THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
EDUCATION OFFICE

The Fruits of the Spirit

A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education

THE JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

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Foreword

by **Stephen Conway**, Chair of the National Society Council

In recent years, public discussion about education in England has increasingly highlighted the importance of character education, and its central place in ensuring that our schools prepare children to flourish in the complex world around them.

For that reason, we are delighted to present this discussion paper on the Church of England's approach to character education. This paper is offered as a stimulus for reflection, and as a contribution to the national discussion about one of the most important purposes of education – the development of the character of children and young people.

We offer some perspectives – and some key questions – on what character development may look like in schools and how this might be received by Christians and those of other faiths or no faith, as both educators and students.

We are grateful to our partners at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues for their support in funding this report, and we look forward to engaging with others from across the education sector in the coming months as we explore what character education can mean for the pupils of today and tomorrow.

Rt Revd Stephen Conway
Bishop of Ely

Executive Summary

There is no such thing as neutral education. As soon as we begin to teach something to someone else, we are inevitably making value judgements about *what* we are teaching, *how* we are teaching it and *why* we are teaching it. Any decision we make about what or how to teach contains within it an implicit understanding of the human condition, of what is important in life, of the relationships we want to foster, and of what is worth learning, knowing or questioning.

For this reason, character education requires learning and development to be set into context against an understanding of what it means to be human and how the world works. While lists of virtues and values can be a helpful way of assisting people in understanding what character education may look like in the classroom, these are insufficient without a coherent and rigorous sense of purpose underpinning them. This sense of purpose will, inevitably, be culturally specific, rooted in particular communities and their beliefs and practices.

We see the ultimate purpose of education as the promotion of "life in all its fullness." Education is about more than just producing increasingly efficient economic units: it is about developing people who can flourish in all areas of their lives. Character education is essential to this.

Within this broad narrative of the ultimate purpose of education, character education must focus on the whole child. It must develop much more than simply the "performance virtues" of grit, resilience, curiosity and creativity, essential though these may be. Rather, it should see the development of intellectual, spiritual, moral and physical attributes as equally essential to preparation for a full and flourishing life.

Any discussion of ultimate purposes, including discussions about character education, inevitably draws out areas of disagreement. Consequently, as educators, we must become open to disagreement. Indeed, one might argue that a legitimate purpose of character education is that of learning to disagree well – to listen deeply to others and recognise their worth, no matter how deep the disagreement. The debate around 'British Values' teaches that tolerance in a pluralist society must reflect the Archbishop of Canterbury's encouragement to engage in reconciliation – honest, loving, faithful, committed disagreement.

In schools, character education is embedded both in explicit, formal teaching and in the implicit web of relationships that characterise schools, including relationships with children, parents and the wider community. We recommend that careful attention is brought to these relationships so that they enhance the school's approach to character education. We also recognise good practice in developing whole-school approaches to character education, and in developing specific pedagogies that allow a wide range of curriculum subjects to become areas for deeper exploration of spiritual, ethical and cultural questions. In all of this, teachers are key role models, and their beliefs about the purpose of education will impact on their practice. There is therefore an opportunity to reshape both initial teacher education and continuing professional development to equip teachers for their role in developing the character of their students.

It is a Christian's concern for the wholeness of the human being, for the quality of the common life, for the direction in which humanity goes, that turns us towards education now and sets us inside it and will not let us disengage.

World Council of Churches 1968

1. Introduction

Schools are moral enterprises. Their cultures and practices are saturated with value judgements about what is worth learning and knowing…

Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas[1]

There is no such thing as neutral education.[2] As soon as we begin to teach something to someone else, we are inevitably making value judgements about what we are teaching, how we are teaching it and why we are teaching it. Any decision we make about what or how to teach contains within it an implicit understanding of the human condition, of what is important in life, of the relationships we want to foster, and of what is worth learning, knowing or questioning.

The current interest in character education provides an excellent opportunity to re-invigorate the conversation about the kind of people we aspire to be, the kind of world we aspire to create and, therefore, the kind of education we aspire to provide. These questions are at the core of the Church's mission in education and always have been.

From the start, the commitment of the Church to provide basic education through its schools was seen in the context of a higher purpose. Schooling was also all about character. For the pioneers it was inconceivable that education could be divorced from a firm emphasis on the spiritual and moral education of the pupils.

Church School of the Future Review 2012

The focus on the whole child and the development of their spiritual, moral, intellectual and academic character remains at the heart of why the Church of England is involved in education at all. If human beings are created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27), then the Church has an interest in the development of that potential in human beings – enabling us to learn and grow so that we can become more fully what we were created to be. Equally, if all human beings are created in His image, then the Church has a responsibility to the common good, to the growth of all human beings. In John 10:10, Jesus states that he "came to give life in all its fullness" and this vision also underpins the Church's approach to education. Within the concept of a full and flourishing life, the Church of England seeks to provide all young people the opportunity to have a "life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ." This means that "irrespective of their response, children and young people should see and experience love, welcome, hope, forgiveness and the possibility of new beginnings whenever they encounter the Church."[3]

In this paper we offer some different perspectives on what constitutes "good character" and how it might be developed in schools and other educational settings. We recognise that these perspectives emerge from different understandings of human nature, and, within the Christian tradition, different interpretations of Scripture. We invite you to explore with us how your understanding of what it means to be human, and what it means to live well, influence the kind of education you aim to provide, through engaging with the questions and ideas in this paper.

- *If you look at the decisions that are made on a daily basis in your school, what implicit assumptions are being made about what is important, about the human condition, about what is worth knowing?*

- *What kind of person do you aspire to be? What kind of world do you aspire to create? How does this affect the way that you teach or lead your school?*

We begin by exploring how character and character education are commonly understood in England, before discussing how Christian world-views might transform our understanding of character and character education. We then turn our attention to how these world-views might be articulated and received in a pluralistic society, in the context of the current attention on "British values." Finally, we discuss the implications these might have for whole-school approaches to character education, for "signature pedagogies" and for teacher education.

2. "Character" and "Character Education" in England

The evolution of "character education" can be traced, at least philosophically, to Aristotle's conception of ethics – a theory of ethics as the development of particular character attributes, including courage, prudence, temperance and justice, rather than as following a system of rules or precepts that can straightforwardly be applied to any situation. Aristotle saw this as initially requiring a process of habit-formation, so that acting with honesty, temperance or courage begins to become second nature, but habits alone are not sufficient for character formation. The circumstances in which we are called on to act are often complex, and they are constantly changing, and so we need to be able to respond creatively and freely, in ways that go beyond the habitual. Aristotle and his heirs in the liberal tradition therefore argue that developing reflective wisdom is as important as developing these other aspects of character. It is only through reflective wisdom that individuals can make wise and appropriate choices in complex and changing circumstances.

By developing these habits of character, and the reflective wisdom which allows us to apply these habits as more of an art rather than a matter of rote, we learn two things. First, we learn to value and desire virtuous action. As the philosopher Stephen Law puts it "we need personal experience of what living virtuously is like before we are in a position to appreciate that this really is how we ought to behave." Second, we are "released from the grip of our own immediate desires."[4] By instilling habits of virtue, we do not act automatically on our desires, and this gives us the freedom to act more wisely and more creatively.

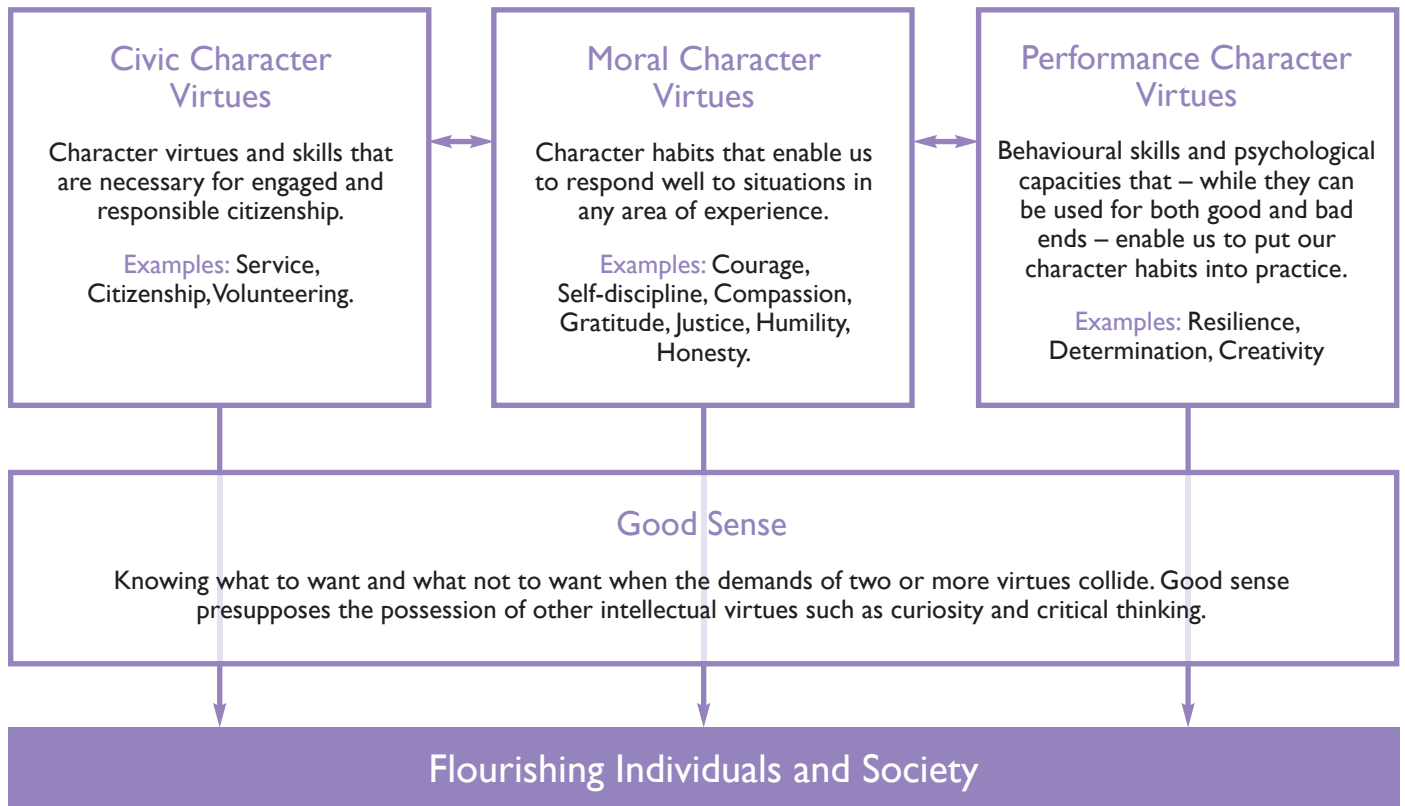This does not do justice to the complexity of Aristotle's thought or its many and varied interpretations but is, it would seem, the model of human development assumed by most, if not all, the approaches to thinking about character that we see across the world today. In the last decade various organisations have promoted the idea of character development within education, and there have been various names given to the dispositions, habits of mind and attributes which schools are encouraged to develop. These include soft skills, transferable skills, non-cognitive skills and 21st Century skills. In most cases, these strands of thinking about character education have culminated in lists of valued attributes – whether these are considered skills, dispositions or virtues. While there is considerable overlap across these different lists, the way that they are constructed illuminates some interesting assumptions about the purpose of education and the nature of human development.

Performance character and moral character

Many of these lists separate out "performance character" from "moral character." By "performance character" is meant those aspects of character which contribute to better learning outcomes for students, on formal measures of learning such as examinations, and by "moral character" is meant those attributes which might more generally be described as to with moral behaviour.

In the UK the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham has kept the idea of performance character in its definition but sub-divided the moral dimension into a personal moral component and the idea of civic character (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues definition of character

Civic Character Virtues	Moral Character Virtues	Performance Character Virtues
Character virtues and skills that are necessary for engaged and responsible citizenship. Examples: Service, Citizenship, Volunteering.	Character habits that enable us to respond well to situations in any area of experience. Examples: Courage, Self-discipline, Compassion, Gratitude, Justice, Humility, Honesty.	Behavioural skills and psychological capacities that – while they can be used for both good and bad ends – enable us to put our character habits into practice. Examples: Resilience, Determination, Creativity

Good Sense

Knowing what to want and what not to want when the demands of two or more virtues collide. Good sense presupposes the possession of other intellectual virtues such as curiosity and critical thinking.

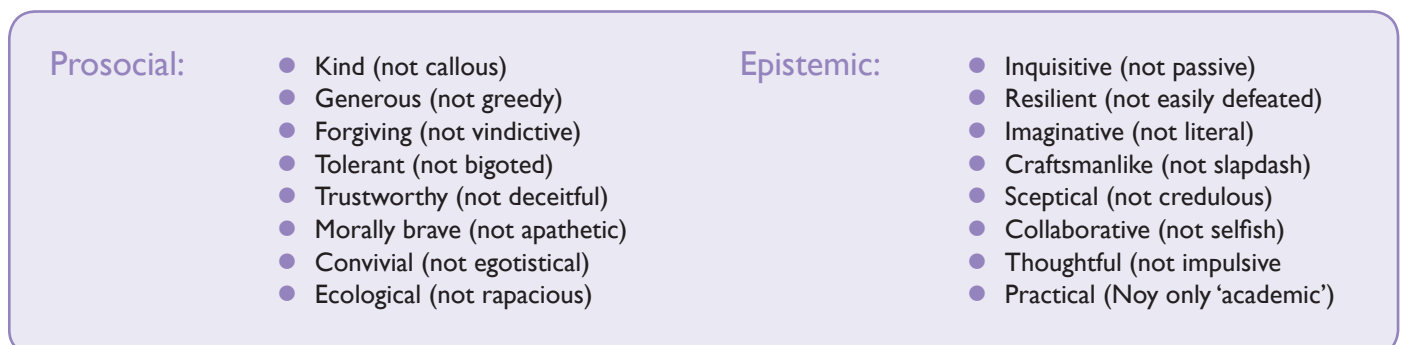**Flourishing Individuals and Society**

The Centre for Real-World Learning at the University of Winchester, in Figure 2, suggests that character can be viewed in terms of a set of attributes which are good for society (prosocial) and another set – very close to the category of performance character – which are important for learning (epistemic).

The Secretary of State has made character education one of the five priorities for the Department for Education, while her shadow in the last parliament Tristram Hunt has also emphasised the importance of character in a "rounded education". When reported in the media, this emphasis is interpreted mostly in terms of the performance virtues of grit and resilience. However, the Department for Education's Character Education Grant specifically invited different approaches to character education, and the Church of England is pleased to have been invited to run a project exploring how teachers can be equipped with confidence to explore character development in the classroom.

We see the current discussions on character education as raising two key questions. First, what character attributes should be taught, if any, and why? And second, can or should character be directly taught, or should it be implicit in the way other subjects are taught? We hope to contribute to the discussion of both of these questions.

Figure 2: Centre for Real-World Learning: Desired Outcomes of Learning

Prosocial:
- Kind (not callous)
- Generous (not greedy)
- Forgiving (not vindictive)
- Tolerant (not bigoted)
- Trustworthy (not deceitful)
- Morally brave (not apathetic)
- Convivial (not egotistical)
- Ecological (not rapacious)

Epistemic:
- Inquisitive (not passive)
- Resilient (not easily defeated)
- Imaginative (not literal)
- Craftsmanlike (not slapdash)
- Sceptical (not credulous)
- Collaborative (not selfish)
- Thoughtful (not impulsive
- Practical (Noy only 'academic')

3. Christian world-views and character

As we have seen, discussions of virtues, 21st Century Skills, "soft skills," or social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), tend to culminate in lists of valued attributes, habits of mind or dispositions that can then be developed. At school level, this can be seen in the kinds of school values or virtues publicly extolled by many schools. For example, the Christian Values for Schools website developed by the Church of England contains the following list of values:

Reverence, wisdom, thankfulness, humility, endurance, service, compassion, trust, peace, forgiveness, friendship, justice, hope, creation, koinonia.[5]

Some Church of England schools may draw on some of the lists of attributes to be found in Paul's letters in the New Testament, such as the "fruits of the spirit" from Galatians 5:22-23 and referred to in the title of this paper, which are: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Some may also draw on the three "theological virtues" of faith, hope and love.[6]

The risk with any list, even the most inspiring, is that it can lead to schools focusing on ticking off items on the list, rather than genuinely embedding it into school life. One contribution that the Church can make to the proliferation of lists and definitions is to keep a relentless focus on the question of ultimate purpose – what are all these lists, traits, values and habits ultimately for? Are they merely about improving performance, or is there more to it than that? And if the latter, then what is this "more"?

We might even question whether reducing "character" to a list of valued character traits is the most helpful or appropriate way of understanding character. Might there be an argument for defining "good character" not as a list of traits but as something embedded in a deep vision about the place of human beings in the world?

And when we think about our calling as a church, or as a school, or as an individual responding to Christ, we always have to look at the bigger picture. You can't just tick one narrow set of boxes and think you're done. God can see through that kind of thing quite easily. God sees a reality that is bigger and more hopeful than we normally imagine.

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury[7]

How might we articulate what the "bigger picture" would look like within the Church of England's approach to character education? There are many ways of articulating the overall shape of a Christian vision of the place of human

beings in the world and many will disagree with the sketch provided here, but our hope is to provide some initial thoughts and an invitation to further reflection.[8]

We might reflect here on three short statements from the New Testament:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

For God so loved the world that He gave his only son.

John 3:16

Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

John 13:34

The first two statements suggest a vision of God not as a distant, austere presence but one that is in intimate relationship with "the world" and with each of us as individuals. For Christians, this relationship begins with creation – human beings were made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). However, the Bible also describes "the human propensity to mess things up.".[9] – in other words the idea of "sin" as referred to in Romans 5:8 above. Beginning with the story of the "fall" in Genesis 3, which describes a catastrophic separation between God and humans, humans and each other, and humans and the environment, the Bible does not shy away from stories which highlight human imperfections and challenges.

How, then, can the relationship with God be restored? The New Testament presents Jesus as the answer – the Saviour who, through his life, death and resurrection will restore the relationship with God. The New Testament presents a narrative of what it might be like to be "an individual responding to Christ" or indeed a community responding to Christ, with an emphasis on responding to God's love by loving our neighbour, as in John 13:34 quoted here. The Bible talks in terms of God's "kingdom" on earth, which suggests the possibility of human transformation through responding to and following God's love in the example, and the saving presence of Christ.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, Paul's letters to the early Christian communities also provide us with a vision of what it might be like to be a community responding to Christ. Across the letters, there is a strong sense of the Holy Spirit actively at work in the lives of individuals and

communities. The Christian narrative invites us to take seriously the possibility, even the reality, that God is alive and at work in the world, that the Holy Spirit works in and through us.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

St Theresa of Avila

So what does this mean for the concept of character? For Christians, those who respond to this narrative by following Christ, the virtues are genuinely "fruits of the Spirit." They are not just good character traits to be developed but have an ultimate purpose – the unfolding relationship with God and the bringing out of His kingdom "on earth as it is in Heaven"

to quote the Lord's Prayer. This means that in practice, any list of virtues will need to be framed in and underpinned by a sense of this unfolding relationship – the "bigger picture" referred to by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In schools, collective worship may be a key site for this – both in the explicit telling of the Christian story (in the Bible and as lived throughout history) and in the implicit messages and structure given by the way in which worship is delivered.

There may also be a sense in which the virtues are a response to a felt sense of, or a faith in, God's love, and again any attempt to engage with these virtues will need to do so in the context of that appreciation of God's love and a deep reflection on what it means to be so loved. It is important to consider what God's love and God's redemptive work in the world means, and we will explore this more deeply in the next section.

Nottingham Emmanuel School's 'One Story' project illustrates one way of capturing what character development may look like in the context of the individual's unfolding relationship with God.

Case Study: Nottingham Emmanuel School One Story project

Nottingham Emmanuel School, an urban secondary school serving a diverse population in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, has been exploring how narrative can be used to capture and explore students' and staff's "faith journeys" to assess the impact of the school's ethos. Students and staff are invited to contribute their own personal narratives through interviews, and the narratives of 12 students and 4 staff are compiled annually into a booklet illustrating the range of "faith journeys" that the school makes possible. While the story of Jesus is not explicitly referred to, the Gospel narratives, as lived out in the school, provide the backdrop to the personal narratives of the featured individuals. Some short extracts from the stories are below:

"My faith journey has been challenging…my friends all believe different things and so it's not quite as simple to know what to think…I still have lots of questions that I don't have the answers to."

Year 10 student, Volume 2, 14

"…for me being a Christian is about knowing God as a reality in my life instead of believing in a concept. I have so many stories of him helping me, calming me down when I'm angry and even taking away physical pain for my mum when she broke her foot.

"One day I know that we'll meet God and see what he's really like in person. For now, I love exploring ideas and thinking things through, and I don't think he minds when we're not sure about him because he wants to help us believe."

Year 9 student, Volume 1, 17

I was brought up regularly going to church with my family, although once I was old enough to make my own decisions, I stopped going and my interest in faith really ebbed away. I've reflected a lot on the meaning of it all [recently] and began to conclude that there must be something out there that is worth having faith in. It was shortly after this that I started working at Emmanuel, and the community that this school has provided me has really encouraged and stimulated my thinking even further.

Teacher, Volume 2, 6-7

Embedding faith and character development into stories allows for a much more nuanced understanding of human development than the linear development of particular qualities. It allows for the possibility that students – and staff – might "go off the rails" as one sixth-former admitted, and be brought back through love and nurture. Narratives also invite personal response and challenge, as each individual explores the narrative in the light of their own experience. As Andy Wolfe, the vice-principal explains:

As our ONESTORY examples illustrate, this narrative is not the classic 'beginning-middle-end' notion of story-telling, but frequently chaotic, unpredictable, intertwined and without resolution. Nonetheless, this is real. This is how stories go, particularly in the inherently unresolved nature of childhood and teenage years.

We would also hope that the broader vision outlined here helps to develop answers to the question of which attributes should be taught. If we are educating for transformation – for what Jesus described in the Bible as "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10); if our ultimate purpose for education is not just improved job prospects and better grades but a "reality that is bigger and more hopeful;" we can then ask what kind of education would help us to achieve that. It is clear that focusing solely on "performance character" or resilience would be insufficient to achieve this aim and that to do so would create a division of human attributes and qualities which is incompatible with understandings of human beings as "made in God's image." We would suggest that the emphasis would be on developing the full range of human qualities – intellectual, spiritual, moral, physical – in the service of this larger vision.

One way of describing what this might look like for Christians is given by the developers of the What if Learning programme:

Character is formed by the year-in, year-out development of patterns of thought, response and behaviour that become part of who we are. Following Christ is not, in the final analysis, about keeping rules, nor even about following Christian principles and values, as important as rules, values and principles are. Rather it is being a particular type of person, one who is shaped by Jesus' teaching; someone whose life is an embodied anticipation of the Kingdom yet to come. Christian character results from years of wise choices becoming second nature, whereby dispositions to think and act in Christian ways are nurtured as the Holy Spirit works in us. Sometimes it is thought, wrongly, that character is only a moral dimension when, in fact, it manifests itself in the spiritual, social, intellectual and other dimensions of life. A person of Christian character is someone then who foreshadows God's wise rule in all these dimensions in the sort of person they are.

What if Learning programme[10]

Interestingly, this approach also illustrates the importance of both developing habits and developing reflective wisdom in order to act with freedom and creativity in changing circumstances.[11] There is an inherent (but creative) tension between the focus on taking on the same habits as others – being faithful to an existing vision and way of life – and the focus on working that out in new and creative ways – shaping the tradition, and being an imaginative innovator within it. The balance between faithfulness and creativity may fall differently for different people, but both are needed. David Ford puts this balance beautifully in his reflection on what it may mean to be a Christian saint:

Christian saints are virtuoso improvisers on the Gospel of Jesus. They are like great jazz players. They know the melody intimately. They know their instrument through long, disciplined practice. They are intensely attentive to the others in the band, and know how to respond to their playing, including their mistakes. And they risk performing new improvisations. As we attend to them, we hear the melody of the Gospel as we have never heard it before. But the point is not for us just to appreciate this great performance. Their point has not been

taken if we do not ourselves join the band, learn that melody intimately, practise our instruments lovingly day after day after day, and improvise creatively in whatever situations and relationships we are in. We are given the responsibility for our own 'as', and we need not only the inspiring examples of the saints but we need to take part in their master classes.

Professor David Ford [12]

Case Study:
Exploring different responses to Christian values.

Professor Mark Pike is Head of the School of Education at the University of Leeds. He currently leads the Narnian Virtues Character Education research project www.narnianvirtues.leeds.ac.uk funded by the Templeton Foundation. This work on 12 'Narnian Virtues' (love, wisdom, fortitude, courage, self-control, justice, forgiveness, gratitude, humility, integrity, hard work and curiosity), builds upon a previous ESRC/AHRC funded case study of a 'school of character', a large Christian-ethos academy in the North of England. The results of the research, published in a paper entitled "Christianity and Character Education" illustrate the range of responses on the part of both students and teachers to the school's values and their Christian underpinnings.

This research concluded that Christian-ethos schools can promote the autonomy of their students in matters of religion while also providing high quality character education that enables them to choose well. This is seen as an important feature of character education that is critical and also fosters a tolerant, respectful and inclusive school and society. The research demonstrates an appreciation of the value of the Christian tradition in character education but also clearly distinguishes between being a Christian and being of good character. While the inspiration for the school's core values was the Christian tradition, one Year 9 focus group explained:

They're not just Christian values because if you think about it it's just what a normal everyday person should be like, so you should be accountable to other people and you should be like determined and have courage … whether you are a Christian or whether you aren't a Christian they're still very good like values to follow.

For those who are not Christians there may be a range of responses to this narrative. Some may find aspects of it compelling or inspiring, or resonant with their own beliefs and vision of the place of human beings in the world. Some may not assent to the overall narrative but may find a different underpinning for similar virtues. Some may actively dissent from either the narrative or its outworking in practice. In schools, which actively and explicitly serve the common good,

there will need to be space for staff and students to take any of these positions and remain valued as individuals within a community which draws inspiration from this narrative. This is not always an easy task and will be further discussed in the section entitled "Warm fires and open doors" on page 12.

- *Does seeing human development as part of a wider narrative, rather than as merely a list of traits to be developed, make a difference to how we develop a pupil's character?*

- *How do we articulate the Church of England's view of character in a way that is inclusive and allows all to engage with this world view?*

- *What is the role of collective worship in developing young people's characters and situating that development within a wider narrative?*

Taking the idea of God's redemptive work in the world seriously

The idea of redemption – Christ's sacrifice to redeem the world, God's constant grace and redemption – is central to what Christians believe. The idea that we forgive others as God has forgiven us – the message of the Lord's Prayer – is more than a matter of reciting well-known words. It points strongly to a view of character development which leaves space for receptivity to God's grace, and for people to sin, confess, be forgiven and continue to be held in love.

On this view, learning is not a linear process, but rather one that involves getting stuck, getting it wrong, sometimes frequently or dramatically, and having unexpected moments of joy, grace or hope that might be suddenly or gradually transformative.

Many Biblical stories show this process being lived out – one particular example might be the stories of Peter from the Gospels, which show him acting rashly and impetuously (e.g. Matthew 17: 4-6), rebuking and being rebuked by Jesus (Matthew 16:22-23), and denying that he knew Jesus (Matthew 26:70-74) and yet Jesus' love and guidance is not withdrawn.

Through Christ the broken can become whole, the dis-eased become healthy, the morally dead become alive, the sinner be saved. Such language can sound highfalutin but it has serious and joyful repercussions for the way we handle failure and understand forgiveness in our schools.

John Cox[13]

This is not to deny the role of our own work and effort, but rather to acknowledge that part of the Christian vision is that God's grace can enable and support our work and may bring our work to fruition in ways beyond our control or even our imagination. How, then, in our efforts towards character development in ourselves or others, do we leave God room to work?

This balance between effort and receptivity to God's grace is not uniquely Christian. It has parallels in the role of effort and receptivity in some Buddhist understandings of spiritual development.[14] It also has parallels in the Jewish and Muslim traditions, where there are age-old debates about the role of human free will in relation to God's power to act.[15] In all these traditions, appreciating our limitations, acknowledging that there are forces beyond our control at work, and developing humility, are essential aspects of character education.

A central element in a truly religious outlook, it seems to me, is the quality of personal humility—a recognition that strive as we might, we will still fall short of our ideals, that climb as we might, there will still be unexplored and mysterious peaks above us. It means recognizing our own creaturehood—and thus our human limitations. In that recognition, it seems to me, lies our best protection against false prophecies and divisive dogmatism.

His Highness the Aga Khan[16]

- *How can we leave room for God's grace, however understood, to be at work in the development of young people's characters?*

- *What are the repercussions of believing that "through Christ the broken can become whole" for how we understand and handle failure and forgiveness in schools?*

4. "Warm fires and open doors" – character education in a pluralist society

Are virtues universal or particular?

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues' Framework for Character Education states that: "Character education is not about promoting the moral ideals of a particular moral system. Rather, it aims at the promotion of a core set of universally acknowledged (cosmopolitan) virtues and values."[17] Universal values are simply rational, shared human values, not rooted in any one tradition.

The idea that there are universal, cosmopolitan values that are independent of any specific moral framework is an attractive one. It presupposes a particular understanding of human nature – that human beings are, in essence, rational beings, and that there are objective values on which any rational being can agree. And indeed, there may be, and has been, considerable overlap in the way in which desired character traits have been stated in many education systems. [18]

However, this overlap obscures the reality that these lists of virtues find expression in particular cultures – that our understanding of what it is to be kind or generous is the product of our specific, culturally formed narrative, of a specific understanding of what it means to be human and how the world works. In assuming objective agreement, we may risk defaulting to the understanding of virtue held by the most powerful in society – in the case of England, it may be argued that these so-called objective values are in fact white, male, middle-class and English, and that minority groups may have equally legitimate, but radically different, understandings of what "good character" means.[19]

We would suggest that the belief that there are objective values on which any rational being can agree is itself rooted in a particular tradition – the tradition of European, and particularly British, liberalism. Instead of searching for an objective set of virtues beyond any one religious or moral system, we could begin from the particularity of religious and moral systems. We could look for *inter-subjective* rather than objective agreement.

Inter-subjective agreement starts from the actual views that people hold. It requires a commitment to listening deeply to those views, however strongly we may disagree. From that deep listening within particular communities – which, for

Christians, will imply a commitment to loving one's neighbour and recognising that all are made in the image of God – we may be able to find our way through to some areas of common ground. The Archbishop of Canterbury refers to this as reconciliation, in a speech to Church of England school leaders and chairs of governors made in 2014:

> *And I want to explain what I mean by reconciliation, because in popular use what it usually means is everyone agrees with everyone, or everyone pretends they agree with everyone. And both of those are rubbish. Reconciliation means finding ways for people to disagree well. It means finding ways for people who disagree well to go forward together without reducing their beliefs to a lowest common denominator or pretending that their difference does not exist. It's honest, loving, faithful, committed disagreement.*

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury[20]

Church of England schools, in their role as Christian schools for all, serving diverse communities, are therefore in a unique position to go beyond the value of tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs to genuine "reconciliation" without compromising on their explicit Christian foundation.

- *Can we assume that there is some universal, objective set of values that any rational person will accept? Should we assume this?*

- *What would a commitment to "honest, loving, faithful, committed disagreement" look like in your school?*

A commitment to inclusivity

> *The Church school offers a spiritual and moral basis for the development of human wholeness and a sure foundation for personal and social values based on the person and ministry of Christ. The Church school offers a distinctive language for understanding life and interpreting human experience.*

The Way Ahead, 2001[21]

How, then, can Church of England schools be places where those of all faiths and none learn and work together within an explicit but inclusive Christian ethos? This is indeed the reality

in many schools. Church of England schools, like many other schools with a religious character, are called to be true to their Christian foundation, and to be openly inclusive to those who may not share it. This may seem, on the face of it, to be a contradiction, but both theology and lived experience indicate that there are meaningful and joyful ways of combining integrity and inclusiveness.

The metaphor of "warm fires and open doors" comes from a speech made by David Thomson. Bishop of Huntingdon, to Church school leaders. As he said in that speech:

By Warm Fires I mean a vibrant and attractive sense of our Christian identity, and by Open Doors I mean a real welcome to anyone and everyone to gather round the fire.

David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon [22]

Bishop David asked the question: "If we start to be explicit about the faith and actually worship out loud, as it were, do we stop ourselves from being able to reach out to everyone?" His answer was a resounding "no," as he explained in this section of the speech:

We would be worse off if either we lost the clarity and warmth of the fire at the centre, or started to close the door on some because they were not already committed to it enough. We need to combine good strong roots, a robust sense of church and school alike as Christian or "in Christ" with a very open door, always inviting but never forcing, leaving room for questioning, doubt, disagreement, journeying and just looking. Lose either pole and it all goes wrong. Get it right and what might look like weaknesses are in fact strengths. Supportive but not explicitly Christian staff, students of many faiths and none, worship where some are committed but others "just looking" are all exactly where we would expect to be. And in fact they represent a powerful model of mission, in which the good news and the good things of God are lived out and celebrated in all sorts of places, and then the celebrants work their way back, as it were, to the great celebration, the big roof under which we all gather, wherever we started from and wherever we've reached on our journey. From that unity, as it re-discovers and affirms its common life and foundation and faith, new energy flows out back into highways and byways of the world, reaching even further than before, only once again to return.

David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon [23]

This commitment to inclusivity can be a virtuoso improvisation on "love" as a Christian virtue. "Love" may be a rather unfashionable virtue, or may be seen as lacking in robustness, but the Biblical injunction to "love your neighbour as yourself" when seen in the context of the parable of the Good Samaritan, is in fact an extremely demanding vision. For love, in this sense, calls Christians, and others who may share the vision, to serve the needs of all human beings, no matter how distant or different, to respect and even to cherish their uniqueness, and to transcend views or habits that might privilege one's own group over another. As Archbishop Justin

Welby has said:

You need to know who your neighbour is if you're going to love them as Jesus said Christians must, and generally speaking as they do. You need to know what shapes their lives if you're going to see how you can walk together. We also need to know and live out of the truth of our own tradition, our own faith, if we want others to trust us and work with us to build mutual flourishing and a shared peace…

Being passionate about our own faith is something that shapes church and faith-based schools across religious traditions in this country today. We share our experience of trust and commitment with those who lead schools in other Christian denominations and in other faiths. If we are to step forward together as leaders in reconciliation, we need to give thanks for that passion and to set alongside it – this is where it really cuts in – an equally passionate hospitality.

We need to welcome those who live by another faith – or no faith – as partners with whom we will build our communities. Hospitality isn't about making someone welcome once and knowing that makes it their turn next time. True hospitality is generosity that is resourced in God's own generosity and it makes welcome and relationship possible across boundaries of faith or race or background, or even boundaries of ingratitude and hostility.

That generous welcome is the authentically Christian way of life and we see it in our schools every single day as a point of complete routine in the hospitality that is shown to children and their families, to staff and to the wider community. [24]

Such generous hospitality is no easy task. It means engaging meaningfully and explicitly with difference. It cannot be seen as a matter of God's people welcoming others among whom God is not yet at work – rather, it needs to stem from a belief that God is at work in all people, and a willingness to be surprised by the forms which that work might take. It requires the integrity and transparency to be explicit about what matters, and the humility to be challenged – the "honest, loving, faithful, committed disagreement" mentioned in the previous section. It also means recognising that character development within Christian contexts, whether schools or otherwise, will be in a complex, dynamic relationship with other processes and theories of character formation:

There is no simple, systematic relationship between the formation pursued in the church and the patterns of formation taking place in the wider world. At times, Christian formation will look identical to non-Christian formation; at times it will seem to extend and deepen it; at times it will take the form of a prophetic critique of it; at times it will itself need to be disrupted and called to deeper faithfulness by it. We will be wary of any account which privileges any one of these modes to the exclusion of others, and will recognise that sorting out which of these is to the fore in any context will be a matter of complex discernment.

Professor Mike Higton [25]

Ethos at Bishop Bridgeman School :
Valuing students' diverse backgrounds

Bishop Bridgeman school in Manchester Diocese is a large urban primary school with a diverse intake, with 80% of students from different faiths including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Following the Headteacher, Jill Pilling's "road to Damascus" moment at the diocese's Christian Leadership course, she formed an 'ethos group' at the school with a mission to build, drive and live the school's values. Growing from 12 to 64 pupils in 5 years, the group develop and deliver collective worship, conduct learning walks and run "super learning days" for the whole school. Their success has led them to present at Headteachers' Conferences and to run a highly successful annual ethos conference attended by children and teachers from over 90 schools in Manchester and surrounding dioceses in the last 3 years. The children have also created their own booklet of activities by children for children, to support the development of values in school. The ethos group and the conference has been held up as a model of good practice across the North West, and other schools in Blackburn, Liverpool and Chester dioceses as well as Manchester, are developing their own ethos conferences. The work that the school has done on values has had a measurable positive impact on behaviour and on student learning outcomes, with students making far better than expected progress and pushing towards the national average for attainment.

The ethos group is fully representative of the school's diverse population, with children from all faith backgrounds taking a lively interest in the school's values and their relationship both to Christianity and their own faith traditions. One ethos group leader has articulated that she lives by Buddhist principles sometimes but is still searching for what she wants to do – and, incidentally, is the first student in the school to have been assessed at level 6 for writing, which the headteacher attributes to the fact that "you can pick out from her writing that she's been on that journey."

Parents from all backgrounds are deeply appreciative of Bishop Bridgeman's explicitly Christian and warmly inclusive ethos – perhaps supported by the close relationship between Jill and her Muslim deputy headteacher who comfortably delivers Christian assemblies. Their relationship, and the discussions that they have about faith, provide a model for an inclusive approach to faith, transparent but without indoctrination, which is reflected in discussions and relationships across the school with staff, students and parents.

- *Is "warm fires and open doors" a helpful metaphor? What does this look like in your school?*

- *How might your school create space for open discussions with students, staff and parents of different faith backgrounds and views? What would need to be taken into account for this to be successful? Would these open discussions support the development of character, and if so how?*

- *How might your induction processes enable all members of the school community to understand your vision for education?*

The Church of England, Character Education and British Values

The recent interest in character education has also been linked to schools' statutory duty to promote "fundamental British values," which has received greater government and media attention following fears of radicalisation and extremism. These "fundamental British values" are listed in government guidance as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The Church's commitment to inclusivity, as stated above, provides possibilities for schools to reach beyond these "fundamental British values" to a deeper understanding of reconciliation.

The Church of England's response to the government's guidance on British values emphasised the need for a wider public debate about the values underpinning our education system, and how society engages with dissenting voices, and we see this report as being part of a contribution to exactly that debate. Returning to the "bigger picture" outlined above, the Church of England's commitment to these values can be seen as part of its wider commitment to the flourishing of all people in Britain, and the flourishing of Britain as part of an international community, recognising that all human beings are made in the image of, and deeply loved by, God.

It is important to recognise, in addition, that the values listed by the government as "fundamental British values" – democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs – are not uniquely British, nor are they exhaustive. Beyond the values listed here, the Church of England's response added the following:

The values listed in this consultation are narrowly focused, and do not include several important aspects of British life including:

a. *'Loving your neighbour' and 'being prepared to receive from the outsider' as demonstrated by the Good Samaritan*

b. *The importance of dissent (e.g. as demonstrated by the campaign for the abolition of slavery, the suffragettes, chartists etc.)*

c. A commitment to the common good.

In addition, the Church of England expressed concern that British values may become "a test or an assessment of whether somebody in a community is 'safe' or 'loyal'. This would be a negative and divisive approach, and should not be how we define our national identity."

Character education, whatever form it may take, is not reducible to these fundamental British values. The lists above, however partial, go well beyond these liberal values to a much more comprehensive view of human flourishing. Again, the question is one of ultimate purposes. While these fundamental British values are important to our living well together, are they enough to constitute the ultimate goal of character education?

In addition, drawing on both the Christian and the British liberal traditions, any discussion of fundamental British values must take into account the importance of dissent and of making space for principled dissent in both word and action. The role of the Church of England as the established Church is to look constantly at the bigger picture, to follow a higher calling, to be a prophetic voice in society. Character education may be about educating every child to be as well equipped to be a prophet as to turn a profit.

The government's guidance suggested that through providing for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC), schools could demonstrate that they are promoting fundamental British values. The Church's response called for a greater emphasis on spiritual development:

> *Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development currently focuses more on the moral, social and cultural than on spiritual development. Spiritual development should not solely be about building self-esteem and self-confidence but greater emphasis should be given to actively encouraging people to grapple with the big ethical issues of life in the light of insights from the major faith traditions and belief systems.*

- *How do you respond to the statement "character education may be about educating every child to be as equipped to be a prophet as to turn a profit"?*

- *Do you agree that "greater emphasis should be given to actively encouraging people to grapple with the big ethical issues of life" and if so, how can this be done in your school?*

- *What place does dissent have in education?*

5. Can character be taught, and if so, how?

There is compelling evidence that some aspects of character can be taught, in particular those that are generally defined as "performance character."[26] Indeed there is a Christian psychological literature exploring the many ways in which character is formed.[27] But to think of "teaching" as merely "direct instruction" would miss the point here. In so far as character is "taught," it is both in the explicit and articulate demonstration and reflection on particular behaviours and in the implicit web of relationships, decisions, practices, cultures and hierarchies that make up a school.

Reflecting on the life and example of Christ as teacher, one sees this combination of explicit and implicit teaching within the context of ongoing relationships. Christ's actions, words and relationships with his disciples and others are all in a sense the making flesh of God's word. Similarly, character development within a Christian context is rooted in being part of a community where both explicit and implicit teaching take place, as the developers of the What if Learning programme explain:

> Christians do not grow spiritually only by improving their understanding of Christian theology. They also grow by experiencing what it means to be part of a community that worships together with singing and prayer, that cares for the sick and welcomes the poor, that practises forgiveness when someone is wronged, that chooses to suffer with those in pain, that gathers around the Scriptures and works at interpreting them together, and so on. Such practices form the contours of a Christian community of faith, and by taking part in them Christians allow themselves to see and act in ways that resonate with Christian belief.

What if Learning Programme[28]

This view of character development owes much to the work of James K A Smith[29] on practices. Smith is critical of approaches to Christianity and to character development which focus on the mind at the expense of the heart and the body, and sees education as being as much about educating our loves, desires and imaginations as our cognitive faculties. This primarily takes place through what Smith calls "cultural liturgies" – a set of practices which implicitly embody visions of the good life and assumptions about human flourishing. In schools, these cultural liturgies include practices of teaching and learning, but also other practices and relationships, including the ways in which the school relates to the wider community, including parents and possibly local churches and other faith groups.

If character is developed at least in part through practices in this way, this has implications for how the school as a whole is structured, for the ways in which teaching and learning take place in particular classrooms, and for teacher professional development.

Developing character within communities

If character is developed by experiencing what it means to be part of a community, then the way in which the school community is organised, and the way in which it relates to other communities, is critically important. Relationships between staff and students, between staff, between the school and the communities in which it is embedded, including the local church and parish, will all be carefully nurtured to provide the kind of supportive community in which young people can be transformed.

> The school is called to reflect these qualities: a fellowship and community which gives individuals scope fully to be themselves, yet participating equally in the common life. Furthermore, to stress that the school is a community of persons (reflecting the Trinitarian life) is to emphasize relationships; the personal is thus prior to the institutional; the institutional exists not for its own sake but solely for the purpose of nurturing and sustaining the relations of the persons who comprise any particular community or organization.

David Hope, Archbishop of York 1995-2005[30]

Seemingly small decisions such as who participates in collective worship and how, or who takes on leadership roles, or what kind of success is celebrated, or who is invited into school and for what reason, will therefore send powerful messages about the kind of young people that we want our children to become. In this, the school is in partnership with parents and others in the community, who are all part of this complex web of relationships that make up the "common life" of the school.

- *How can teachers, school leaders and other adults within school be inspired and empowered to reflect on their decisions as members of a school community?*

- *What small decisions are currently being made in your school that might be undermining your overall approach to the development of character? How could you revisit these decisions? What support would you need as a school?*

Case Study: Engaging positively with the wider community through reading

Moorlands Church of England Primary Academy has had a difficult journey over the past few years. Since January 2015, the leadership team have rebuilt the school around six core values of respect, resilience, honesty, compassion, belief and responsibility. Rebuilding relationships with parents and the wider community was a vital component of this – and so the #mydadreads and #mymumreads twitter campaigns were born. As Jon Biddle, Senior Teacher, explains:

"As part of our push to create a school reading for pleasure culture among pupils, parents and staff, we decided to run a reading campaign for parents. We felt that it was essential to provide the children with as many adult role models as possible and show that reading for pleasure was an activity that anyone could enjoy. We were looking for something that they could get on board with easily, a 'quick win', which would have immediate results and could be seen by all parts of the local community, most importantly the children. This is why we decided to use Twitter. We asked family members (not just mums and dads) to share photos of them reading at home. We didn't limit the photos to books as we wanted to show reading as a real activity. We were sent photos of people reading comics, magazines, instruction manuals, birthday cards and so on. As an extra incentive we would give a £10 book token to one of the families who took part.

We set a deadline of two weeks and received approximately 30 photos for #mydadreads and 50 photos for #mymumreads. Every time we were sent a new photo we retweeted it and shared it in the school. We created a reading display in the school to model reading behaviour and put together a reading video (https://deerclass.wordpress.com/2015/09/21/my-mum-reads/)

We linked the project to the core values of responsibility (children taking responsibility for asking family members for photos) and respect (being polite when asking). The children thoroughly enjoyed the project and were delighted whenever a new photo was sent in. It also led to lots of discussion from the pupils as to how we can further raise the profile of reading, with lots of suggestions coming from them (independent learning). We will be putting some of their suggestions into practice over the next few months."

Moorlands' experience shows that with careful thought, the practices of a school can be adjusted to repair relationships and promote reconciliation hand in hand with the pursuit of greater academic success. It also shows that such attention to practices and relationships can be positive wherever a school is on its journey.

Case Study: Steps to Awesomeness at All Saints, Fleet

Steps to Awesomeness, designed by All Saints Fleet School in the Diocese of Guildford, is a wellbeing programme designed to help children grow in confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and happiness. Developed on the basis of extensive research on wellbeing in children and young people, each "Step to Awesomeness" (Kindness, Appreciation, Positivity, Courage, Goals, Exercise, Participation and Service) is embedded into the school curriculum. Pupils are awarded with a 'badge of awesomeness' following an assessed, reflective exercise and interview that marks the completion of the programme at either bronze, silver or gold level. Exercises can include writing a thank you note to demonstrate the step of appreciation and keeping a positive diary to demonstrate the step of positivity. This curriculum is consistently reinforced by a strong head, Alison Wyld, who makes it very clear to all members of the school community (including parents) that this whole-school approach to character is 'non-negotiable.' The programme has been explicitly designed based on a Christian world-view which sees each child as an individual that has been made in God's image. The development of their non-academic gifts therefore enables them to "let their light shine" for the benefit of others, as well as themselves. It is important to highlight that All Saints completely recognises that these values chime with all, from atheists to followers of other religions and that the buy-in of parents into these values is key. Moving forward, All Saints reviews and refreshes its programme every year to ensure that all staff are happy to embed and deliver the steps, with improvements to the programme seen year upon year. The school is currently exploring ways to ensure maximum benefit to their most vulnerable children through developing joint approaches with the school's Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. All Saints is also continuing to look for relevant areas of the curriculum in which to integrate Steps to Awesomeness within a holistic approach to education.

Whole-school approaches to character development

Getting the culture right is very important if schools are to make a significant contribution to the character development of children and young people. Character can be cultivated most effectively when:

- Opportunities are taken in all parts of the curriculum to identify relevant content.

- Collective worship is consciously connected both to the wider world and to the formal curriculum.

Case Study: "ALIVE" at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School, Bristol

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School is an 11-18 secondary school serving a diverse urban population in Bristol. Inspired by Irenaeus' words "The glory of God is a human being fully alive," the ALIVE model was developed in 2005. It began with the Headteacher's research and vision, and with a staff consultation on the qualities, skills and values that made up a "successful" student. The ALIVE model describes these values, qualities and skills as follows:

- **I value:** faith, trust and truth, myself, justice and respect, forgiveness
- **I am:** resilient, questioning, organised, interdependent, creative
- **I can:** revise, communicate, review, research, plan.

The ALIVE model integrates the whole life of the school, from weekly worship themes to the school development plan, to everyday conversations in lessons. The current School Development Plan is about "imperfect people in a climate of hope" and picks out "I value forgiveness", "I am organised" and "I can review" as priority themes. Each department, faculty and pastoral team has considerable freedom to develop material based on each of these themes and is strongly encouraged to do so, supported by effective modelling. It provides a shared language for all members of the school community to reflect on and explore their attitudes, behaviours and decisions, as commended in the school's recent OFSTED inspection.

While the values, skills and qualities are those that one might perhaps see in any school, within this school they have explicitly Christian justifications and are explored from Christian perspectives, in particular through worship. Staff at the school suggest that the qualities and skills that may not on the face of it be recognisably Christian, such as "I can revise," often yield the richest and most creative explorations of their Christian underpinnings.

The school sees its role as preparing young people for "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) and believes that their approach "leads us to have a pretty good go at a full life" according to Simon Stevens, Assistant Head at the school. He goes on to explain that "Resilience has certainly been useful in revision; forgiveness in behaviour management with excluded students; justice and respect has driven some of our older students in their social justice campaigning and in our work with our partner school in Uganda"

The school is wondering about the balance between the familiar language of ALIVE and the need for a freshness of approach, especially with staff. They are also questioning whether, and how, to judge students' progress against the ALIVE model.

- There are informal and extra-curricular opportunities to experience "service learning."

- The teaching and learning methods used by teachers encourage, for example, kindness, listening, empathy, collaboration and resilience.

As well as role models and relationships between individuals, this culture can be articulated more formally through school-wide programmes which integrate collective worship, curricular and extra-curricular activities, and celebrating success, such the Steps to Awesomeness and ALIVE models featured in the case studies. Formal programmes of this type can help children and young people to integrate their learning across subjects and reflect more explicitly on their development as "whole people" across a range of learning experiences.

- *How might you develop or enhance a whole-school approach to character education?*

- *Should a whole-school programme of this type be "non-negotiable" once implemented? In what ways could it be made non-negotiable?*

- *How can we give pupils meaningful roles to create opportunities to develop their characters?*

"Signature pedagogies"[31] for character development

There is a wealth of evidence to indicate that the way in which subject content is taught can have a significant impact on the character development of pupils. When delivering a lesson, the implicit messages communicated in the delivery

Case Study: "Banana Maths"

"My class had been doing work on percentages and this was the summary lesson. I wanted them to use real situations and see how facts and figures can make us think about important issues. I wanted them to see how relevant maths is, as well as making them aware of issues of justice. I gave the class the figures about bananas using the banana link website (http://www.bananalink.org.uk/node/8). We looked at how much of what we pay for bananas goes to the grower, and what goes to other people involved in the process. We sliced bananas to represent these percentages and labelled the slices with food flags.

"We then looked at the difference Fairtrade made to the percentages and the grower's life and cut the fair-trade bananas to reflect the different percentages. These too were labelled. We talked about how our buying choices could affect other people's lives a long way away, and how our choice could affect whether justice happens. The students invited their parents – who came to collect them – to taste the fair-trade bananas.'

can be just as important as the content of a lesson. For this reason, teachers need to be equipped to reflect on their pedagogy and the character development opportunities associated with it. The Jubilee Centre's report on Character in UK Schools found that in the "top seven" schools for developing their pupils' character, teachers had significantly more freedom to discuss moral issues when they arose, and to deviate from the standard curriculum without permission.[32]

For example, the *What If Learning* approach seeks to refocus the context in which pupils are taught and develops a Christian vision of "the good life." By reshaping both content and pedagogy in particular ways, a wide range of curriculum subjects, including addition and subtraction in maths or grammar in writing, become vehicles for developing and reflecting on character traits inspired by the virtues of faith, hope and love. One example on the website (bottom right, previous page) shows how the teaching of percentages can inspire young people to think about injustice.[33]

Another example (below), also in mathematics, shows how particular pedagogical decisions can impact on the development of students' character.[34]

Case Study: Rewarding perseverance

On the wall at the front of Jane's classroom hangs a photo frame, but it does not contain the class photograph. Above it is a large, vibrant and colourful sign saying 'FANTABULOUS EFFORT!'. Underneath the frame is a photograph of a boy – one of the little photos routinely taken each year at school. Inside the frame is an exercise book open at a page of work done in mathematics. As I look at the workbook, I expect to see a page with 100% of all calculations correct, but this is far from it. Many of the calculations are not correct, but the comment written by Jane underneath the work says, 'Well done, Nathan. What an improvement!'

I did not hang the frame there to display the best work done in the class, but to recognise the effort made by students. It is hung at the front of the room so that it is prominent. I always draw my class' attention to the new entry to the frame. In this case I talked to the whole class about how I could see that Nathan has shown great improvement in subtraction. The class clap and this seems genuine for they all know how it feels to have their effort recognised.

This public acknowledgement is an important part of the classroom practice as Jane's class encourage one another and learn to share in each other's learning, celebrating the small daily accomplishments. That afternoon, Nathan took home a certificate in the shape of a photo frame, stating that his Mathematics subtraction work has today been in The 'Fantabulous Effort' Frame."

- *What kinds of pedagogy would support the development of the kind of young people you want your students to be?*
- *How could curriculum content be adapted to support the development of the kind of young people you want your students to be?*
- *How can school reward systems be changed to promote character development more effectively?*

Implications for teacher professional development

As we have said above, the role of teachers and other adults in the school community cannot be underestimated. Teachers themselves are acutely aware of the important role that they play as 'character educators' and 'exemplars' of 'good character,' (Jubilee Centre, 2015) but research has also found that they feel ill-equipped to play this role confidently, particularly with regard to conversations regarding 'morality' (Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015). This suggests a greater role for the development of teachers in a holistic fashion as part of both initial and continuing professional development. Teachers' beliefs about what is of value will inevitably be reflected in their pedagogical practices. As Parker J Palmer put it in his seminal work The Courage to Teach:

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together. the entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.

Parker J Palmer[35]

This suggests that there may be a need to reshape both initial teacher education and continuing professional development to allow teachers an opportunity to "look in that mirror." We have also suggested in this paper that the development of "good character" is a response to God's overwhelming love – for the world and for each human being as an individual. The Church's vision for education is that schools model, in a range of creative ways, that unbounded, self-giving love. This too has implications for teacher development. If teachers are to model God's love, as far as possible, they too need to experience this love in the web of relationships and practices that they meet on a daily basis in school and in teacher education and professional development. Teachers who feel valued and nurtured will be better able to value and nurture others.

- *How can initial teacher education and continuing professional development enable teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and their impact on their teaching practice?*
- *How can your school become a model of God's love, for both adults and students within the school community?*

6. An ongoing conversation

This paper has explored some of the major themes which the Church can contribute towards the ongoing national conversation about character education. Many Church of England schools are already leading this conversation with exciting practise in the classroom and cutting edge whole-school approaches. Many more are keen to learn, and bring a wealth of enthusiasm and experience to the table.

However, the Church's network alone is not sufficient for the bold task ahead of us and we hope that this paper will activate a much broader exploration of how we can be working with and learning from others in the sector at national, diocesan, school and parish levels.

Suggestions for further reading

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Acknowledgements

Notes

1   Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas (2013) *What kind of teaching for what kind of learning?* London: SSAT

2   Speech by Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer, Church of England, 2015, see also R. Pring and T. Moore (1978), *Theory and practice of curriculum studies.* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3   The Archbishops' Council (2010). *Going for Growth: Transformation for children, young people and the Church.* Report available online at: https://www.churchofengland.org/media/59351/ goingforgrowth.pdf

4   Stephen Law (2012). *What is Character Education?* Blog post, available online at: http://stephenlaw.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/character-education-and-religious.html

5   *Koinonia* is a Greek word that may be translated as partnership or fellowship, with the connotation of being a single family and sharing each other's burdens.

6   The *What if Learning* project uses the virtues of faith, hope and love to structure its approach to the teaching of character and virtue in a Christian context.

7   Speech by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, 2014. Available online at: http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5439/ reconciliation-in-action-archbishop-of-canterbury-on-church-schools

8   See also The Archbishops' Council (2010) *Going for Growth.*

9   Adapted from Francis Spufford (2013), *Unapologetic: Why, despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense,* London, Faber & Faber.

10   *What if Learning* (no date): http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk/big-picture/virtues

11   In this context, it may also be helpful to reflect on the formation and nurture of Jesus' disciples in the Gospels. There is not space to do justice to this here but a helpful starting point may be Jeff Astley (2015), *Forming Disciples: Some Educational and Biblical Reflections. Rural Theology,* vol.13, no.1.

12   Sermon by David Ford, 2013: http://trinitycollegechapel.com/media/ filestore/sermons/ FordVanier171113.pdf

13   John Cox (2011) *More than Caring and Sharing.* Stowmarket, Suffolk, Kevin Mayhew Ltd.

14   See, for example, Maitreyabandhu (2015). *The Journey and the Guide.* London: Windhorse publications.

15   See, for example, Karen Armstrong (2007), *Islam: a short history,* and Reza Aslan (2005) *No God But God* for brief outlines of the free will debate among early Muslim scholars.

16   Speech by His Highness the Aga Khan, 2006. Available online at: http://www.akdn.org/speech/228/Evora-University-Symposium

17   Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. *A Framework for Character Education.*

18   Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas (2013). *What kind of teaching for what kind of learning?* London: SSAT

19   See also Trevor Cooling (2010). *Doing God in Education.* THEOS report, available online at: http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/files/files/Reports/ DoingGodinEducation.pdf

20   Speech by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, 2014

21   *The Way Ahead* report, published in 2001 by a group chaired by Lord Dearing, outlined a direction of travel for Church of England schools for the new millennium.

22   Speech by David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon, 2014.

23   Speech by David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon, 2014.

24   Speech by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

25   Professor Mike Higton, personal communication, 2015

26   Various recent research makes this connection including: Tim Kautz and James Heckman (2013) *Fostering and measuring skills interventions that improve character and cognition.* Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labor and Angela Duckworth and Scott Yeager (2015) *Measurement Matters: Assessing Personal Qualities Other Than Cognitive Ability for Educational Purposes.* Educational Researcher 44(4): 237-251

27   See, for example, Joanna Collicutt (2015) *The Psychology of Christian Character Formation.* London: SCM Press

28   http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk/big-picture/background-research

29   James KA Smith (2009). *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation.* Baker Academic

30   This statement by David Hope, Archbishop of York 1995-2005 is quoted in *The Way Ahead* (2001), 3.27

31   How a subject is taught is at least as important as what is taught. So a signature pedagogy of character will deliberately encourage the kinds of attributes which are desired, whatever is being taught. See Lee Shulman (2005) *Signature pedagogies in the professions.* Daedelus 134: 52-59

32   Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2015). *Character Education in UK Schools.* Research Report, available online at: http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20 Reports/Character_Education_in_UK_Schools.pdf

33   http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk/examples/39-percentages-and-injustice

34   http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk/examples/50-rewarding-perseverance

35   Parker J Palmer (1988). *The Courage to Teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco, Jossey Bass.
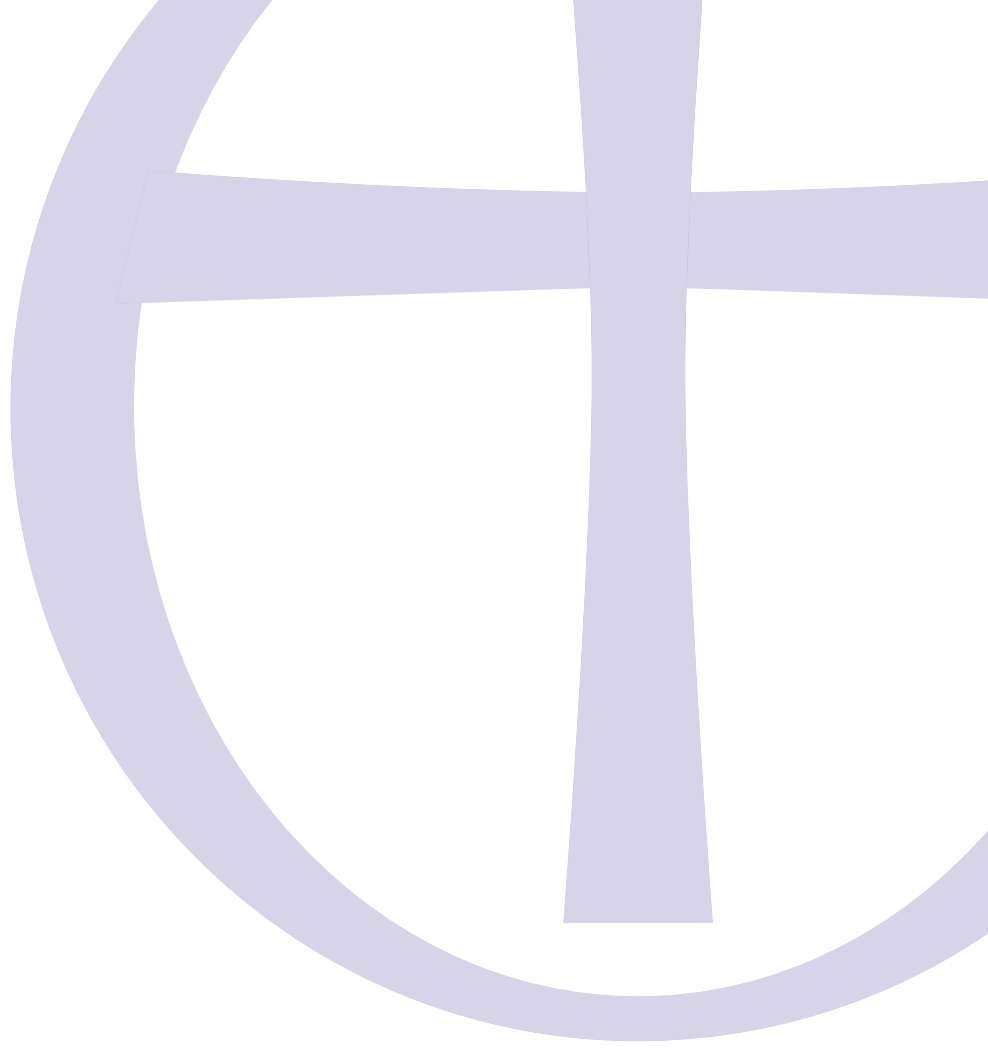
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Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ