present in their future placement schools (Bjørke, Standal and Moen, 2020).

School A was intentionally chosen because it has a clear intent and implementation strategy for character-oriented practice in the PE department. The school uses Head, Heart and Hands learning objectives: Head (to know), Hands (to show) and Heart (to grow) (Frapwell, 2014). The Heart element has a precise focus on FAITHFUL virtues, and this term, the department were emphasising the virtues of faith-filled and attentive. This is why the earlier gymnastics caught example narrated character-learning through the virtue of attentiveness. This departmental structure gives trainees a clear starting point, making it easier to incorporate character education during their first taught lesson of the year. Consequently, this sought 'introductory practice' simulation invited trainees to actively commit to character by planning for it, implementing it in a low-stakes environment, and reflecting on their actions (Grossman, 2018) thus supporting trainees' growth as teachers who cultivate character through deliberate virtue developing practice (Arthur, Fullard, and O'Leary, 2022).

After observing expert teachers in situ, trainees carry this additional caught learning into collaboratively planning their first sought lesson. Effective approximations of practice let trainees rehearse key parts of complex practice in lower stakes, graduated settings, helping them build confidence in their shift from theory to enactment (Grossman, 2018). The first approximation is a peer teaching episode. Trainees deliberately rehearse specific aspects of their planned lesson with each other affording the conditions for 'assisted rehearsal' (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009) meaning that the professional dialogue surrounding this rehearsal provides depth to the learning process of how to enact character education. What I find most interesting is the creativity and subject passion that emerges from this early rehearsal, especially in the current overly prescriptive landscape (Hordern and Brooks, 2023) and instead aligning with the reasons many trainees pursue teaching as a career (Thompson and Maile, 2020).

Expert feedback, a fundamental component of approximations of practice (Grossman, 2018; Figure 7) helped trainees refine their lesson plans for their first successful character-focused PE lesson. This structure provided support and enabled a purposeful integration of skills, knowledge and judgement into practice (Grossman, 2018; Korthagen, Loughran and Russell, 2006).
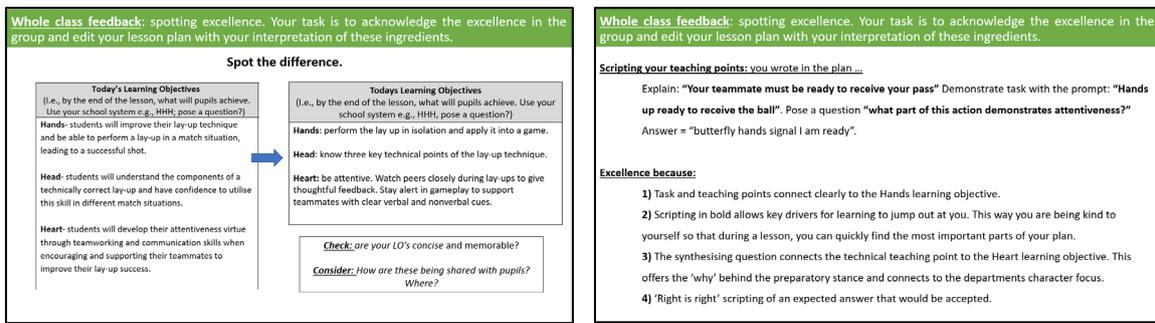
Figure.❸

In groups of four, trainees collaboratively taught two-hour lessons in basketball, tag rugby, netball or tchoukball lesson. The authenticity of this approximation exposed the ambitious instructional practice of pupil centred pedagogies, such as character education within PE, because the pupils 'acted back' in a way that could not be pre-rehearsed (Lampert, 2009). Thus, trainees had to adapt their instructions and actions in response to what unfolded, refining their practical wisdom in each moment (Thompson and Maile, 2020). This sought learning opportunity was highly successful.

In-service teachers report limited time to reflect on pupil's character development or the moral example they wish to set for their pupils (Thompson and Maile 2020). Yet, the journey towards owning one's pedagogical decision making requires a process of 'sense making' and critical reflection (Grossman, 2018). Therefore, protecting time for meaningful reflection was essential in the stride towards practical pedagogical wisdom and professional flourishing (Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald, 2009; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). This period of group reflection supported the development of professional virtue by drawing on individual insight and expert feedback, while fostering collegiality through shared discussions in which trainees explored the challenges they faced and how they adapted their actions and behaviours in the moment (Grossman, 2018; Thompson and Maile 2020). The overarching consensus amongst the group was that:

"Planning in character intentionally is essential. This is not just in the learning objectives but also the tasks that the kids do. For example, we got students to referee basketball matches when their team was off and used this to intentionally develop their attentiveness and faith-filled virtues as it encouraged them to be focused on the rules of the match and honest with the implementation. Through practicing these skills, this could be transferable to other contexts which require focus, attention to detail and honesty e.g. in other subjects".

Trainees highlighted three actions that make character explicit:

While recognising the enablers, trainees also identified barriers and potential solutions they might encounter in

7¡.Use.mini.plenaries.throughout.the.lesson.to.relate.back.to.the.Heart.character.learning.objective¡..

8¡.Intentionally.design.tasks.such.as.the.refereeing.activity.that.focus.on.developing.a.specific.character.virtue¡

9¡.Use.whole.class.feedback.to.spotlight.where.the.group.or.individual.students.have.demonstrated.their.use.of.attentiveness and.faith_filled.virtues.to.then.motivate.others.to.continue.practicing.this¡

PE lessons:

»Character.education.felt.authentic.to.integrate.[into.school.A].due.to.their›FAITHFUL".virtues.which.shape.school.life¡. Therefore?it.felt.logical.to.start.the.lesson.with.character.because.it.is.something.they.are.already.familiar.with¡.However? it.can.be.easy.to.forget.about.the›character".part.of.the.lesson.when.there.is.a.competitive.game.happening.and.there.are. a.few.misconceptions.of.the.rules¡.Circling.back.to.the.learning.objectives.regularly.by.having.mini.plenaries.every.86–96. minutes.can.be.useful.for.the.teacher.and.pupils.to.embed.character.education.more.clearly‹¡.

Trainees began to recognise the complex nature of character orientated practice but not in a way that seemed to diminish their motivations to choose this pedagogy. For example, recognising that virtue motivation differs in their learners:

> »I.found.that.when.students.were.officiating?they.responded.differently.to.my.praising.of.their.character.skills.like.integrity. and.judgement.needed.in.their.role¡.While.some.students.resisted.this?I.wonder.if.this.is.because.they.just.didn't.know.me. or.perhaps.wanted.to.play.[basketball].more.than.they.wanted.to.officiate¡.Regardless.of.this?integrating.different.roles. can.develop.a.range.of.virtues.in.pupils.and.give.me.chance.to.praise.them.for.something.that.is.not.performance.based‹¡

Approximations have a stronger impact when they are authentic (Grossman, 2018) and this sought scenario did not cover up or hide pupil behaviours that can emerge in PE and school. In this anecdote, the trainee reflects on a competitive disagreement between pupils and how the expert teacher guided them to resolve it. The trainee recognises PE's potential to help pupils manage challenges beyond school, illustrating the contextual value of character education in PE:

> »Adding.in.character.into.PE.creates.a.supportive.space.to.make.mistakes.in.and.this.can.be.a.key.factor.in.whether.a. young.person.stays.engaged.with.education.or.becomes.vulnerable.to.negative.influences.outside.of.school¡.It.is. important.to.remember.that.when.these.disagreements.occur.within.a.structured.and.supportive.environment?such.as.a. PE.session?it.can.be.far.safer.and.more.constructive.for.the.pupils.than.allowing.similar.conflicts.to.unfold.outside.of. school?where.they.may.become.involved.with.negative.influences‹¡

The impact on teacher motivation to practice character:

Up until the start of placement, the character caught, taught and sought approach to this PETE curriculum scaffolded trainees deliberate engagement with character orientated pedagogies. As a result, trainees can make more informed choices, drawing on a broad pedagogical foundation beyond the limited scope of statutory frameworks (Hordern and Brooks, 2023). Whilst evidence from this journey so far suggested that this learning had increased trainee's confidence to adopt a more process-focused PE learning experience sooner, rather than a content driven one (Herold and Waring, 2010), the true measure of impact lies in the motivations of trainees to independently prioritise character orientated pedagogies. For this reason, additional and optional opportunities to cultivate and nurture character in their teaching practice are sought, empowering trainees to pursue their identity as a teacher of character in authentic school practice should they choose to (Thompson and Maile, 2020). This is tracked through trainees' university submissions and school placement observations.

Trainees are more likely to select and enact the pedagogical practices adopted by their placement school and their communities of practice (Herold and Waring, 2010). In this example of a trainee's journey, the school placement reinforced the prioritisation of character, as they also adopted a Head, Heart, and Hand curriculum approach. This week 3 submission relating to a year 10 Girls PE basketball unit of work and associated feedback demonstrates the trainee's motivation to explicitly embed virtue development into their practice (Figure 8).

What pupils need to learn
(What will they *know*? What will they *show*? How will they flourish personally – *within* and *beyond* PE?)
Head: : Key techniques—chest pass, bounce pass, dribbling with control, pivoting, and rules (e.g, travelling).
Hands: Ability to execute passing and receiving under pressure, dribble with purpose, and pivot to outwit opposition.
Heart: Build resilience, teamwork, and tactical awareness, develop sportsmanship, respect, and lifelong physical activity habits.

Expert.feedback¿,I.wonder.if.we.could.look.to.make.this. simpler¡.Why?.7).economy.of.language?ensures.HHH. is.memorable.for.the.pupils.and.you¡.8).Prioritising.the. highest.leverage.HHH?.For.e¡g¡?the›heart"?there.is.a. lot.here?and.so.it's.hard.for.pupils.to.focus.on.and. show.all.of.this.at.the.same.time¡.I.wonder?could.you. prioritise.one.lesson.on.resilience.for.instance?but.next. lesson.on.respect.and.so.allow.for.stronger.progress.of. each.virtue.in.turn?.This.might.also.feel.less. overwhelming.for.you.to.manage¡
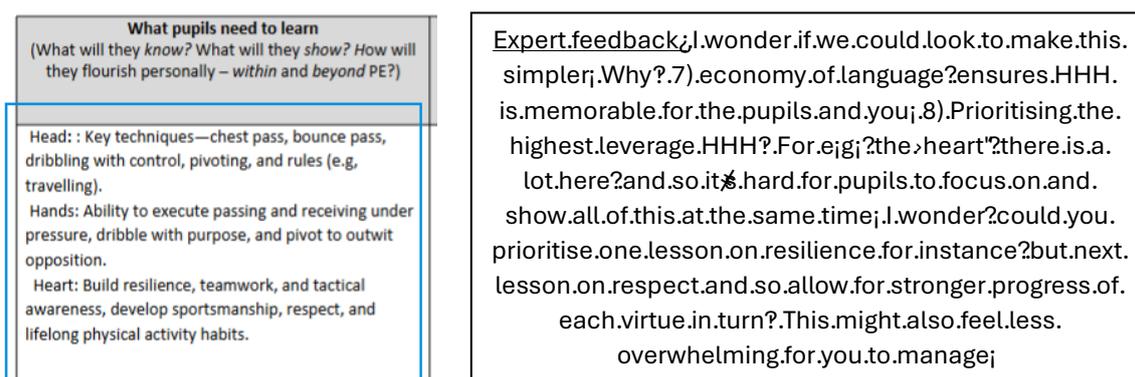
Figure 8

This submission highlights the challenges trainees face when reconceptualising traditional practice. Such rethinking and reimagining of learning and teaching can be both demanding and overloading (Askildsen and Løndal, 2023). This early placement submission indicates an initial conceptual shift from organiser to character educator, with feedback helping this pedagogical approach become established as the new norm (Askildsen and Løndal, 2023), as evidenced in the following weeks submission (Figure 9).

What pupils need to learn (What will they know? What will they show? How will they flourish personally – within and beyond PE?)		Personal target(s) and observer focus (Your granular focus)	To consistently narrate pupils' participation using virtue-based language that celebrates resilience and reflection. To align with the school's character focused reward system to reinforce values over performance outcomes
Head: be able to describe how shielding, fakes, and drives to outwit an opponent Hands: make decisions to use shielding, fakes and drives in competitive situations. Heart: build resilience in 1v1 and 2v2 situations even if you are unsuccessful. Be ready to reflect on this resilience and how this supports future decision making.			

Figure.❺

A motivation for virtue-based practice is evidenced by the trainee's responsiveness to feedback (Figure 9). Together, the caught, taught, and sought PETE curriculum alongside the school placement have created space for the trainee to rethink what constitutes meaningful PE experiences, to be equipped to start making informed, context-appropriate decisions (Casey and Kirk, 2020; Biesta, 2019) and plan for learning in PE to shift beyond solely performance (Louden, 2007, as cited in Askildsen and Løndal, 2023).

Thompson and Maile (2020) note that teachers are character educators who learn from their own experience and that of colleagues. As their experience grows, so does their confidence in applying professional judgment. For example, trainees have begun to apply their learning independently into their own practice, such as the use of a whiteboard to spotlight virtue practice, as caught from the earlier gymnastics' representation of practice (Figure 10). Independently sought opportunities in the school placement have given the trainees confidence to further integrate this knowledge and experience into their own practice (Korthagen, 2010; Silva et.al., 2021).

> A danger within PE is that nonparticipants can be underutilised (Munk & Agergaard, 2015), therefore limiting opportunities to connect with the values and skills being promoted. Brunsdon and Layne (2024) highlight that a cornerstone of character education for a teacher is setting an inclusive environment. Consequently, I will assign leadership roles to non-participants using "Virtue-Spotters", to ensure that all students contribute to the collective spotlighting of resilience and reflection in practice. This will be used most effectively by incorporating a whiteboard, employed collaboratively by myself and the non-participants. The whiteboard will serve as a tool to record precise pupil actions, which will then be spotlighted and reflected during mini plenaries. This will address the barrier presented in a previous lesson, where pausing participation to narrate resulted in disrupted lesson flow and reduced engagement.

Figure.76

This motivation extends across more than half of the current cohort, with multiple submissions evidencing a strong commitment to character-oriented pedagogies. Furthermore, trainees complete a formal assignment examining the place of PE in the curriculum. Authentic assessments immerse trainees in realistic and challenging contexts (Cross, 2010; Newman et.al¡?1996), where they plan and enact pedagogies and reflect on their impact while navigating the pressures of teaching PE, thus exercising agency. In their upcoming credit-bearing assignments, trainees have shared their chosen directions during personal tutor support sessions, further demonstrating engagement with character-oriented pedagogy. Such sought opportunities help cultivate practical wisdom (Arthur, Fullard, and O'Leary, 2022).

> »In.response.to.Goodyear.and.Dudley"s.(867❶.observation.that.student_centred.learning.is.often.misinterpreted.as. leaving.students.to.learn.independently?I.will.explore.how.explicitly.taught.character.education.in.PE.can.bridge.the.gap. between.instructional.and.student_centred.pedagogies.in.a.Year.❸fitness.unit.of.work¡.For.example?explicitly.teaching.the. virtues.of.self_discipline.and.integrity.through.PE.so.that.students.can.shift.towards.greater.success.in.student_centred. pedagogies?but.also.in.their.wider.flourishing‹¡

> »My.assignment.will.focus.on.bringing.PE"s.hidden.benefits.to.the.forefront¡.I.will.explore.practical.strategies.for.explicitly. teaching.life.skills.like.using.group.work.to.develop.communication.and.fostering.character.values.like.resilience.through. my.conversations.with.my.students¡.Drawing.on.Cronin?Greenfield.and.Maher.(8689).I.will.consider.how.implicit.and. explicit.learning.experiences.promotes.life.skills.and.leadership.skills.in.my.students.in.PE‹¡

What makes these examples particularly poignant is that it reflects the true nature of character sought (Arthur, Fullard, and O'Leary, 2022). The trainees' choice to focus on character-oriented pedagogies is intrinsically

motivated, not imposed by me or the school. It stems from their personal commitment to character and their understanding of what constitutes great PE. This illustrates the impact of the caught, taught, sought framework in PETE, enabling future PE teachers to be pedagogically responsive. Trainees are becoming deliberate agents of change (Lynch, Walton-Fisette and Luguetti, 2021) practising and embodying personal character education through PE.

Next steps:

This self-study has captured the impact of my practice on trainee teachers' perception of what quality PE entails. Through this PETE curriculum, trainees have begun to recognise the potential of virtue-oriented pedagogy in PE, developing into teachers who actively choose to be character educators.

I am confident that trainees are growing in their ability to navigate competing perspectives on the purpose and quality of PE within the curriculum (Herold and Waring, 2010). Importantly the taught, caught, sought framework has provided them with the tools and strategies to value and implement pupil-centred pedagogies, including character education. Deliberate sought experiences have offered explicit opportunities to 'practice the practice' (Askildsen and Løndal, 2023), fostering greater responsibility, reflection, and professional judgement.

Building on this start, in the next phase of the curriculum, we will explore inclusion and adaptive practice, addressing earlier simplistic assumptions that character education automatically makes PE inclusive. We will consider how marginalised groups experience character education differently. Trainees will also examine alternative approaches to character in PE, such as using driving questions and role models, and how to counter contexts that may not formally support character education.

Finally, extending the caught, taught, sought approach to mentors might help them understand their role in developing trainees who embody their own pedagogical philosophy, even if it differs from the mentor's view of character education. This is particularly timely, as recent curriculum and assessment reviews (DfE, 2025) emphasise pupils' holistic development, highlighting the need to reconceptualise both curriculum and practice towards pupil-centred approaches, including character education. Trainees at this institute are therefore well-positioned to lead such reform, and I am ready to support ongoing discussions about the place of character education in PE.

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