

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

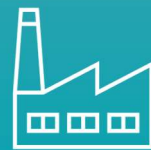


Pupils explore themes like kindness and honesty through increased discussion. Pupils define the virtues at play.

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.

