

Evaluating schools developing 'character' in their pupils: is this possible? Is it desirable?

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Overview

- What is character?
- Can character be taught by schools? Developed? Built?
- Can it be evaluated as an outcome? Measured? Is it desirable to do so?
- Would evaluating input be better for the new inspection framework?

What is 'character'?

- A person's inner moral qualities or traits
- Affects how people see themselves, other people and situations
- Shapes behaviour, as well as response to others and situations
- Assumes a degree of self-awareness
- Often associated with integrity and trustworthiness
- Debated and commented on by Aristotle, Benjamin Franklin and countless other philosophers, theorists, writers and politicians in every society across the world

The word 'character' may refer to...

- **Personality:** e.g. 'her character' (a pupil's traits)
- **Idiosyncrasy/individuality:** 'She's a real character' (a pupil's distinctiveness)
- **Strength in the face of adversity:** 'He shows great character' (a pupil's resilience & robustness)
- **Virtues:** 'He's got character' (a pupil's values, and how they behave based on these – whether they are aligned)
- **Role model:** 'Her good character' (a pupil's leadership qualities, potentially an example to others)

Just one possible definition

From *GRIT, The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth (2016)

- **Interpersonal strengths** (strengths 'of the heart', such as gratitude, a sense of a 'larger purpose')
- **Intrapersonal strengths** (strengths 'of the will', such as a 'growth mindset', optimism, self-control)
- **Intellectual strengths** (strengths 'of the mind', such as curiosity, a zest for life)

- Missing: perseverance? resilience?

Another definition

From Floreat Schools

- **Curiosity** (open-mindedness)
- **Honesty** (to seek out truth around us, includes openness to feedback)
- **Perseverance** (carrying on performing in the face of difficulties in order to achieve long-term goals)
- **Civil virtues**(a commitment to help others)

- Missing: resourcefulness? working differently to achieve aims?

And another definition



From The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham

- **Intellectual virtues** (reflection; focus; critical thinking; reason and judgement; curiosity; communication; resourcefulness; open-mindedness)
- **Moral virtues** (courage; compassion; gratitude; honesty and integrity, justice, modesty, self-discipline; tolerance; respect)
- **Performance virtues** (resilience; perseverance; grit and determination; leadership; teamwork; motivation; confidence)
- **Civil virtues** (service/volunteering; neighbourliness; citizenship; community awareness and spirit; social justice)

What sort of aims might schools want to develop for their pupils?

- For their pupils to:
 - develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and a **respect** for others?
 - have the **knowledge, understanding** and values to establish and **maintain healthy lives**?
 - act with a moral integrity and **make good choices**?
 - be committed to **fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law**, equity and justice?
 - become **positive, active citizens**?

Can character be taught?

- 97% of schools surveyed sought to promote desirable character traits in their pupils
- But only 54% were familiar with the term 'character education' – when prompted, leaders described the term for developing pupils' personal development as well-rounded young people
- The development of character was seen as integral to the school rather than stand-alone lessons
- Schools develop character to promote good citizenship (97%) and improve achievement (84%)

From the Summary Report DfE 'Developing Character in Schools' (August 2017) - NatCen Social Research & The National Children's Bureau Research and Policy Team

What character traits were most prized by schools surveyed?

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Respect for others

Less so were...

- Curiosity
- Motivation
- Problem solving

Things schools do to develop character

- School values and ethos
- House systems
- Sport, especially teams
- Volunteering in school
- Work in the community
- Outdoor trips, residential trips
- Assemblies with moral messages
- Curriculum work e.g. learning about democracy, historical or current figures famous for their good character
- PSHE lessons/work
- Reward systems
- Feedback and guidance on work
- Behaviour policy and conflict resolution system
- Moral reasoning
- Religious Education
- Pastoral care programmes and structures
- Citizenship education
- Links with other schools

Barriers that schools say prevent more work on building character

- competing demands of the curriculum
- staff time to meet and discuss the work
- the capacity of staff

A minority of schools reported:

- lack of engagement from pupils and/or parents
- lack of knowledge about it

Schools said that the successful building of character was due to...

- clear vision and an embedded, whole-school approach
- driven by strong leadership
- modelled by staff with the appropriate time, knowledge and access to activities that could be adapted to pupils' different needs

Key performance indicators?

Typically schools want pupils to (from aims/prospectuses/ethos statements)...

- become independent learners who achieve relevant, challenging but achievable goals
- collaborate with their peers, teachers, families and the community
- communicate effectively
- have a reputation for being passionately engaged in challenging, substantive and rewarding learning
- participate in opportunities that enable them to rehearse for a life of meaningful contribution, learning and service to others

What references to 'character development' are in the current inspection handbook?

- Current inspection handbook does not specifically mention pupils' character, let alone 'character education' - but it is nevertheless implied in almost **all** key judgement areas in different ways:
 - Leadership and Management
 - Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare
 - Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Leadership and management

Inspectors will consider:

- whether leaders and governors have created a culture of high expectations, aspirations and scholastic excellence in which the highest achievement in academic and vocational work is recognised as vitally important
- whether leaders have the highest expectations for social behaviour among pupils and staff, so that respect and courtesy are the norm

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inspectors will consider pupils' work, with particular attention to:

- pupils' effort and success in completing their work, both in and outside lessons, so that they can progress and enjoy learning across the curriculum
- how pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills have developed and improved
- the level of challenge and whether pupils have to grapple appropriately with content, not necessarily 'getting it right' first time, which could be evidence that the work is too easy

Personal development, behaviour welfare

- Pupils are **confident**, self-assured learners. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a strong, positive impact on their progress. They are proud of their achievements and of their school.
- Pupils discuss and **debate issues** in a considered way, **showing respect** for others' ideas and points of view.
- Pupils value their education.
- Pupils' **impeccable conduct** reflects the school's effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour. Pupils are **self-disciplined**. Incidences of low-level disruption are extremely rare.

Personal development, behaviour welfare

- Pupils **work hard with the school** to prevent all forms of bullying, including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying. Staff and pupils deal effectively with the very rare instances of bullying behaviour and/or use of derogatory or aggressive language.
- Pupils...**make informed choices** about healthy eating, fitness and their emotional and mental well-being. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development equips them to be **thoughtful, caring and active citizens in school and in wider society.**

SMSC: spiritual development

The spiritual development of pupils is shown by their:

- ability to **be reflective** about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their **perspective on life** and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values
- **sense of enjoyment and fascination** in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- **use of imagination** and creativity in their learning
- **willingness to reflect** on their experiences.

SMSC: moral development

The moral development of pupils is shown by their:

- ability to recognise the **difference between right and wrong** and to **readily apply this understanding** in their own lives, recognise legal boundaries and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England
- understanding of the **consequences of their behaviour and actions**
- interest in **investigating and offering reasoned views** about moral and ethical issues and ability to understand and **appreciate the viewpoints of others** on these issues.

SMSC: social development

The social development of pupils is shown by their:

- use of a range of **social skills in different contexts**, for example working and socialising with other pupils...
- **willingness to participate** in a variety of communities and social settings, including by **volunteering, cooperating well** with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively
- **acceptance and engagement** with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to **participate fully** in **and contribute positively** to life in modern Britain.

SMSC: cultural development

The cultural development of pupils is shown by their:

- **understanding and appreciation** of the **wide range of cultural influences** that have shaped their own heritage and those of others
- **understanding and appreciation** of the range of **different cultures** within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain

SMSC: cultural development

- **willingness to participate** in and **respond positively** to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities
- **interest in exploring, improving understanding** of and **showing respect** for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their **tolerance** and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities.

Can it be evaluated? Measured? Is it desirable?

- **Intellectual virtues** (reflection, focus, critical thinking, reason and judgement, curiosity, communication, resourcefulness, open-mindedness)
- **Moral virtues** (courage, compassion; gratitude; honesty and integrity, justice, modesty, self-discipline; tolerance; respect)
- **Performance virtues** (resilience, perseverance, grit and determination, leadership, teamwork, motivation, confidence)
- **Civil virtues** (service/volunteering, neighbourliness, citizenship, community awareness and spirit, social justice)

The new framework: a place for evaluating 'character education'?

- In previous and current handbooks more implicit than explicit
- Should it be more explicit for EIF2019?
- Should it be evaluated as an outcome?
- Or as input activity?
- Your thoughts?

Any questions?



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