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The Character Education Framework in Ofsted Inspections and how the Entrepreneurial Attributes can make a contribution

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief review of relevant psychology and education theory literature to locate the relevance of the Entrepreneurial Attributes to current developments in primary and secondary education in England today. The aim is to identify what support that they may have in the Psychology of Learning, to see their 'fit' with the broad field of what is now identified as 'character education' and to explore the implications of this broad approach for teaching / learning strategies at school level, particularly concerning the compatibility of character education with attainment of academic excellence. The key finding is that the personal development of the child is strongly supportive of ability and willingness to attain knowledge and skills. That the two should go together in teaching practice and curriculum development has recently been recognised in DfE guidelines and in Ofsted inspection framework documents.

Overview

The relationship of personal, character development to academic achievement has been a key focus of education research reaching back several decades with outcomes leading to recent Department for Education (DfE) pronouncements and Ofsted guidelines. A foundation study supporting this new approach is Kolb's theory experiential learning. Building upon such child focused theories, other researchers reviewed, point to questions of personal goals and motives and how these are or are not recognised in the classroom. This paper shows that these themes have been of wide concern within education, the OECD demonstrating the ways in which various countries have recognised the importance of social and emotional development in equipping young people to acquire the knowledge and skills that are of benefit to society as well as their own well-being. In England, The



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Early Intervention Foundation, the Cabinet Office and the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission asked important questions:

- Do social and emotional skills developed in childhood matter for adult life?
- What is the evidence on the effectiveness of social and emotional skill based Interventions implemented in the school and out of school settings?

All three organisations were interested the importance of social and emotional skills in gaining access to high-status, well paid-jobs which are an important aspect of social mobility. This work was brought to policy level by the DfE in the 2019 Character Education Framework, leading to subsequent revisions to Ofsted inspection criteria. This paper sets out the key elements of this framework (with two sections appended) and shows how the Aldridge Attributes are supportive of this trend, in their emphasis on skill development to equip young people for constructive entrepreneurial roles in future life.

Background

The Department for Education commissioned NatCen Social Research to undertake a survey of character education in the final term of academic year, 2015-16. The research aims and key working assumptions of that study usefully define the educational policy concerns that are addressed in this paper.

The research aims were to:

1. Derive robust national estimates on the activities and support provided by schools to promote the development of character
2. Provide example of specific activities that schools have found effective in developing desirable character traits
3. Understand the motivation and priorities that schools place on the development of character.

For the purpose of their study, character education was defined as any activities that aim to develop desirable character traits in children and young people. Ultimately character education seeks to prepare children and young people for well rounded and successful adult lives, supporting improved academic attainment, employability and citizenship. In discussing desirable traits the following were included.



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- Resilience, perseverance and persistence,
- Hard work, self control, discipline and good time keeping,
- Self confidence, leadership and team working
- Honesty, integrity and respect for others
- Curiosity, problem solving and motivation.

There was a recognition that the term character education may be allied to the term 'non cognitive skills and abilities' as well as the terms 'socio emotional skills'. These are used interchangeably in the literature. They indicate that young people learn through social interaction, experiential learning or observation and modelling others behaviour.

Four questions arise:

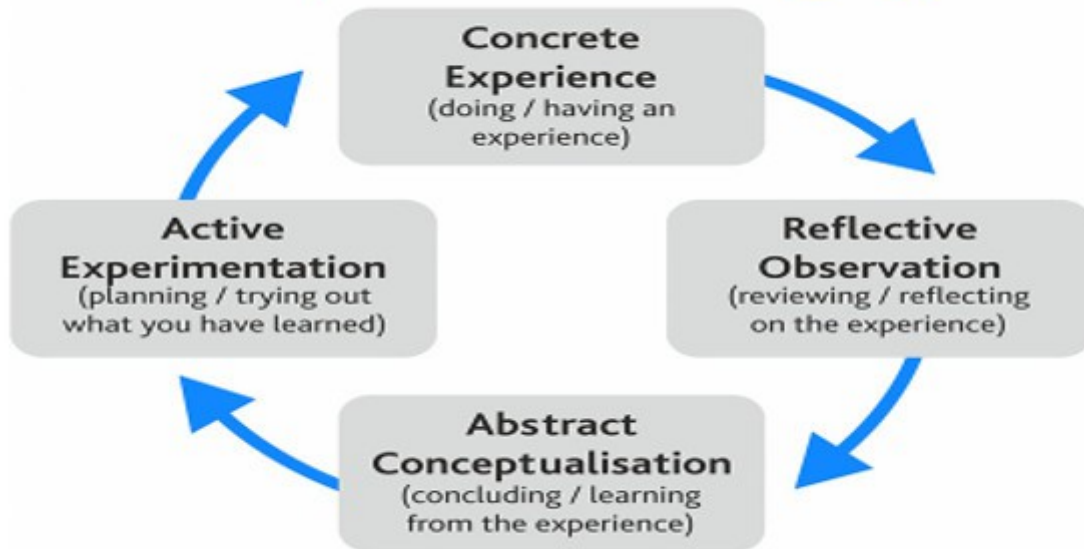
- What are these theories
- How evident are they in teaching methods?
- How do Inspectors interpret them in inspection?
- What is the effect of an exclusive exam focus on experiential learning?

Learning Theories

Albert Bandura and others (1986) demonstrated that people can learn new behaviour by watching others in a social situation and then imitating the other person or modelling their behaviour. This kind of Learning is called social learning. It involves modelling, symbolism and self control. An example would be the number of people who have given up smoking because of its link to cancer. They have seen or read how smoking has adversely affected the health of others. Bandura showed how children can be affected by watching a violent film and then how they reacted when given toys to play with. The control group played peacefully, those who watched the film displayed aggressive behaviour.

Many educators will be familiar with the Kolb theory of Experiential learning, which is in many respects a foundational study in learning theory. His basic model suggest that people learn through experience in a circular process as shown in the Diagram below.

The Experiential Learning Cycle



Notes:

The first stage is concrete learning or concrete experience, where the learner encounters a new experience or reinterprets an existing experience. This could be where the learner is exposed to a new task or a new way of carrying out a project, in a way they haven't seen before.

This is followed by the next stage, reflective observation, where the learner reflects on the experience on a personal basis. For many people, this is where the metamorphosis from seeing and doing to reflecting can embed the learning into real-time absorption of materials and methodology. It could be where a person is shown how to accomplish a goal and then looks at how it could be applied in differing circumstances.

Following reflective observation is abstract conceptualisation, where learners form new ideas, or modify current abstract ideas, based on the reflections that arise from the reflective observation stage. They now have the chance to see how the ideas learned previously can be applied in their real world. The concepts they see can be altered by the results they have seen obtained in observing the ideas formulated in previous stages.



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Then, there is the active experimentation stage. This is where the learner applies the new ideas to her surroundings to see if there are any modifications in the next appearance of the experience. By actively experimenting with the whole concept of visible action, we learn to associate what we have experienced with new ideas and innovations. This second experience becomes the concrete experience for the beginning of the next cycle, beginning at the first stage, and this process can happen over a short or long time.

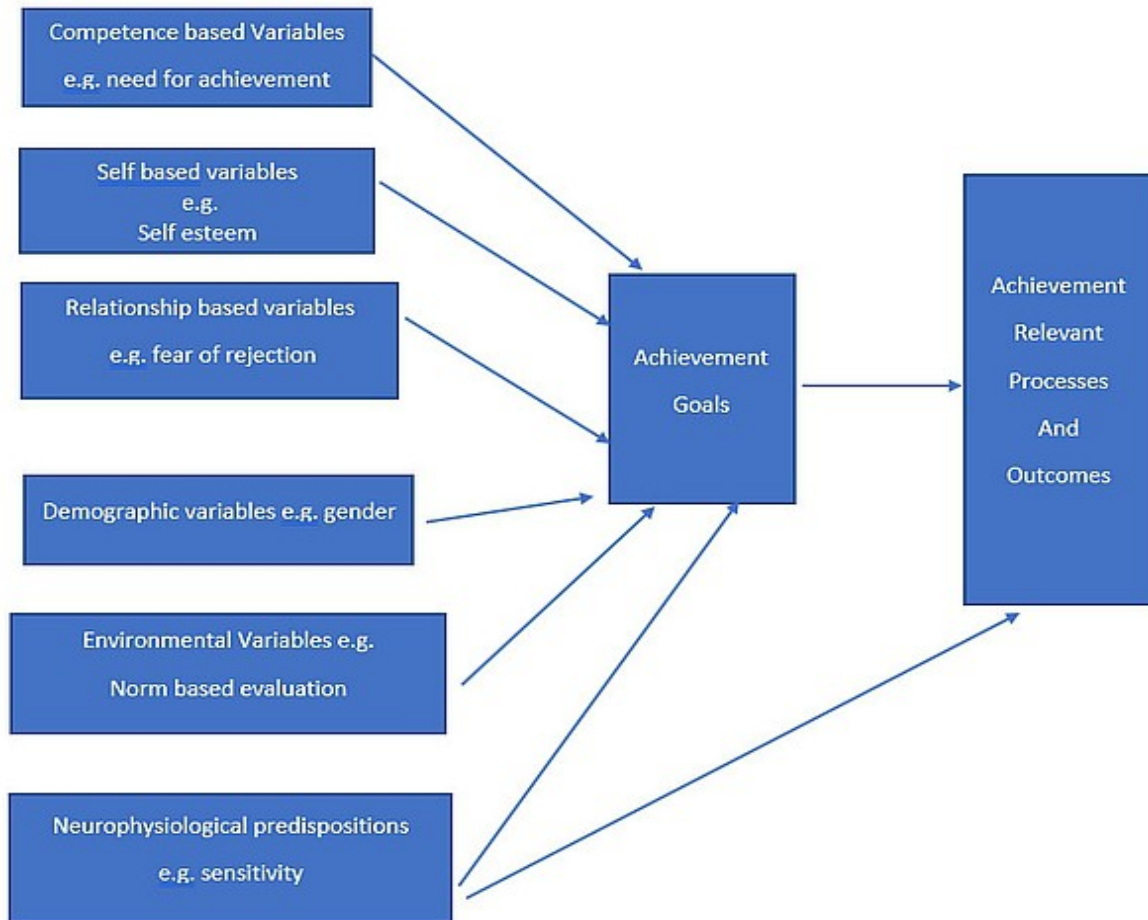
Knowing these stages helps us to develop teaching methods that provide learning experiences for students in ways that enhance their whole skillsets and capabilities.

Bandura and colleagues and Kolb contributed to a wide ranging and continuing range of theories about how people learn that support current teaching methods.

Learning something new is associated with achieving a goal. A further field of research investigated the relationship between personal motivation, goal oriented behaviour and learning strategies. A personal aim or goal may be acquiring a skill, a new piece of knowledge or a deeper understanding of how an object works.

To understand the concept of 'personal achievement goal', we need to think about what an individual student may utilise when they are assessing their competence in an endeavour. In education the goals of students and the reasons behind their learning behaviour are essential research areas. Elliott and Church (1997) made the distinction between 'goals' and 'motives' pertinent to accomplishments. Church (1999) pointed out the importance of the variables that configure in a hierarchical model of achievement motivation in academic learning environments.

The diagram below presents the variables configuring achievement goals as conceived by Elliott.

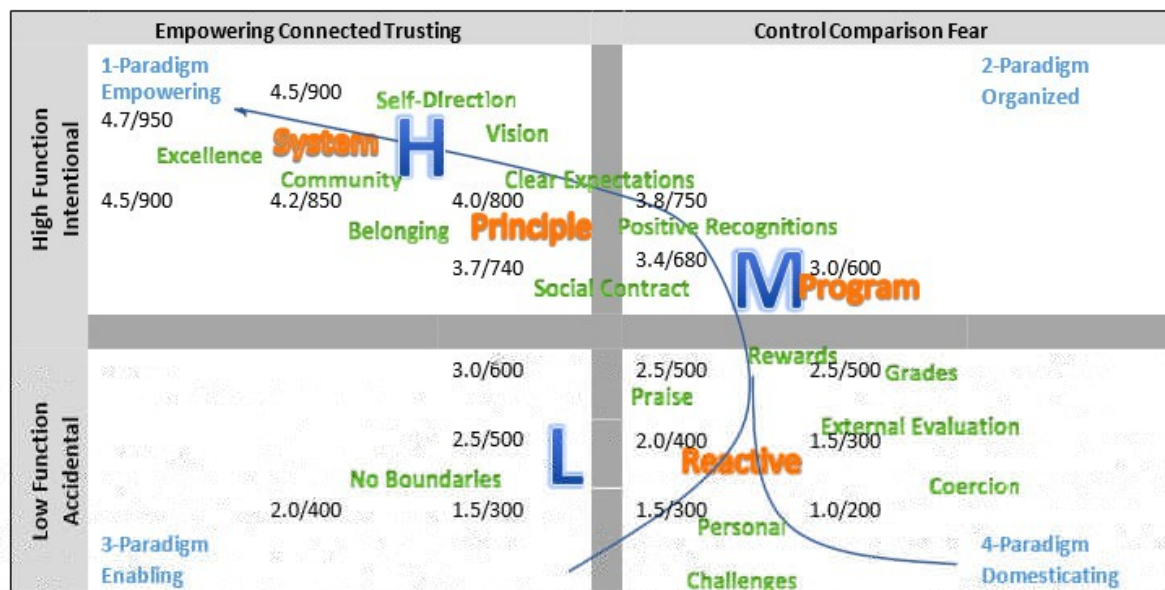


In essence this theory is saying that the individual learner sets the standards for their own performance by relating these to a set of variables which express their belief in own competence or abilities. Importantly it points out that students compare themselves with other students, think about their environment and the norms that are set in the school and outside the school.

Methods of teaching and teachers understanding of success have a great influence on students' decisions to achieve.

Shindler (2009), with over twenty years research and observation of school climates and teaching methods, used the diagram below to describe the effects of different models of teaching on pupils' school achievement.

Figure 3: Complete School Improvement Theoretical Roadmap with Pathway Pattern



What he found especially interesting is that the roadmap structure with its pathway toward higher levels of consciousness and efficacy works at all levels – school, classroom, and individual. As an institution, the more a school can take on the nature of the 1-Paradigm the more successful and effective it will be. In the classroom or team setting, when a group develops a sense of community and grows in the capacity for self-direction, their potential is increased. For all individuals in the school – leaders, teachers, staff and students, raising our levels of consciousness will imply growing our personal qualities related to trust in life, connection to others, and learning to access our inner resources, gifts and talents. This personal journey up the pathway will define to a great extent the ability of the school to move up as a collective/institution. Therefore, unsurprisingly, what they found in most every case was that when they came across a transformative school they typically also found a leader who had to a great extent embraced a personal journey of growth (up the pathway) that mirrored that of the school.

Traits, Attributes, Characteristics

When thinking about traits one could also use the term attributes. Importantly education psychologists and social psychologists have demonstrated with



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evidence that traits and attributes can be learned and developed. The NAT Cen Survey UK report (2017) was very detailed and gives much food for thought. Suffice to say here, there is plenty of evidence from all school categories (Maintained, Academies, Independent schools, Special schools, Alternate provision), that the term 'character education' was not very familiar in schools, but nevertheless character traits were clearly a familiar term and understood. There was a commitment and a high sense of priority attached to the development of character traits, primarily to encourage good citizenship and academic attainment, but also to promote employability particularly in secondary schools.

It is important to note that most schools stated they supported character education citing school processes such as assemblies and mission statements as a means of achieving character education. However, where the term character education was fully understood they were very likely to have a formal 'Character Education Plan' or a lead person for character education. This resulted in a more targeted approach with a much wider set of activities, such as discrete character education lessons, focus on character through and within subject lessons, tutor periods, peer to peer support and mentoring, smaller group or inter-personal sessions. In all cases strong school leadership and high levels of staff commitment were seen as essential to implementing character education.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

This view of character education being synonymous with 'social and emotional skills' is strongly supported by the OECD 2015 study on 'Skills for Social Progress: the Power of Social and Emotional Skills'. The UK is a key member of this 35 country organisation for economic and social development. The OECD study broadly defined skills as individual characteristics that drive at least one dimension of individual well-being and socio- economic progress (productivity) which can be measured meaningfully, and that they are malleable through environmental changes and investments.

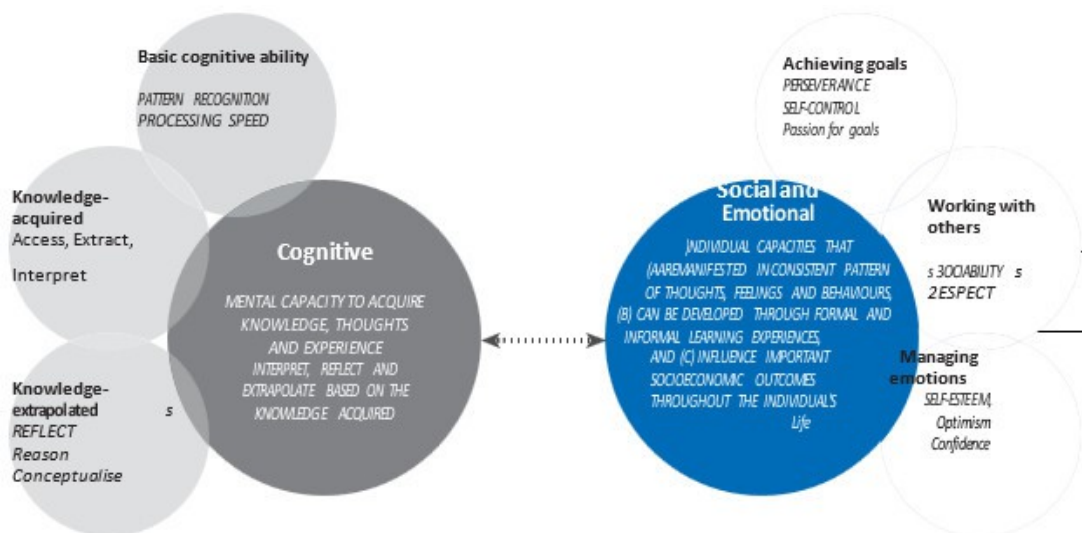
Skills are also key to understanding the development of social and emotional inequalities.

We know that in OECD countries and other global partners, school gaps across ethnic and income groups are more associated with skill deficits than family financial capabilities during school going years (Cunha and Heckman, 2007). Increases in cognitive skills increases the probability of completing tertiary education, finding a job and earning a good salary (Kautz et al. 2014). It is known that there are sensitive periods for skill development, and that parents have a significant impact on cognitive and social emotional skills in early childhood.

Kautz also suggests that social and emotional skills can raise the long term life prospects of disadvantaged children and adolescents for a variety of labour market and social outcomes.

We are equally cognizant that later interventions are also effective especially in terms of social emotional skills. Hence the importance of school years in skills development (Kautz et al. 2014). The framework diagram below illustrates this point.

Figure 4: A framework for cognitive, social and emotional skill



Skills for Social Progress: 'The Power of Social and Emotional skills'. (page 34 OECD 2015)



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The OECD study makes the case that social emotional skills have outcomes that matter to policy makers, teachers, parents and students. For example, a longitudinal study of 10-year olds in the USA, measured for factors of grit, social anxiety, and social co-operation at Grade three and showed they were predictors of self reported university attendance at the age of twenty. A similar study in the UK showed that 10-years olds measured for self esteem, locus of control and persistence were good predictors of tertiary education completion when aged 26 years.

Overall, the OECD study suggests that the impact of raising social and emotional skills on improving social outcomes generally outweighs the corresponding impact of raising cognitive skills. This is consistent with other studies (Heckman, Stixrud and Urzua 2006). Weissberg et.al (2017) reviewed 82 school-based interventions on social and emotional learning involving 97,406 kindergarten to high school students. Participants fared significantly better than controls in social emotional skills, attitudes and indicators of well-being. The benefits were similar regardless of students' race, socio economic background or school location.

Thinking about Educational Standards & Character Education / Social Emotional Learning

The majority of teachers and educators care about their students and know that the real purpose of education is to prepare students for the future. They understand that life success is predicted as much by social emotional intelligence as by IQ (Goleman 1995). They equally know the importance of competence in Maths, English, Business Studies and the Sciences. The increasing pressure for results in the traditional subjects can make teachers feel that every moment of time must be dedicated to achievement of results in traditional subjects.

The big step forward is to recognize that character education is a vital component of today's educational standards. This is not surprising given the growing body of evidence which supports that. Evidence from America, Day and Koorland (1997) showed that the five most frequently mentioned skills were higher level thinking / problem solving, interpersonal communication, decision making, communicating effectively and self-management.

In the UK, The Early Intervention Foundation, the Cabinet Office and the Social mobility and Child Poverty Commission jointly commissioned a review in (2015).



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The review bolsters the evidence for the UK on the strong links between social and emotional skills in children and how they fare as students and adults.

The second strand of work in this review was undertaken by an international team of experts based at the National University of Ireland Galway, who sought to determine the current evidence on the effectiveness of programmes available in the UK that aim to enhance the social and emotional skills development of children and young people aged 4-20 years. Programmes in school and in out-of-school settings were included. The report provides detailed analysis of the strength of evidence on the effectiveness of these programmes. The review found strong and consistent support for the impact of social and emotional skills programmes implemented in the school setting.

Well-evaluated programmes in primary and secondary schools which sought to improve the skills of all students, including self-esteem, social skills, problem solving and coping skills, led to benefits for students' social and emotional competencies as well as educational outcomes.

The best evidenced programmes in schools and out-of-school settings have adopted a structured approach to delivery, including:

- having specific and well-defined goals
- direct and explicit focus on desired outcomes
- provision of structured activities
- training of facilitators and use of a structured manual
- and implementation over a longer period of time.

However, it appears that there is some way to go in getting social and emotional skills development embedded in school practice alongside and supporting traditional subject competencies.

The Early Intervention Foundation third report had the following findings:

- Evaluating the impact of social and emotional learning is important and challenging. At the moment, this is not being done systematically or widely. Therefore, children and young people are not necessarily receiving the best provision possible. Improving this evidence base in a way that addresses the challenges in measurement was seen as important.



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- The skills and training of staff supporting social and emotional learning with children and young people was described as key in order to ensure quality provision. This was both in terms of specific curriculum delivery in education, such as Personal, Social, Health Economic (PSHE), as well as the skill set required for working with young people, such as build trusting relationships in the youth sector. New teachers were described as sometimes underprepared in this area which led to suggestions to include child psychology and social and emotional learning in both initial teacher training and continuing professional development.
- Having a 'whole school approach' to social and emotional skills (SES) delivery was described as the most effective approach alongside dedicated curriculum provision, such as PSHE. Such an approach required strong leadership and for SES to be embedded, modelled and reinforced throughout the school.
- The key operational drivers in the education sector were reported to be attainment targets and the Ofsted accountability framework, which were not felt to support prioritisation of social and emotional learning or consistency in its provision. The voice of children and young people in contributing to the role of social and emotional learning in education was noted to be absent. Policy leadership was seen as necessary if social and emotional learning is to be prioritised.

Character Education and the new Education Inspection Framework

The psychology of learning has long pointed to the significance of emotional and social skills in overall educational attainment. Recent work by the Department for Education suggests this now has policy support. In 2019 the Department for Education [DfE] produced a new document titled Character Education Framework Guidance. The framework gives a set of six character benchmarks to assist schools. They are seen as the most important features of good provision for character education. See Appendix One for details.

In May 2019 Ofsted followed up the DfE Character Education Framework with a new inspection framework to be carried out, respectively, under Section 5 of the Education Act 2015 (as amended), section 109 of the Education And Skills Act



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2008, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2006. This new inspection regime applies to maintained schools, academies, non-association independent schools, Further education and skills provision and registered early years setting in England.

Inspectors will use a four point scale in all inspections to make the principal judgments on, quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management. From September 2019, Ofsted inspections recognised the importance of school's Provision of Character Education by including it the new judgement on Personal Development (in all Section 5 and Section 8 inspections).

Personal Development

Inspectors will make a judgement on the personal development of learners by evaluating the extent to which:

- the curriculum extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational. It provides for learners' broader development, enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents
- the curriculum and the provider's wider work support learners to develop their Character, including their resilience, confidence and independence, and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy
- at each stage of education, the provider prepares learners for future success in their next steps
- the provider prepares learners for life in modern Britain by:
 - equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute
 - positively to society
 - developing their understanding of fundamental British values
 - developing their understanding and appreciation of diversity
 - celebrating what we have in common and promoting respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law.

When discussing developing pupils' character, Ofsted inspection handbook A (2019) has this to say:



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Developing pupils' character, which we define as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that inform their motivation and guides their conduct so they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. This give the pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society.

Ofsted Inspection Handbook A (2019 paragraph 215)

Ofsted's new handbooks gives grade descriptors for Outstanding and Good character education under personal development. See Appendix Two.

Key messages so far in relation to Character Education

Character is a set of personal traits, attributes or dispositions that produce specific emotions, inform achievement motivation and guide individuals behaviour. Character education is inclusive of all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths. Character education enables individuals to acquire key social and emotional traits and attributes. The intention is the development of good sense, moral judgement the capacity to choose intelligently between alternatives. The growth of this capacity comes gradually from the experience of making choices, receiving relevant feedback and the ability to be able to think and reflect on own and other's actions. Hence the importance of constructive feedback for the student and between student and teacher.

Ofsted have highlighted the importance of a planned structured approach to character education, the value of having a dedicated resource to implement character education, combined with wider set of activities aimed at providing targeted programmes which enhance traits, skills and attributes for career and life success. This is abundantly clear in the inspection descriptors of outstanding and good character education (Appendix Two). There is extensive evidence that traits, attributes, skills are elements of character education as are social emotional skill acquisition these have a positive effect on educational outcomes.

There is a growing political and industry consensus that the role of character education is extremely important in sustaining well being in individuals and thus sustaining healthy economies and democracies.

The contribution Entrepreneurial attributes and App offers to character education

A central tenet is the aim to;

“ equip young people with essential and transferable enterprise skills, encouraging an entrepreneurial approach so that they will have the ability to create better life chances for themselves and become catalysts for positive change in their communities ” (Aldridge Foundation, 2019).



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Each attribute has a defined skill set with associated indicators to assist development of the attribute and facilitate feedback for the learner.

These attributes have further been developed into a **SkillsSelfie** App which has the ability to track students skills development within the Aldridge Attributes and the impact of this on development on academic progress.

During 2016 – 2017 academic year a pilot study was conducted into the implementation of the **SkillsSelfie** App.

The sample size was too small to yield significant findings that would hold up under full academic scrutiny. However it did indicate some trends which seem to point to positive impact of the attributes on academic progress, the efficacy of the APP itself and its ability to isolate each attribute and see the effect it is having on academic progress.

Early indications of the potential usefulness of the app include:

- ... The App has the potential to be a powerful evaluation tool whilst also having some potential as a learning and teaching tool.
- ... Attribute development can be measured and tracked by students over time and the relationship of this trajectory compared to academic progress.
- ... In the pilot, across the board the average levels of progress of the user group were higher than those of the rest of the cohort in each exam group compared.
- ... Those showing a 5% or more increase in all six attributes made more levels of progress than the rest of the user group in English and Maths and equalled the average levels of progress in History indicating that developing all six attributes could have a cumulative impact.
- ... The study did not find any impact of the teacher having access to the APP on the user group compared to the subject specific non user group taught by the same teacher. These findings are more than sufficient to warrant further, more rigorous academic research using the APP and the tracking of the skills within the Attributes to ascertain impact on academic progression.

There were some very interesting additional points to note from this pilot:

- ... In maths those showing a 5% increase in each skill also outperformed the rest of the year group in terms of academic progress in the period. The skill which correlates to the greatest difference is **Passion**
- ... The differential in Levels of **Progress** less in History, but it is also true here that those making 5% increase in each skill outperformed the rest of the year group taking this subject. **Passion** and

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Ofsted, School Inspection Handbook, (2019) Handbook A (paragraph 215).



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APPENDIX ONE

A. What kind of school are we?

- How clearly do we articulate the kind of education we aspire to provide?
- How do we ensure that all members of the school community (e.g. staff, pupils, parents/carers, governing body) understand and share our aims?
- How effectively do we create a sense of pride, belonging and identity in our school?

B. What are our expectations of behaviour towards each other?

- Are we clear on the importance of discipline and good behaviour in school life?
- How do we promote this understanding?
- How well do we promote consideration and respect towards others (pupils and adults), good manners and courtesy?
- How well do we promote a range of positive character traits among pupils

C. How well do our curriculum and teaching develop resilience and confidence?

- Is our curriculum ambitious for our pupils? Does it teach knowledge and cultural capital which will open doors and give them confidence in wider society?
- Is our curriculum logically organised and sequenced, including within subjects, and taught using effective pedagogy, so pupils gain a strong sense of progress and grow in confidence?

D. How good is our co-curriculum?

- Does it cover a wide range across artistic, creative, performance, sporting, debating, challenge, team and individual etc. so all pupils can both discover new interests and develop existing ones?
- Do we make use of or promote local, national or international programmes or organisations? (e.g. uniformed organisations, Duke of Edinburgh, National Citizen Service etc.)
- Is provision of high quality and does it challenge pupils and build expertise?
- Is participation sustained over time?



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- Are there ample opportunities for pupils to compete, perform etc., and is success acknowledged and celebrated? Is participation sustained over time?
- Are there ample opportunities for pupils to compete, perform etc., and is success acknowledged and celebrated?



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APPENDIX TWO:

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in personal development securely and consistently.
- Personal development is exceptional. In addition, the following apply:
 - The school consistently promotes the extensive personal development of pupils. The school goes beyond the expected, so that pupils have access to a wide, rich set of experiences. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality.
 - There is strong take-up by pupils of the opportunities provided by the school. The most disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from this excellent work.
 - The school provides these rich experiences in a coherently planned way, in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, and they considerably strengthen the school's offer.
 - The way the school goes about developing pupils' character is exemplary and is worthy of being shared with others.

Good (2)

- The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development. The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.
- The curriculum and the school's effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.
- The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests. Pupils appreciate these and make good use of them.
- The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.



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- The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. As a result, pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, including the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.
- Pupils engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own in considered ways. They show respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law and no forms of discrimination are tolerated.
- The school provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society.
- Pupils know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.
- Secondary schools prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They use the Gatsby Benchmarks 87 to develop and improve their careers provision and enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13. All pupils receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. The school provides good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.

October 2020