



Character Education

‘...all teaching is a moral enterprise, as is education itself.’

Arthur et al (2017)

In order to be happy and live a good life, experience fulfilment, develop morality and build the practical knowledge and wisdom to make the best choices in life, good character must be intentionally developed.

At Tindal, our perspective of character education is driven by an Aristotelean approach whereby individual traits of character, known as virtues, are developed. We believe that character is developed through the teaching and practice of virtue. By teaching our pupils about virtues and providing a platform to practise and develop their use, pupils at Tindal learn to become virtue literate, using their understanding and experience to make meaningful choices. The distinguishing feature of being human is the ability to reason; as educators, we have a moral responsibility to teach our pupils to make the best possible decisions in order for them to reach their full potential.



The school’s approach to character underpins the school vision of inspiring ‘all children to flourish into confident, successful and well-rounded individuals.’ This can only be achieved where staff understand the backdrop of the theory of psychology of moral development. This is reflected in the professional development planned and delivered to staff. By purposely educating staff about moral theory, the increased understanding and engagement in critical thinking around virtue has a much more profound effect on pupils; the influence of this reaches outwards into the wider community.

Much of the work of the school has been informed by research done by the Jubilee Centre. The Jubilee Centre is a pioneering interdisciplinary research centre focussing on character, virtues and values in the interest of human flourishing. The Centre outlines what character is and the goal of character education within its Framework for Character Education in Schools:

Character is a set of personal traits or dispositions that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct.

The ultimate goal of all proper character education is to equip students with the intellectual tools to make wise choices of their own within the framework of a democratic society.

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2022)

Some core beliefs of this approach, taken from the Jubilee Centre, are outlined below.

Virtues can be...

Caught: the school community of both staff and students provide the example, culture, and inspirational influence in a positive ethos that motivates and promotes character development.

Taught: the school provides educational experiences in and out of the classroom that equip students with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes that enable character development.

Sought: the school provides varied opportunities that generate the formation of personal habits and character commitments. These help students over time to seek, desire and freely pursue their character development.

To reason with virtue, individuals must first become virtue literate. ‘**Virtue Literacy**’ is a helpful term that can be defined as including three components:

- 1. Virtue perception:** noticing situations in need of virtues
- 2. Virtue knowledge and understanding:** acquiring a complex language usage through familiarity with virtue terms
- 3. Virtue Reasoning:** making reasoned judgements which includes the ability to explain differences in moral situations

Universality

Virtues, throughout history and transcend different cultures, religions and societies; they are universal. The definition of honesty is consistent across faiths and has always been regarded as being truthful. Although there are clear areas of crossover with the teachings of philosophical and moral systems through religion, character and virtue are not exclusively religious notions.

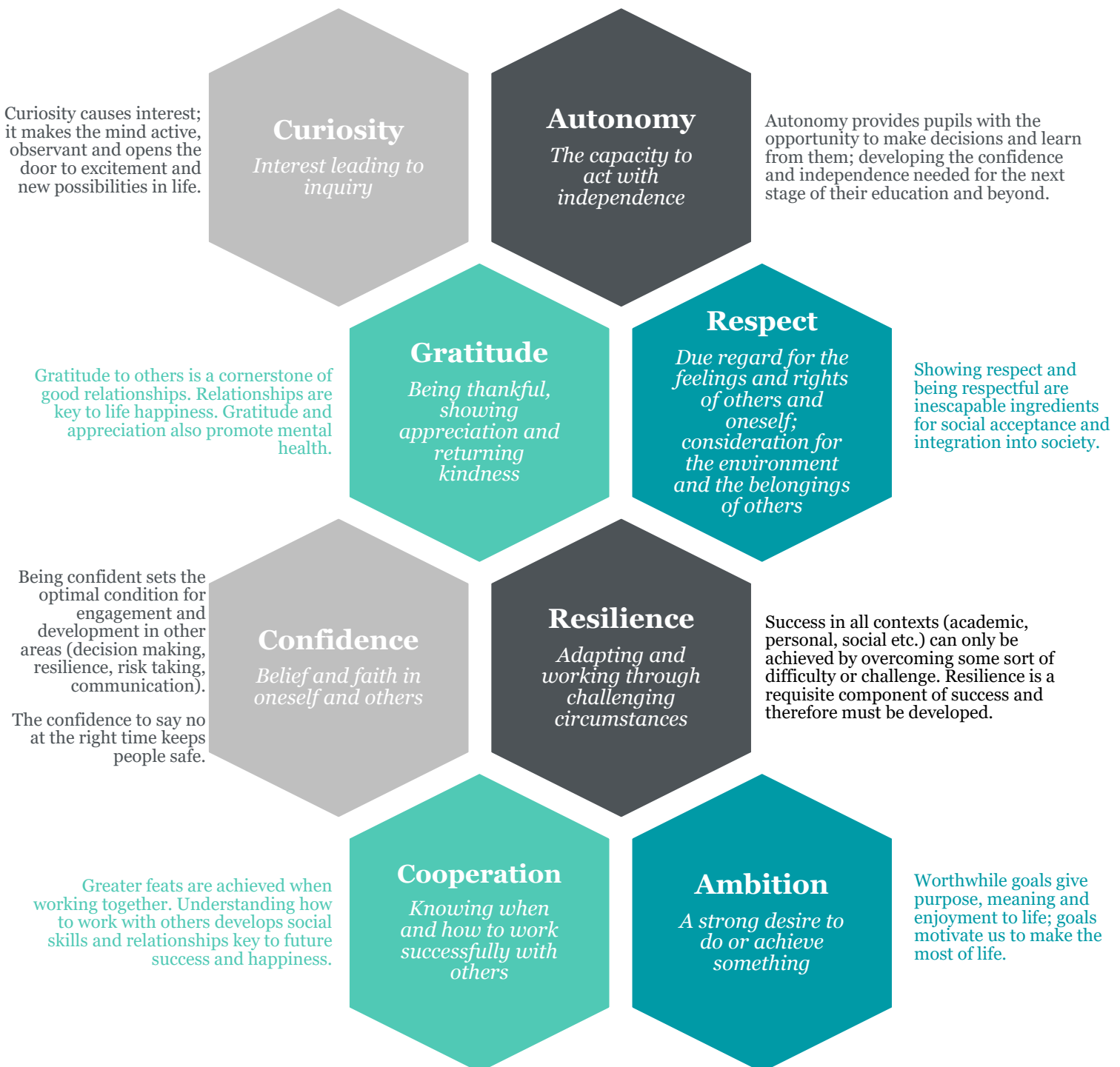
Which virtues should be taught?

It is widely believed that ‘no definitive list of relevant areas of human experience and the respective virtues can be given, as the virtues will to a certain extent be relative to individual constitution, developmental stage and social circumstance.’

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2022)

Though there are many virtues to be considered for inclusion in a character curriculum, it is pragmatic to recognise that not all can be taught in the depth they need to be effective, especially in competition with the statutory requirements of academic timetables. Schools should select which virtues will carry the highest leverage in both reaching the ultimate goal of character education, to equip students with the intellectual tools to make wise choices of their own within the framework of a democratic society, alongside the vision of the school itself. Virtues chosen must reflect and represent all key stakeholders in a school, starting with the children.

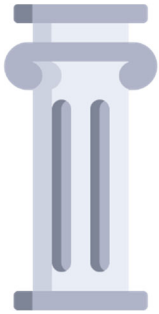
Therefore, the examples and virtues listed below represent the outcomes of consultations with pupils, staff, and the wider school community; these virtues are considered to bear the most significance and relevance to our pupils.



Although we have selected core virtues to focus upon at Tindal, other virtues are not excluded as a consequence, with many different virtues taught and discussed through the curriculum.

This approach to teaching character and virtue acknowledges that all virtues fall into one of four categories, with examples below:

Moral



Courage
Compassion
Gratitude
Justice
Honesty
Humility
Modesty
Self-discipline
Tolerance
Integrity
Friendliness
Respect

Moral

Character traits that enable us to act well in situations that require an ethical response.

Civic

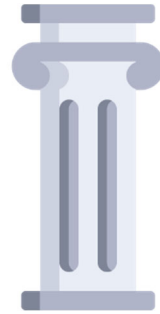


Service
Neighbourliness
Citizenship
Community Awareness
Volunteering
Social Justice

Civic

Character traits that are necessary for engaged responsible citizenship, contributing to the common good.

Intellectual

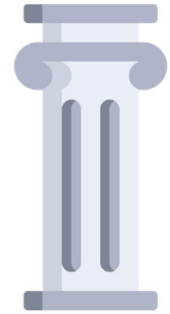


Reflection
Focus
Critical thinking
Reason & Judgement
Curiosity
Resourcefulness
Open-mindedness
Wisdom
Creativity
Autonomy

Intellectual

Character traits necessary for discernment, right action and the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.

Performance



Resilience
Perseverance
Determination
Leadership
Teamwork
Confidence
Motivation
Ambition
Problem-solving
Communication

Performance

Character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.

Practical wisdom is a regularly used term and a necessary requisite for individuals to flourish, as the school vision states. A good way to understand what is meant by practical wisdom is to start with the meaning of each word separately:

Practical

'concerned with the actual doing or use of something'

Wisdom

'the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgement'

By providing our pupils with a practical character curriculum where students learn to habituate virtue, an intentional experience is set in motion which is imperative for the complimentary development of wisdom. Practical wisdom is a platform of thinking where reflection upon the practical application of virtue over time supports the decision-making process pupils face every day in a range of situations in the classroom, on the playground and beyond.

Practical wisdom provides the language of thought to inform the best possible decision making in order for one to flourish

The Character Curriculum

At Ark Tindal, we recognise that the profound content and thinking required in an effective character curriculum cannot be successful in one-off, weekly timetabled lessons. For pupils to vividly see the full scale and breadth of the nature of character, this curriculum needs to be threaded through the entirety of both the personal and academic curricula. Because of this, work has been done to introduce a progressive character model at Ark Tindal that appears in all aspects of a pupil's education.

We begin by developing an awareness of virtue in Early Years; pupils are then ready to learn to define and explain them in Key Stage One, becoming more virtue literate. Following on from this, in Key Stage Two, pupils begin to reason using acquired complex vocabulary & understanding about virtue & virtue terms.

Work has been done with subject leads to interleave character and virtue throughout the academic curriculum. Subject leads have considered how pupils can learn about virtue on their journey with that subject throughout their primary education.

What we do

A progressive character model has been created where pupils incrementally build knowledge and understanding of virtue literacy to the point where they are able to reason with virtues using different ideological vehicles, like the golden mean (outlined on the next page).

Early Years

Exposure to language of virtue to build familiarity

Years 1 - 3

Pupils able to define virtues and recognise virtues at play in different situations

Years 4 - 6

Virtue reasoning: pupils use understanding of virtue to reason in different contexts

What this looks like

An example of this is the work done with the school's English subject lead to explore the links between the school's literature spine and the school's approach to character:

Early Years

We're Going on a Bear Hunt



Children become familiar with virtues such as curiosity, resilience, perseverance, and courage through teacher exposition.

You need courage to hunt a bear. It's important to persevere through different challenges.

Years 1 - 3

Jack & the Beanstalk



Pupils explore themes like kindness and honesty through increased discussion. Pupils define the virtues at play.

How did Jack show the virtues of curiosity and determination in the story?

Years 4 - 6

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory



Explore how Charlie demonstrates integrity while the other characters' downfall is a result of vices of virtues using the principle of the golden mean.

What vices did the characters demonstrate in the story? What happened to these characters? Does this mean there is a moral to this story?

Part of this work includes the addition and recognition of protected characteristics within the academic curriculum.

Core strategies for the teaching of virtue and character adopted by the school in accordance with the Jubilee centre and our own beliefs are as follows.

Practise

Pupils are taught about virtue but are, importantly, given the opportunity to practise virtue. Like any other area of learning, the more something is practised and revisited, the more it becomes embedded in memory, becoming automatic. Making virtue practise habitual is a key concept of an Aristotelean approach to character development.

Reflection

Providing time and stimuli for reflection paves the way for critical thinking and reasoning. Reflection provides a perspective that was impossible to observe before an event; this process is a core component of the development of practical wisdom, with particular emphasis on the *wisdom* element. The process of reflection sets foundations for further, more profound thinking to take place.

Moral Dilemmas

By providing pupils with scenarios that pit two or more virtues against one another, pupils must apply their understanding and experience of virtue in selecting the best course of action to achieve the greatest good. Many such dilemmas are found throughout the academic curriculum in the decisions faced by key historical figures, characters in the texts the pupils are studying, the choices they must make in selecting and running an ethical, fair and impartial experiment in Science.

The Golden Mean

‘Virtue is the golden mean between two vices, the one of excess and the other of deficiency.’

Aristotle

The Golden Mean is the idea that virtues exist between two vices, excess and deficit and that only through acquired experience and wisdom can one attain the desirable middle between these two extremes.

‘The earliest representation of this idea in culture is probably in the mythological Cretan tale of Daedalus and Icarus. Daedalus, a famous artist of his time, built feathered wings for himself and his son so that they might escape the clutches of King Minos. Daedalus warns his beloved son whom he loved so much to “*fly the middle course*”, between the sea spray and the sun’s heat. Icarus did not heed his father; he flew up and up until the sun melted the wax off his wings. For not heeding the middle course, he fell into the sea and drowned.’



Wikipedia

An example from the Aristotelean perspective is that courage is a virtue, but if taken to excess would manifest as rashness, and, in deficiency, cowardice:

Deficit	Virtue (Golden Mean)	Excess
cowardice	courage	rashness

This concept provides a language of thought for both staff when planning the content of their lessons and the pupils in reasoning with the virtues presented to them across the full breadth of the curriculum. The Golden Mean is a tool that can also be used as a component for the moral dilemmas pupils consider.

The vices for the virtues highlighted as carrying the most significant are explained in the table below:

Vice of <i>deficit</i>	Virtue (Golden Mean)	Vice of <i>excess</i>
Apathy	Curiosity	Nosiness
Subordination	Autonomy	Nonaligned
Entitlement	Gratitude	Overwhelmed
Disdain	Respect	Obsequiousness
Diffident	Confidence	Arrogance
Fatigue	Resilience	Stubbornness
Dissociation	Cooperation	Obedience
Inertia	Ambition	Grandiose

Character assemblies are delivered weekly and are informed by either the resources from the Jubilee Centre or in response to an exhibited need from within the school.

Character informs behaviour

Behaviour is 'the way in which one acts or conducts oneself'

(Oxford languages, n.d.)

Character and behaviour are inextricably intertwined. The word behaviour often triggers the thought of undesirable behaviour and how it is dealt with.

As with anything important, problems should not be waited for and then responded to. For years, research has discussed the importance and successful results of preventative interventions which totally bypass any instances of undesirable behaviour.

Teaching character not only does this, but it goes much deeper; avoiding and preventing possible instances of unwanted behaviour can work but it does not help to prevent the need for regular and repeated interventions of this kind. This can be exhausting for teachers and take up precious time for learning. Since character informs behaviour, developing character addresses the root cause of unwanted behaviour and equips the pupil with the experience and understanding needed to navigate the different challenges that often lead to outbursts of unwanted behaviour. This is not only about making life easier for teachers and students; it is our moral responsibility.

Tindal's behaviour policy has been updated to reflect the school's stance on character development and the inevitable role it plays in pupil behaviour.

Key points to note are:

- Restorative Justice: reflection using virtue literacy
- Class Dojo: Dojos updated to reflect virtues
- Virtue recognition (celebration assembly etc)

For more information on how character influences behaviour at Tindal, please read the behaviour policy on the school website.

