

# Case Study Report

## Leading Character Education in Schools



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Education



Pearson

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## Leading Character Education in Schools: Case Study Report

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# 1 Introduction

This document presents case studies of five schools who are all past winners of the Department for Education's (DfE) Character Award – an award scheme designed to act as 'a gold standard as to what works in character education' (Morgan, 2016). Commissioned by the Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL) and Pearson, and undertaken by a team from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the case studies form part of a suite of outputs which include a bibliography of recent research, reports and resources about character education and an emerging practice guide which draws out the key principles of effective practice in the leadership of character education in schools. The research project aimed to address a gap we identified in the evidence base relating to the leadership and management of character education in schools. As a small-scale qualitative study, it was designed to provide the school sector with practical insights and illustrations rather than robust systematic evidence of the impact of different approaches to leading character education. We hope that by presenting the experiences of recognised leaders in the field of character education, other teachers and school leaders will find ideas and inspiration for developing their own approaches.



## 2 What is character education?

Character education or character instruction, as it was referred to by one case study school, is a debated term. Although there is no universally accepted definition, character education can be broadly described as an approach to developing a set of values, attitudes, skills and behaviours that are thought to support young people's development and contribute to their success in school and in adult life. These qualities include respect, leadership, motivation, resilience, self-control, self-confidence, social and emotional skills, and communication skills (Education Endowment Foundation, 2016). Perhaps the most comprehensive framework for understanding character education is the one developed by The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (2017). The framework groups a number of different skills into different virtues, described as 'civic', 'moral' and 'performance' related. Interestingly, none of our case-study schools set out to deliver 'character education'. Most were focusing on specific skills, identified as important to their pupils' needs, rather than the full range of virtues defined by the Jubilee Centre. However, all of the case-study schools had adopted a whole-school approach to creating a positive school ethos and learning environment considered to help develop young people's character. They also shared a common belief that this would provide the foundations for strong academic achievement and prepare young people for the future.

## 3 Why is character education important?

There has been a lot of recent interest in character education. For example, a recent CBI education and skills survey report, delivered in partnership with Pearson, found that a young person's attitude to work, demonstrated through skills such as resilience, teamwork and leadership, is 'critical' to the success of the British workforce, and the most important factor for employers when recruiting school or college leavers (CBI/Pearson, 2017). Yet, the report also found there is a gap between education and the preparation young people need for their future, as well as a gap between the skills needed in the workforce and those young people have. These are challenges that have been recognised by Government. The DfE's Education Strategy Overview 2015-20 (DfE, 2016) highlights the importance of preparing pupils for adult life, whilst building character and

resilience is one of the DfE delivery priorities. In support of this goal, the DfE has pledged to support schools to develop pupils into ‘well-rounded, confident, happy and resilient individuals to boost their academic attainment, employability and ability to engage in society as active citizens’.

## 4 How is character education being led in schools?

While there is no recognised blueprint or template outlining how character education should be led in schools, a feature common to all of the schools is the leading role of senior leaders. They are leading character education in three main ways by:

- 1. Highlighting the importance of character education as being central to the culture, values and vision of the school;**
- 2. Taking a whole-school approach to developing the character of pupils; and**
- 3. Exemplifying and communicating positive character traits themselves in the way they interact with governors, colleagues, pupils and parents.**

However, we also found evidence that the leadership of character education is distributed, with heads of department, heads of year and curriculum leaders often taking responsibility for leading specific aspects of provision. A recently published DfE study found that it is typically headteachers, deputy heads or other members of senior leadership teams who lead character development and that they often recruit a small team with relevant expertise to support them in developing and delivering provision across the school. The study noted that headteachers highlight the importance of encouraging all staff to take responsibility for developing pupils’ character traits or attributes. Other findings revealed that whilst character education is a priority for most schools, only a quarter have a dedicated lead for it, and a lack of time and capacity is a key constraint for many (NatCen Social Research and National Children’s Bureau, 2017).

## 5 What is the impact of character education?

A challenge commonly reported by all of the schools we visited is measuring and demonstrating the impact of their character education work. As character education is embedded within the ethos and culture of these schools, it is perhaps understandable that identifying a causal relationship between 'character education' and specific outcomes is difficult. Nevertheless, senior leaders identified a range of impacts which they associated with this work. Beyond the development of specific attributes, such as resilience, self-confidence and leadership skills, they reported improvements in: the ethos and culture of their schools, which was associated with the development of an environment that was more conducive to learning; pupil behaviour and attendance; pupils' emotional well-being; expectations of pupil performance, from staff, pupils and parents; and the proportion of young people going to university and gaining places at Russell Group universities. One of the gaps this study has identified is the need for more robust measures of the impact of character education. Without this evidence, it is not possible to compare the relative effectiveness of different approaches to its leadership and/or delivery.

# 6 Case studies

## a. Archibald Primary School, Middlesbrough

### “BELIEVE AND ACHIEVE”



**CHARACTER TRAITS PROMOTED INCLUDE:**

- Respect
- Motivation
- Attitude
- Gumption
- Communication
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Resilience
- Initiative

Archibald Primary School instills in its pupils the belief that everyone can achieve, regardless of their background. They do this by delivering three strands of activity, which have been brought together under the banner of character education: 1) “Golden Rules” - behaviours that are promoted within school; 2) “MAGIC” - traits that pupils are encouraged to develop and demonstrate; and 3) “LORIC” - an approach which uses characters to encourage pupils to develop specific attributes.

**TYPE:** Primary LA maintained

AGE RANGE	PUPILS ON ROLL	FSM	SEN*	EAL	ATTAINMENT**
2-11	530	65%	0.4%	17%	81%

\*Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan.

\*\*Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 in 2016 (England average for 2016 was 53%).

## Background

Archibald Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is considerably higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, however the school population reflects the locality - there are twenty one different home languages spoken reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of pupils who attend the school.

## Approaches to the development of character education

We passionately feel that education is not just about maths, reading and writing, it's larger than that, and character education fits into this because it's about traits of learning, traits of character."

*Anita Jefferies, Headteacher*

The school has three main strands to its work on character education which contribute to its 'big picture' curriculum. These strands ensure the skills and traits they promote are embedded in the teaching and learning that takes place throughout the school.

**Strand 1: "Five Golden Rules"** - these are the behaviours that are promoted within the school.

- R** Respect
- U** Use kind and caring words
- L** Listen carefully and follow instructions
- E** Everyone to use their personal power to make the right choices
- S** Share your concerns and celebrate your achievement.



When the head first arrived at the school, some eight years ago, there were problems with behaviour, and the Golden Rules were developed in response. The character education work developed from there. The rules were written by the pupils, and are prominently displayed around the school. The language behind these behaviours is used every day in interactions between pupils and between staff and pupils.

**“It’s been an evolving thing; we didn’t set out to do character education. When I first came here, we needed rules, and it’s evolved from that.”**

*Anita Jefferies, Headteacher*

**Strand 2: “MAGIC”** - these are the traits pupils are encouraged to demonstrate and develop throughout their time in school.

- M** Motivation
- A** Attitude
- G** Gumption
- I** ‘I learn’
- C** Communication

Following a professional development day, the school embraced what are referred to as the ‘magic’ traits, another acrostic, which pupils found easy to remember. These are the traits that have been identified as necessary for pupils to thrive and make the best progress possible.

**Strand 3: “LORIC”** - the members of the LORIC family are characters used in school. Each character encourages pupils to display the characteristics of a specific attribute.

- L** Leadership
- O** Organisation
- R** Resilience
- I** Initiative
- C** Communication

Offered as part of PiXL The Primary Edge (PiXL is a partnership of over 1500 schools), the LORIC programme was introduced in September 2015 and built upon the work the school had already undertaken. Its aim is to develop the whole individual by encouraging and recognising growth, and key life skills both inside and outside the classroom.

## How character education is delivered

Character education is integrated into every lesson. For example, the language used in the Golden Rules and MAGIC are used every day in interactions between pupils and between staff and pupils.

The LORIC characters are introduced to children in Reception, and developed further in Key Stage 2 through specific lessons in which pupils demonstrate their skills in each attribute using log books provided by PiXL. Time is also devoted to the Golden Rules and MAGIC in so far as there is a celebration assembly every week devoted to one of the three strands. Every half term the school has a different focus, for example in Autumn term 1 – it is Five Golden Rules, Autumn 2 it is MAGIC, Spring 1 it is LORIC, and so on. Every week a child in each class is identified as “Star of the Week”.

There are 19 classes so this happens 19 times at a Friday assembly which means children get 19 examples. Parents are notified in advance by text message that their child will get the award and they are invited to attend the assembly to help share in their child’s success.

“The parents love it! The text doesn’t say which child has won the award and so parents with more than one child only find out on the day. Quite often we find that the parents are using the same terminology at home, which is great”

*Steve Cowgill, Deputy Headteacher*

## Leading character education

Overall responsibility for leading character education sits with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. The school has team leaders for each year group and they are part of the school’s senior leadership team (SLT). As members of the SLT, they are involved in developing the school development plan so they are very aware of what they are trying to do with character education.

“All staff monitor what is happening in their year group, and they will organise some of the assemblies for it. We have given them a framework, and given them some suggested activities for how they will work with parents, but it is very much up to them [to decide how to implement it in their class].”

*Anita Jefferies, Headteacher*

Staff have undertaken training on how to deliver LORIC and some professional development time has been focused on discussions of the meaning of the different values that the school wants to cultivate in its children. Indeed, the SLT has worked hard to ensure that staff understand why the school is doing these things. The label of “character education” has helped in this regard, as it has given additional prominence and momentum to the school’s work in this area, while also providing an umbrella term that helps new staff understand what the school is trying to achieve.

The head attributes their success to their approach, which views character education not as an add on but as a core part of what the school offers. However, success has not been realised overnight, and the current approach has evolved over several years, following incremental implementation.

“It’s not a quick fix. You couldn’t introduce this in September and expect to see the outcome of it by December, or even the next July. It doesn’t work that quickly”

*Steve Cowgill, Deputy Headteacher*

## The impact of character education

Directly attributing the impacts of this work to improved pupil outcomes is difficult, but the Headteacher is convinced that their work on character education has contributed to their academic success.

A lot of this improvement is attributed to the school’s ethos, which is ‘Believe and Achieve’,

“We feel very much that it’s about making children whole and that if you create the right atmosphere in the school then your standards will rise, and that’s certainly the case here. Last year we were in the top three percent for SATs results in the whole country”

*Anita Jefferies, Headteacher*

and the resilience of the children. Indeed, resilience is identified as one of the most important values the school teaches.

While all of the pupils are said to benefit from this work, EAL and SEN children are perceived to be particularly benefiting. SEN children benefit because it allows them a real opportunity of success, which then feeds back into their academic work, and EAL children benefits because it helps to increase their vocabulary and the way they use language.

“Resilience is the value I think that has the most impact, and it’s one of the hardest things to teach. You hear teachers in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 saying to their children ‘show me your resilience’, ‘go back and try it again’, or ‘well done, you’ve been really resilient’”

*Steve Cowgill, Deputy Headteacher*

## Next steps

In June 2016 the school was recognised for its work as North East regional winner of the DfE Character Education Award, but that is by no means the end of the journey. The school is planning to run Family Workshops in the summer term as part of the LORIC strand of their work, and, together with the student council, they will also be revisiting the Golden Rules to see if these can be developed further. The school is also planning to develop ‘PiXL Early Edge’ for Early Years pupils, and they are also looking to make a link with a secondary PiXL school to explore how the work they are doing is continued at secondary level.

## b. Co-operative Academy, Stoke on Trent

# “BE THE BEST”



### CHARACTER TRAITS PROMOTED INCLUDE:

- Resilience
- Creativity
- Determination
- Leadership
- Communication
- Compassion

The Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent serves a largely deprived community and uses character education to help address a deficit in ‘cultural capital’. It does this through three programmes: 1) Co-operative Young Leaders – a programme designed to create young leadership and volunteering opportunities; 2) dedicated character education lessons – a bespoke programme of lessons based on selected character virtues; and 3) The Edge – an enrichment programme for Year 7 and 8 pupils.

**TYPE:** Secondary Sponsored Academy

AGE RANGE	PUPILS ON ROLL	FSM	SEN*	EAL	PROGRESS 8 SCORE**:
<b>11-16</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>0.13</b>

\*Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan.

\*\*This score shows how much progress pupils at this school made between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of KS4 in 2016, compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of Key Stage 2. A score above zero means pupils made more progress, on average, than pupils across England who achieved similar results at the end of Key Stage 2.

## Background

The Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent opened in September 2010. The academy is part of the Co-operative Academies Trust (CAT) and is sponsored by The Co-op Group. The academy is smaller than an average-sized secondary school, with some 700 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils that are disadvantaged is much larger than average. In addition, almost three-fifths of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This figure is much higher than in most secondary schools. A well above average proportion, two-fifths, of pupils speak English as an additional language, with 34 different languages spoken in the academy. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average. An above average proportion of pupils join or leave the academy part-way through their secondary education.

## Approaches to the development of character education

**“We do character education because it fits in with our values. One of our values is equity and we aim to close the cultural capital gap by giving our students the same opportunities as others nationally”**

*Nick Lowry, Principal*

The Principal joined the school in 2010. At that time, the government’s expectations for schools were increasing and the Principal thought the school would not have been able to meet those expectations without a change in the school’s focus. Against the backdrop of a school that served the needs of pupils from deprived backgrounds, he identified the need to develop pupils’ resilience, creativity, determination and leadership skills, as well as improving their academic grades. Thus evolved a programme of work that is now referred to as character education. This comprises three main programmes.

## 1) Co-operative Young Leaders (CYL)

A programme designed to create young leadership and volunteering opportunities. Started in 2011, it was originally based on the model of sports leadership, and has evolved to include different leadership models in different curriculum areas. Pupils in all key stages can volunteer to undertake a programme of training designed to enhance their leadership skills, together with other supporting skills such as resilience, determination and communication, as well as their self-esteem. At Key Stage 3, CYL activities are delivered within the academy day. At Key Stage 4 this is done via after school clubs at primary schools outside of the academy day. Co-operative Young Leaders play a pivotal role

in the life of the academy including: helping to deliver content in primary transition lessons; planning and delivering concerts and other events; mentoring younger pupils; and acting as ambassadors for the academy. Co-operative Young Leaders deliver activities to all key stages, but they also lead activities designed to ensure that Year 6 pupils from feeder primary schools successfully transition to the academy. For example, they plan and run introductory visits for primary children, and run phonics clubs in the primary schools themselves. This is done with the supervision of staff, who act as facilitators, but it is the young people who plan and lead the activities.

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## 2) Character education lessons

The academy delivers a bespoke programme of lessons for Year 7 and 9 pupils which is designed to teach selected character strengths or virtues. Lessons are explicitly tied to curriculum areas. In 2015, following a visit to King's Leadership Academy in Warrington – another recognised leader in character education – the Principal took the decision to collapse the timetable on a Wednesday afternoon to create space for KS3 pupils to have one lesson a week on character education. The purpose of the lessons is to help pupils to

grasp what is important in situations and how to act for the right reasons so that they become more reflective. Pupils are encouraged to develop 'good sense' and 'wisdom'. The programme is founded on a range of virtues, including moral virtues, such as courage, self-discipline and compassion, and civic virtues, for example community spirit, volunteering and leadership. Delivered by the academy's Performance Faculty, which comprises PE, Music, Drama and Art, the lessons cover eight topics over the year, each lasting five weeks.

### 3) The Edge

An enrichment programme for Year 7 and 8 pupils. Delivered on a Wednesday afternoon, pupils take part in a range of activities designed to broaden their horizons and enrich their experience of the academy. At the start of every term, pupils attend an event similar to a Fresher's Fair, where, selecting from a wide range of activities, they choose something they would like to do that term. Pupils can choose from a 'smorgasbord of different activities based on a framework of character'. These include a variety of sports (e.g. football, cricket, badminton, basketball and boxing), drama and music

activities, horse riding, jewelry making, photography, French cinema and coding club, to name but a few. The activities are largely delivered by support staff – referred to as learning support practitioners (LSPs) - alongside outside agencies who deliver activities such as horse riding.

The academy also has an active student council and places a major focus on encouraging pupils to share their opinions and viewpoints while also allowing pupils to make authentic contributions to the leadership of the academy. However, this was not a major focus of the visit and so is not covered in detail here.

### How character education is delivered

Delivery of character education is very much a shared endeavor, with staff in the Performance Faculty leading the teaching of character education lessons, while LSPs and other support staff deliver The Edge, teaching the pupils something they are passionate about. Support staff have 32 or 37 hour contracts so they are paid to participate. However, it is voluntary as to whether they lead a session. The horse riding is funded by **The Emile Faurie Foundation**, while other activities are funded by **Awards for All**, a lottery fund which offers grants of between £300 and £10,000 for grassroots and community activity that aims to improve life for local people and neighbourhoods.

In changing the timetable on a Wednesday, the academy has created the opportunity for pupils to take part in character education and enrichment activities, but also for staff meetings and professional development activities, and for additional revision sessions to be run for KS4 pupils. By rotating teaching staff round, so that one week they have department time, and another week they are delivering lessons to KS4 pupils, pupils can remain in the academy at all times, while staff still receive the departmental and



“A lot of schools will finish early one day in the week to allow staff professional development time. We made a conscious decision that any model we designed had to give both the staff development time but also kept the students learning with us to the end of the academy day and beyond.”

*Nick Lowry, Principal*

professional development time they need. The revised timetable means that, on a Wednesday, departmental time can go from 2.30pm-5.00pm if a teacher is not teaching. If they are delivering revision practice during Period 6, they can be delivering this from 2.30pm to 4.00pm on a Wednesday, and then have a meeting afterwards. Equally, with the enrichment work, many of the activities start at 2.30pm but many continue beyond 4.00pm.

## Leading character education

While some of this work was already underway prior to the Principal taking up his post, it has very much been driven forward and expanded by him. However, leadership of the three major strands of work that make up character education is devolved to different staff. While all the different strands of work are delivered within a common framework for character education, the staff leading the strands are given autonomy as to what these activities look like and how they are managed locally within their teams. This distributed approach to the leadership of character education has helped to facilitate the structural changes required, such as changing the contracts for support staff and changing the structure of lessons on a Wednesday. But it has also meant that the academy has benefited from drawing on the enthusiasm, creativity and diverse skills of the academy's staff which, in turn, has helped to ensure that there is widespread staff buy-in and support.

“To be successful, I think it [character education] needs to sit at a very senior level [within the leadership of a school]. Changing ethos and structures requires hard decisions to be made. For us, the hard decision has been to reduce the lesson time on a Wednesday from 60 to 50 minutes. This has created a sixth period in which we can deliver The Edge.”

*Nick Lowry, Principal*

## The impact of character education

Directly attributing the impacts of this work to improved pupil outcomes is difficult, but the Principal is convinced that their work on character education has contributed to a range of positive impacts.

“We’re suddenly better at more things. We’re better at sports, parental expectations have improved, attendance records have improved, and work ethic has improved. But this hasn’t happened overnight. It takes time.”

*Nick Lowry, Principal*

Data collected as part of a regular pupil feedback exercise points to the impact that some of this work is having. For example, 96 per cent of Co-operative Young Leaders ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that being part of the initiative had helped to build their confidence, while 99 per cent reported that they thought they had made additional progress in their curriculum lessons as a result of taking part.

More pupils than ever before are also going to university and gaining places at Russell Group universities. In 2011, just 11 pupils went to university (which represented eight per cent of the year group). By 2014, this number had increased to 44 (almost 40 per cent of

the year group). The Principal is convinced that: 'You don't get that without building the qualities we've been developing'.

**"We've seen lots of improvements from The Edge. We've seen a big improvement in how students feel about themselves. Student engagement, confidence, resilience, community spirit, integrity and perseverance have all improved."**

*Mark Rogers, Head of the Performance Faculty*

While the academy has experimented with different approaches to pupil assessment, the Principal does not want the character work to be assessed in the same way as academic subjects: 'When we launched the character education work, I didn't want it to feel like another subject. I didn't want to have to ask staff to show me the progress that children had made'.

## Next steps

The academy has been recognised for its work as the regional winner for the West Midlands in the DfE Character Education Awards 2016 and has plans to develop this work further. Some of the work currently delivered as part of the character education lessons will be delivered as part of a wider and deeper personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme from September 2017 as part of a general move to strengthen the quality of this subject. The content of these lessons and the activities delivered as part of The Edge will continue to be reviewed and strengthened. The academy is exploring the possibility of rolling out the CYL model to other academies in the Trust.

## c. Thoresby Primary School, Hull

# “TEAM THORESBY”



### CHARACTER TRAITS PROMOTED INCLUDE:

- Team Work
- Risk Management
- Negotiating and Influencing
- Effective Communication
- Initiative
- Leadership

Thoresby Primary School has developed a skills-based curriculum to support and challenge pupils of all ability levels. A set of transferable, practical ‘real life’ skills called ‘The Big 13’ have been adopted. Developed by education programme Rotherham Ready, the skills have their origins in enterprise and entrepreneurial education. Together with local innovations including the ‘Iceberg vision’ and ‘backpack of skills’, these skills and character traits provide a common language and set of concepts which underpin the school’s ethos and culture.

**TYPE:** Primary Academy Converter

AGE RANGE	PUPILS ON ROLL	FSM	SEN*	EAL	ATTAINMENT**
3-11	520	23%	1%	35%	82%

\*Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan.

\*\*Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 in 2016 (England average for 2016 was 53%).

## Background

Thoresby is larger than most primary schools. A higher than average proportion of pupils receive support through pupil premium funding. A much higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. Twenty-nine different languages are spoken in the school. A significant proportion of pupils join the school at times other than the start of the school year. The proportion of pupils who need support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than typical. The school is a founding member of HCAT (Hull Collaborative Academy Trust) and it embodies the trust's mission statement: "Children first". The headteacher is also a National Leader in Education and Thoresby is a National Support School.

## Approaches to the development of character education

"We wanted to be able to focus not only on the academic skills, but the wider skillset that children need to succeed."

*Melissa Milner, Headteacher*

Thoresby's journey into character education started in 2008. At that time, they had a particular interest in how to teach mathematics in an enterprising way. To support this, the school joined **Rotherham Ready**, an internationally recognised education programme designed to transform the aspirations and skills of children and young people by developing their enterprise skills. The programme introduced the school to '**The Big 13 skills**' - a set of transferable, practical 'real life' skills and qualities that young people need to face the future with confidence.

### The Big 13 are:

- **Team Work**
- **Risk Management**
- **Negotiating and Influencing**
- **Effective Communication**
- **Creativity and Innovation**
- **Positive Attitude**
- **Initiative**
- **Organisation and Planning Skills**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Leadership**
- **Making Ethical Decisions**
- **Financial Literacy**
- **Product and Service Design**

Involvement in Rotherham Ready led to a link with the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** and the school joining an international project called **Entrepreneurship360**<sup>1</sup>. This project culminated in a conference in Potsdam, Germany in 2012. Up to that point, character education work had largely been led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), but the conference made the Headteacher realise that, for it to be truly successful, every pupil and every member of staff needed to take ownership of it.

Consequently, the SLT undertook further research, and in discussion with staff, identified 21 character skills or traits (some of which overlap with the Big 13). These are recognised as being essential to achieving the school's vision which is 'the highest aspirations for all in developing the key characteristics, skills and knowledge required to achieve academic success'. Amongst the 21 skills are:

- **Leadership**
- **Vision**
- **Passenger to crew** (i.e. encouraging children to take more control over their lives and to become more proactive).
- **Determination**
- **Independence**

These skills have been visually presented to the pupils as an iceberg, with the 'vision' being the visible part, and the skills being displayed under the water and so underpinning the vision above. This has been a hugely popular approach with staff and pupils alike, and has supported a culture whereby, on joining the school, every new pupil and member of staff is told they are part of 'Team Thoresby' – a collective that works together for the good of all.

Another innovation that the school has introduced is the backpack of skills – a metaphorical vehicle for reminding the children that, as soon as they arrive at the school, they develop a range of skills, such as leadership and determination, which they then carry through life. These skills can be 'pulled out' of their backpacks as and when they are needed. Every child in the school knows about the backpack, and can talk with a common voice about the skills and traits they have developed.

*"What's happened over the years is that we've found out more, and we've developed the vocabulary to articulate it. We used to call it 'Thoresbyness', because we didn't know what to call it."*

*Melissa Milner, Headteacher*

<sup>1</sup>This is part of the OECD's work programme on Skills for Entrepreneurship, see <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/skills-for-entrepreneurship.htm> for more details [16/06/17]

## How character education is delivered

Character education is not taught as a discrete subject but is, instead, 'embedded into every single element of school life'. Six of the Big 13 skills are introduced to children at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in the form of six characters: Pippa Positive, Tim and Tom the Teamwork Twins, Izzy Initiative, Freddy Finance, Charlie Communicate and Chloe Creativity. The remaining seven skills are taught from Key Stage 2.

The Headteacher has implemented an **80:20 rule**, whereby 80 per cent of work is proactive, and the remaining 20 per cent is reactive. This means that staff are encouraged to think about how best to develop these skills and incorporate this into their planning. A range of activities have been delivered, including running a pop-up shop in the city's main shopping centre, Make £5 Blossom - a project aimed at linking schools with local businesses, and setting up a stall at an enterprise showcase at a local secondary school attended by His Royal Highness the Duke of York.

The school also hosts an annual arts festival called **Kaleidoscope** which all pupils take part in. The festival culminates in performances from each individual pupil to parents, local community stakeholders and businesses. All of these activities are anchored around the school's enterprising culture and ethos, and are designed to develop key attributes of resilience, drive and determination in children, enabling them to take pride in their own achievements and those of their school.

The school also takes a **restorative approach** to resolving conflict and preventing harm. Restorative approaches enable those who have been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible, and for those responsible to acknowledge this impact and take steps to put it right. This very much complements and strengthens the other character work being undertaken in school.

**"Failure will happen. Children will fail, and we need to prepare them for that, and how to respond positively to it."**

*Catherine Corner, Deputy Headteacher*

## Leading character education

As part of the journey the school has undertaken, leadership of what is now known as character education has moved from the SLT to the staff and children. Staff are encouraged to plan activities to develop these skills within their classes and year groups, supported by opportunities that are presented by whole-school activities like the annual week-long Kaleidoscope arts festival. Children are also proactive in suggesting activities and in taking on roles. Examples include: a group of Year 6 pupils volunteering to make a film of the recent Kaleidoscope festival, and Year 4 pupils helping to organise a school concert. Both activities helped children move from 'passenger to crew'.

**"We came to the conclusion that all characteristics can be grown, developed and enhanced. Staff play a key role in doing this."**

*Melissa Milner, Headteacher*

## The impact of character education

While the school is unable to attribute the development of character skills to specific outcomes, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher strongly believe that this work has contributed to improved pupil outcomes, including improved behaviour and attendance and outstanding achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The relationship between the huge amount of time and energy the school has invested in developing the culture of the school and the life skills of children, and their outstanding attainment results, was recognised by Ofsted inspectors during their most recent inspection.

**"It [the character education work] has impacted on attendance, on academic achievement, on pastoral and welfare and behaviour. We wouldn't have got that [recent Ofsted] judgement [of Outstanding] if we hadn't got those things in place."**

*Melissa Milner, Headteacher*



All children are reported to benefit from the school's approach to developing character education skills, including those from deprived backgrounds.

*"We're trying to develop the mind-set in children that, they might not be able to do this now, for example solve complex problems in maths, but with practice, they can get there."*

*Mrs Hawksley, Year 6 teacher*

This has arisen from the context and characteristics of the school, and the need to build a culture in which children from different backgrounds, races and religions can all work together harmoniously. The restorative practices adopted by the school form a key part of this, and help support the children to articulate their feelings to staff and to one another.

*"As a restorative practice [RP] school, we run daily circles in the classroom and ask the pupils things like, 'tell me how you have shown resilience this week'. It's about developing the children's voices. RP helps us to support the children to articulate their feelings to us and to one another."*

*Melissa Milner, Headteacher*

## Next steps

The school is recognised for its work as both national winner and regional winner for Yorkshire and the Humber in the DfE Character Education Awards 2016. The senior leadership team (SLT) plans to continue to develop its work through further research. The school has responsibility for research and development (R&D) as part of the local Teaching School Alliance and, as part of this role, it is participating in a large-scale, ongoing research project with 16 schools, working with partners from Sheffield Hallam University. As a Teaching School, they have the opportunity to travel to New Zealand to learn more about restorative cultures and pupil leadership, and they hope this research will feed back into their own work.

## d. Kings Langley School, Hertfordshire

# “UNLOCKING POTENTIAL FOR LIFE”



### CHARACTER TRAITS PROMOTED INCLUDE:

- Stickability
- Self-regulation
- Empathy
- Responsibility
- Self-control
- Grit
- Self-discipline
- Quality
- Perseverance

The drive to put character development at the core of the school’s ethos and culture is part of a long-term strategy and the school’s improvement plan. The school highlights the importance of three character traits: stickability – learning to keep going and cope with failure; self-regulation - taking responsibility for one’s conduct and exercising control over one’s actions; and showing empathy with others’ situations and feelings.

**TYPE:** Academy converter

AGE RANGE	PUPILS ON ROLL	FSM	SEN*	EAL	PROGRESS 8 SCORE**:
<b>11-18</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>-0.01</b>

\*Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan.

\*\*This score shows how much progress pupils at this school made between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 in 2016, compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of Key Stage 2. A score above zero means pupils made more progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of Key Stage 2.

## Background

Kings Langley School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. A very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, less than a fifth, who are supported by the pupil premium, is below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at around a quarter, is above average.

## Approaches to the development of character education

**“The three key character traits – stickability, self-regulation and empathy – shape the school. We convey the message that people of strong character make the right choices. We integrate the traits in everything we do, across the board.”**

*Gary Lewis, Headteacher*

Kings Langley School places character education at the centre of its school improvement plan. It has taken a long-term approach to developing a positive school ethos and culture which are underpinned by a moral purpose. The school has used its links with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at Birmingham University to inform its approach by drawing on research. The character development it provides has a theoretical framework based on the assumption that character is the most important quality that defines the way people live their lives. The framework comprises three character traits: stickability - learning to keep going even when you want to give in, when you are getting bored and when it hurts, and learning to cope with failure; self-regulation - taking responsibility for your conduct and exercising control over your actions; and showing empathy with others' situations and feelings.

Kings Langley School takes a whole-school approach to developing character in its pupils. This starts in Year 7 when pupils learn about the importance of developing resilience in the face of challenges, set-backs and criticism. Pupils also learn that strength of character is key to making the best decision with the information available.

Staff emphasise that they train pupils to think critically, not just to pass examinations.

The senior leadership team work on the understanding that the momentum to develop character has to be regularly examined and refreshed to ensure that there is no slippage in the school's drive to provide an education which embraces the three traits of stickability, self-regulation and empathy.

All the school's policies refer to character education. The school's vision for character education is communicated in the form of posters placed around the school, letters to parents and use of social media. The school promotes the practice of maintaining good manners and positive body language. There is emphasis on ways of communicating, specifically covering language, vocabulary, tone of voice and smiling.

**"Our journey to develop a culture of character has been a moralistic expedition over a period of 15 years. It is a long-term approach involving staff, pupils and parents. Our raison d'être is to produce young people of good character."**

*Gary Lewis, Headteacher*

## **How character education is delivered**

Character education is embedded in all subjects. All lesson plans and lesson observation forms include character development. Developing character is at the core of teachers' pedagogy. All teachers are expected to exemplify the school's three key character traits in their behaviour and the way they work

Pupils are continually exposed to the school's core values and character development themes in school assemblies, in lessons and in extra-curricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, outdoor education and opportunities to volunteer in the school's 'pledge an hour' scheme. For example, in assemblies, pupils use role play, act out scenarios and read their poems which highlight decision-making challenges involved in moral dilemmas.

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons include the Penn Resilience Programme which is designed to enable young people to develop resilience skills, learn

from difficult situations and develop emotional awareness and critical life skills. All teachers attend resilience training sessions to learn how to deliver this programme. Character development is also a focus of the three staff briefing sessions every week. In these, staff share examples of how they write character development into lessons, how they contextualise it in their subjects and make it explicit in their schemes of work.

The school encourages staff and pupils to think about character through considering what a good teacher and what a good pupil look like. This is carried out in assemblies and lessons and through a questionnaire survey of pupils.

The school has a Character for Parents programme. Every term, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher run workshops for parents on issues such as homework and bullying which discuss implications for pupils' character development.

**“Long-term planning of character education is important. All our policies include it. We do whole-school community work with pupils, parents and staff. Our approach to character development is research based.”**

*Ruth Jennings, Deputy Headteacher*

## Leading character education

The Headteacher leads from the front in driving character development at Kings Langley School. He models the school's three key character traits in his interactions with staff, pupils and parents. The Deputy Headteacher leads the character education programme through organising themes for assemblies and continuing professional development (CPD), including staff briefings. She also models the inclusion of character in her mathematics lessons using dilemmas such as how to share proportions of a lottery win, with reference to the individuals' characteristics and needs within a lottery syndicate.

The Head of Psychology and Sociology is lead practitioner for developing character education through research and implementation of best practice. He advises staff on how to contextualise character development in lessons and schemes of work. He shares his

research-informed knowledge and expertise on character development with staff and helps them to 'use the same language' when talking about civic, intellectual and moral virtues. The Head of PSHE plays a leading role in delivering the school's character education. He ensures that PSHE lessons include a focus on character-related issues and conducts lesson observations to see how character traits are demonstrated in different subjects. Both of these members of staff support the collective learning across the school about character development.

**"It is important to show how character development is done. We're moving to a place where staff are internalising it as a basis for learning. It's intrinsic to our job as educators. It is good and worthwhile in itself, not just instrumental."**

*John Davies, Lead Practitioner and Head of Psychology and Sociology*

The school sees a role for all staff in leading character education. All teachers are expected to model and exemplify positive character traits in the way they relate to each other and with pupils. Senior leaders believe that making these qualities explicit and 'living it rather than just talking it' is a powerful approach.

**"Our actions must model the character traits we are trying to promote. It's a gradual process. Living out these virtues in our everyday lives as teachers is the best way of leading character development."**

*Milusi Moyo, Head of Personal, Health and Social Education*

## **The impact of character education**

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of measuring the impact of character education, staff consider that their drive to place the three character traits of stickability, self-regulation and empathy at the core of the school's ethos and culture has had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour, attendance and the way pupils and staff communicate with each other.

The Ofsted inspection report on Kings Langley School (2014) stated that the behaviour and safety of pupils was outstanding. Ofsted inspectors noted that pupils are very positive about their school. They also noted that the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team has created a school in which pupils develop the qualities of character and the academic skills to become successful citizens: 'they do not give up when they find out the work is difficult'. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are of the opinion that resilience, perseverance and self-discipline help pupils to learn and will translate into improved examination results. They say that grit helps pupils to prepare for examinations and manage related stress in a positive way. They add that the feedback from employers is that pupils from Kings Langley School are polite, good listeners and engaged with what employers tell them.

**"Visitors to the school say how polite and welcoming our pupils are. They are impressed with the way our pupils show respect and the language they use."**

*Gary Lewis, Headteacher*

Instilling the traits of stickability and self-discipline has helped to develop pupils as independent learners which staff think contributes to their achievement and emotional well-being.

**"The impact of our unrelenting focus on character development has been seen across the whole school. It can be seen in how we communicate with each other and in better working relationships between staff and pupils."**

*Ruth Jennings, Deputy Headteacher*

## Next steps

Kings Langley School was a DfE Character Education Award East of England regional winner in 2015. The Headteacher has built on this success and is the inaugural Chair of the Association of Character Education which is developing a kitemark that schools can aim to achieve and which will help cement their commitment to character education.

He has recently become the executive head of another school where he is introducing a character education programme to help improve behaviour and performance and has briefed parents on values, parameters and boundaries. The Deputy Headteacher has been seconded to the Jubilee Centre, Birmingham University, to develop source materials that all schools can use to help implement character education. She has also advised a behavioural support unit about introducing character development to its educational offer.



**e. Sweyne Park School, Essex**

# “SECURING PUPIL SUCCESS”



**CHARACTER TRAITS PROMOTED INCLUDE:**

- **Respect**
- **Tolerance**
- **Resilience**
- **Confidence**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Motivation**
- **Self-belief**
- **Independent Thinking**
- **Organisation**
- **Initiative**

The Swayne Park School places respect at the centre of its ethos and strategic vision. This whole-school focus on respect is driven by a culture of developing pupils as tolerant, confident, independent-thinking and successful learners. Respect is integral to teaching and learning, pastoral provision and behaviour policy. Regular feedback from pupils on their life at the school, captured mainly through the school council, is a key component of the approach which values insights from the pupil voice.

**TYPE:** Academy converter

AGE RANGE	PUPILS ON ROLL	FSM	SEN*	EAL	PROGRESS 8 SCORE**:
<b>11-19</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>-0.07</b>

\*Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan.

\*\*This score shows how much progress pupils at this school made between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 in 2016, compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of Key Stage 2. A score above zero means pupils made more progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of Key Stage 2.

## Background

The Sweyne Park School is a secondary converter academy which is above average in size. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, with only a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is above average. The school has a centre for hearing-impaired pupils. The school has specialist status in science and was a former Training School<sup>2</sup>.

## Approaches to the development of character education

**“We have a strong school ethos in place which focuses on respect for others, respect for the community and environment, and respect for yourself. Respect is eternal, not ephemeral. We try to live it and apply it every day.”**

*Andy Hodgkinson, Headteacher*

The whole-school approach to encouraging the development of appropriate character traits is delivered, reinforced and communicated through several means including curriculum development, teaching and learning, assemblies, School Council, Year Councils and Think Tank meetings, the Headteacher’s weekly updates for staff and parents, staff briefings and continuing professional development.

External validation also plays an important role. For example, the school has taken its first steps towards becoming an ambassador to UNICEF. Key to character education is pupils learning about their rights and responsibilities. The school has set up a Rights Respecting Group which represents pupils from each year group. It has been working to make sure that everyone associated with the school, staff and parents included, knows about the rights children have and ensures these rights are respected. UNICEF has recognised the school’s progress to date with the Recognition of Commitment Award. This acknowledges how far the rights of children are embedded in the curriculum and school life.

<sup>2</sup>A training school is an official designation, awarded by the Department for Education, for schools in England that provide exceptional facilities for in-service and work-experience training of teachers.

**“We have a strategic vision of how we develop and the UNICEF Award signals our dynamic approach to reinforcing respect as a key value. We hope this engenders in our pupils a healthy dose of humanity.”**

*Andy Hodgkinson, Headteacher*

The Sweyne Park School helps to develop pupils' character through challenges and competitions. A recent example is the challenge set for pupils to make an application to an external funding body in order to secure resources for a local charity. This met the school's focus on respect for the community and for others. The process involved two competitions: first, groups of pupils made and presented a funding application in front of parents, staff and governors and, following this, the best applications were selected to go forward to the competition where pupils presented their case to the funding body. A team of pupils was successful in winning a £1,000 award, resources which were allocated to Mind, the mental health charity that provides help for people with mental health issues.

## **How character education is delivered**

Character education is embedded in the curriculum and school life and the school takes an holistic approach to growing and developing the whole pupil. Teachers support pupils to become investigative learners and critical thinkers who are positive and resilient enough to deal with criticism.

Citizenship and Personal Education and Religious Education (CPRE) encourages pupils to reflect on self-identity and helps to build their self-esteem and raise aspirations. In careers education sessions, pupils reflect on their interests and what they are good at guided by the understanding that everyone has talent. This 'lights a spark' and helps to build self-confidence. Debates on current issues also help pupils to assess different ethical and intellectual positions.

The school values what pupils value. This is exemplified by the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), and Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) national research-based qualifications taken by sixth-form pupils. The EPQ and HPQ delivery at this school works on the assumption that everyone has an interest which motivates them. For example,

in taking the EPQ, pupils set their own research questions, undertake the research and produce a report. Pupils present the findings from their studies at a Research Poster Conference to which parents are invited. This gives pupils the opportunity to articulate what they have discovered through their research and celebrates their effort and commitment to completing their project. The EPQ is instrumental in enabling pupils to become independent, self-managing learners.

Pupils taking the EPQ and HPQ have a viva on completion of their project which gives them an additional challenge that helps to prepare them for university and job interviews. This investment in individual pupils helps to foster self-belief and has increased their self-confidence in making applications for university entrance.

The school has driven the development of an Employability for Life Charter that has been adopted by Essex Local Authority as a model of best practice. The Charter provides a way of pupils evidencing the skills they have developed both inside and outside of education and provides a framework to help prepare them for further and higher education, employment and apprenticeships. The portfolio of evidence that Year 11 and some Year 12 pupils put together can include work-experience reports; school/college reports; certificates; press releases; testimonials from part-time jobs, clubs, volunteering opportunities, charity events or hobbies. The evidence must be related to standards in attendance and punctuality; appearance; communication skills; motivation; professional conduct; and problem solving. Successful pupils receive a Gold, Silver or Bronze certificate and can take their portfolio of evidence to interviews. The Headteacher noted that character development is key to young people becoming work-ready.

**“We are pupil-focused, not exclusively results-driven – that defines our school. Character is a thing in itself, not a means to an end.”**

*Alick Robertson, Assistant Headteacher*

## **Leading character education**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for character education in the school. He ensures that character education is at the core of the school's ethos and strategic vision. His weekly staff bulletin – ‘the cultural driver of the school’ - reinforces the importance of

staff and pupils showing respect in all communications and conduct. He takes the lead in modelling the school's approach to character education through the way he relates to staff, pupils and parents. The Chair of the school's governing board endorses the importance of respect being at the heart of the school's culture and other governors support this.

**"You've got to model what you preach. I have an open door policy which gives all members of the school access to me. This shows that everyone's views and experiences are valued and treated with respect."**

*Andy Hodgkinson, Headteacher*

The school's values are reinforced through weekly staff briefings. Sometimes, pupils are invited to these meetings to present, demonstrate or exhibit their achievements. Staff consider it important to recognise the full range of pupil achievement, including art, dance, music, poetry, and science and technology.

Heads of year and curriculum leaders play a significant role in embedding the school's values in the curriculum and in teacher-pupil working relationships. During continuing professional development sessions, they take a leading role in sharing good practice in teaching approaches which help to develop pupils' confidence as learners.

**"We lead the nurturing and fostering of their self-belief, independence and creativity which shows our pupils that we are investing in them and their future."**

*Jenny Clements, Extended Project Qualification and Universities and Colleges Admissions Services Coordinator*

## The impact of character education

Staff acknowledge that measuring the impact of character education on pupil outcomes in a cause-and-effect way is difficult. Nevertheless, in their professional judgement, the

school's respect-based ethos plays a significant role in developing pupils as independent, engaged and successful learners. The Headteacher thinks that the school's values and culture have created a positive learning environment which supports pupils' academic achievement. He noted that working towards the Employability for Life Charter has helped to increase pupils' attendance and motivation.

**"Our approach, which values achievement in the widest sense, supports pupil attendance and complements their preparation for exams."**

*Andy Hodgkinson, Headteacher*

Pupils' passion for learning is identified as having a particularly positive impact. Taking ownership and developing a love of learning are regarded as important pupil attributes engendered by the school which, in turn, are considered to have a positive effect on pupils' aspirations, ambition and performance. Staff also reported that they could see pupils becoming more interested and independent learners which had helped them to organise their revision.

**"We try to develop well-rounded pupils and can see that pupils are engaged and critical learners questioning the source materials they use and the quality of what they produce."**

*Adam Thomson, Head of Citizenship and Personal Education and Religious Education*

In addition, staff believe the school's expectation that pupils show respect for others and themselves has a positive impact on behavior and has resulted in improved cohesion between groups of pupils. The inclusive, collaborative activities run within the school - such as the Rights Respecting Group and the charity challenge - have helped to achieve this cohesion.

## Next steps

The Sweyne Park School was a DfE Character Education Award East of England regional winner in 2015. The Headteacher reflects that a school's ethos cannot be assumed as a given so it is important to look for new ways of reinforcing its values. He says that the school will continue to refresh its approach. This will include raising the profile of pupil voice which provides vital feedback on what it is like to be a pupil at The Sweyne Park School. Believing that learning and character development go hand in hand, the school is committed to further developing the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, in order to provide learning opportunities which stretch pupils and raise their aspirations.

# 7 The key features of effective leadership of character education

This document concludes by drawing out five key features of the effective leadership of character education, as identified from across our five case-study schools. Further information is provided in the emerging practice companion document.

## 1. Senior leaders must drive it and all teachers must deliver it

Senior leaders are the driving force behind the leadership of character education. Senior leaders give pupils meaningful opportunities to share their experiences, perspectives, insights and views as part of an ongoing dialogue with staff about how well the school is performing. All teachers and support staff are responsible for delivering character development in lessons and other learning activities.

## 2. Place at the core of school ethos

As a defining characteristic, character education forms part of the ethos of each of our case-study schools. This means that developing pupils' character is essential to the schools' values, culture and purpose, and therefore is not an optional, 'nice-to-have' or marginal part of the education the schools provide. Staff and pupils live and apply shared values such as respect and tolerance in their daily life in school. Placed at the core of the school's ethos, character education permeates all aspects of what the school does and how it operates.

## 3. Take a long-term approach

Senior leaders told us that developing or transforming an institutional culture underpinned with shared values and principles is an incremental process. Effective leadership of character education thus entails taking a long-term approach (based on the



five case-study schools, this is typically five years or more). This journey of development and application is often linked to the school's strategy aimed at improving its reputation, pupil enrolment, learning environment, standards of behaviour, pastoral support, academic and wider achievement performance, and standing in the local community.

#### **4. Build a collective understanding and language**

Achieving a shared understanding of what character education is and how to support its delivery requires the school community to develop a common language to explore, agree and communicate the meaning of key concepts such as 'character', 'values', 'principles' and 'traits'. A common language and shared understanding facilitates communication between staff, between pupils and staff, and between pupils and pupils which is required for putting into action meaningful character development.

#### **5. Maintain focus, momentum and ongoing communication**

The effective leadership of character education is a continuing process which involves maintaining a focus on what it is, why it is important and what it aims to achieve. A key related leadership task is maintaining the momentum for sustaining a whole-school approach to providing a learning environment and activities which help to develop young people's character.

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