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Character Development Project

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Diocese of Chester

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University of St Mark
& St John, Plymouth

GO Ministries Ltd.

Introduction

The What If Learning Character Development Project has been funded by the Department for Education and run by the Church of England Education Office in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University, the dioceses of Chester, Derby, Exeter and Peterborough, and the University of St Mark and St John. Full details of the programme are included in the accompanying report, along with headlines of the impact it made. However, these case studies bring to life the imaginative and exciting ways in which schools have used their Christian ethos to support teachers and pupils in promoting character virtues in the classroom. They are a small selection of the wider work which has been done, and we hope they will be useful to others.

Wybunbury Delves C of E Aided Primary School

Being part of character development project has its benefits

Our school is a one-form entry primary school in the Diocese of Chester. Our reception teacher led our participation in the Character Development Project, working closely with Reception and Year 5. Our school wants 'children knowing the school values and them turning those values into virtues.' Teachers used *What If Learning*, a Christian approach to teaching and learning, over a three-month period to develop the Christian virtue of hospitality amongst pupils. We found that not only was the school's Christian ethos enriched but also there were benefits of using *What If Learning* for pupils, staff and our school's community.

'The project added extra rocket fuel to what we do already. It supported what we do and believe in and that's not just about teaching the Bible, it's about growing as a character, and a person, understanding the world you're in, the place you're in and thinking about others.'

BENEFITS TO PUPILS

Character education benefitted pupils as they:

Came to understand better each other and world events;

Reflected on how behaviour impacts on the feelings and lives of others;

Demonstrated hospitable virtues such as empathy and respect.

Two teachers explain the value of using *What If Learning* to encourage reflection on these benefits.

'It allows children to explore and that's a good thing for them to realise they've got a voice and can be heard and can come up with ideas.'

'It empowers children to think. I think it gives them permission to consider and be more reflective in different way.'

BENEFITS TO STAFF

The project encouraged deep reflection on teaching and learning. Our teachers recorded personal responses in planning journals. Confidence in delivering character education grew as teachers got to grips with understanding the nature of hospitality and using *What If Learning*.

'As a newly qualified teacher What If Learning gave me a different way of planning my lessons... It's a tool for me; it's seeing something through new eyes. It gave me another angle to look at something and use something I would not have thought about in my lessons.'

'It helped me work with different people in a different way from the way I normally work. You get boxed into your own way of doing something so it is nice to see it in a different way.'

HOW CHARACTER EDUCATION WORKED FOR US

These four strategies underpinned our developmental process:

- 1 We began with changing the way we taught rather than the lesson content.
- 2 Through professional dialogue and coaching, we talked through lessons with the project lead and colleagues, which helped us to see things differently and share ideas.
- 3 Project lead observation and feedback on aspects of What If Learning evident in lessons and children's responses enhanced teachers' familiarity with the approach.
- 4 Use of the project's 'matching tool' to aid lesson planning enabled one aspect for each of the three steps of What If Learning to be included into our plans - see examples on the following pages.

HOW CHARACTER EDUCATION WORKED FOR US

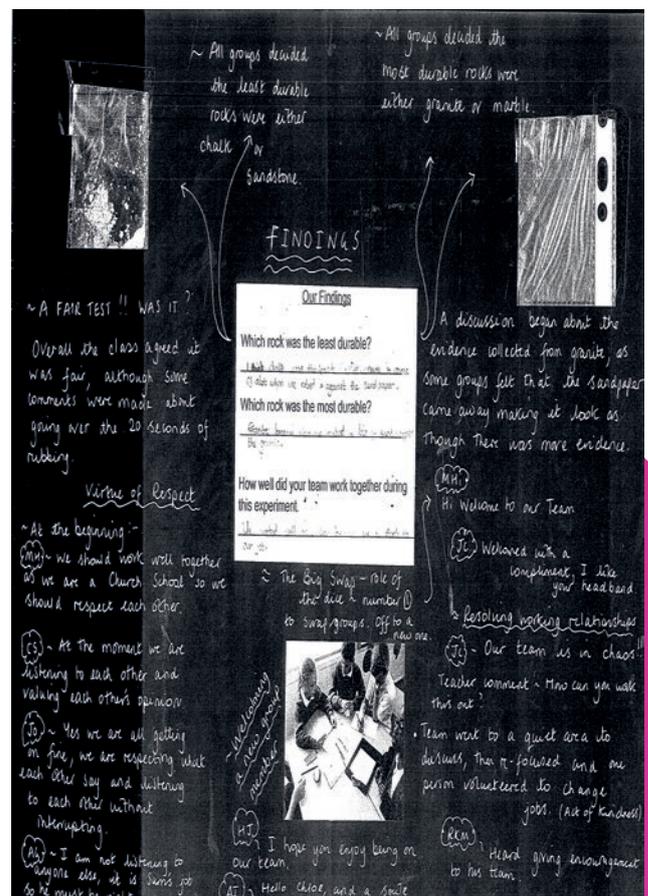
Example 1: Jumping into the scientific world of chemistry

Year 5 Science	Investigation of the properties of materials
Seeing Anew	Towards curiosity in other people's views
Choosing Engagement	Focus on the virtue of respect
Reshaping Practice	Reflection time; making a tangible change to the environment

The Year 5 teacher invited pupils to 'jump into the world of science' and develop hospitable characteristics through the process of investigating the durability of rocks. Pupils had come across crumbling rocks in the 'Wind Singer' story, and were interested in finding out what the rocks may have been made from and their characteristics. The teacher's reflection was 'the experimental process lent itself well to children demonstrating virtuous behaviour'.

The teacher's objective was for pupils to show curiosity towards the views of others. Midway through the session when pupils had formulated hypotheses and were planning tests, the teacher introduced 'unexpected changes' to the groupings. Children had to engage differently and 'think about how to work as a team.' The teacher observed children empathising with the child joining their group who had not contributed to their investigation plan. The group needed to be inclusive, 'welcoming' and 'respectful' while listening to each other's viewpoints.

Children could reflect on the impact the changes had on their learning and behaviour and discuss any problems encountered. The teacher encouraged one team, finding the change hard to work things out and one child's act of kindness in offering to change roles resolved the situation.



One page in the teacher's journal

The teacher commented:

'Whilst some children with specific learning difficulties found the change unsettling they managed themselves and the situation well...It was a privilege to stand back and watch how they welcomed somebody at their table.'

Example 1 (cont'd)

Pupil views of their experiences were very positive.

The teacher recorded these on post-its and in her journal. The photograph on page 5 is of one page in the journal.



Example 2: Welcoming Noah into Reception

EYFS	Child-initiated learning: A friend you have yet to meet
Seeing Anew	Towards hospitality (welcoming a stranger)
Choosing Engagement	Focus on the virtue of respect
Reshaping practice	Think about use of body language

The reception teacher introduced Noah, a large persona doll, to the class. She wanted young pupils to experience and demonstrate hospitality towards a new friend. Thinking about the needs of others can be challenging for young children. Following a 'stranger-danger talk', some pupils conceptualised a stranger 'as someone they did not know'. They thought strangers were either 'good or bad'. The teacher wanted children to understand that 'a stranger may be a friend they have yet to meet'. She wanted them to experience ways of welcoming people. She altered the learning environment by introducing Noah. The teacher modelled ways pupils might treat a new friend. The children then followed these in child-initiated learning. They used hospitable gestures and the language of hospitality when talking to the doll. They made food for him and served this as part of the social play experience.



The teacher perceived that this kind of experience was valuable:

'I think it helps them think of others and how they can help others and what they can do. It's a lovely mind-shift for the children that actually they think of others first before themselves.'

Example 3: Exploring the hospitable behaviour of fictional characters

Year 5 Art Lessons	Creating art to reflect a person's emotions
Seeing Anew	Towards controlling initial reactions
Choosing Engagement	Experiencing God's world through others' eyes
Reshaping Practice	Making connections with faith

Fiction provides a wealth of characters with interesting behaviours. The Year 5 teacher invited pupils to express artistically the emotional changes a character called 'Mumpo' went through. Mumpo, initially an unlikeable person, goes through a character transformation for the better. Mumpo starts to treat others more hospitably. Pupils studied the character as part of literacy work. The teacher altered the way she would have taught the 'PSHE element of one lesson'. She enabled children to make connections with the wider world and discuss the terrorist attacks in Paris. Children reflected on the importance of faith. They considered the impact positive and negative choices can have on others and Biblical versus concerning the need for 'Peace on earth and goodwill to all men.'

The teacher observed that the concepts in the lesson challenged children:

'They didn't just dismiss somebody because they'd done a bad deed they were realising like in the story that there were reasons behind things and they were thinking these through.... Lots of them said 'it teaches you that you have an impact on how others are feeling.'

Examples illustrating the changes in children's thinking recorded in the teacher's journal:

*Hold yourself back,
don't hurt people - It
makes everybody
hurt.*

*Its changed me
because it made me
think wow! It teaches
happiness not hatred. If
someone did something
bad to me now, I'd look at
why they are doing it.*

*Faith teaches you
to have to have an
impact on how others
are feeling. If you put
yourself in their shoes,
it gives you power to
give joy.*

*Faith
gives you
confidence.*

Braunston C of E Primary School

Braunston C of E Primary School, for approximately 200 four to eleven year olds, is situated in the canal village of Braunston, Northampton, in the Peterborough Diocese. This case study illustrates our response to the Character Development Project, which focused on teachers adopting use of What If Learning over a three-month period to develop the Christian virtue of hospitality amongst pupils. What If Learning supports teachers in provision of a Christian approach to teaching and learning. We found project engagement benefitted pupils, staff and the school community.

'We'd got our values and what we were saying as a school was actually, we need to see those values in practice so that if we can see those values in practice, those values become virtues and those values are then celebrated within the class and within an achievement assembly.'

Our approach to character education

We used What If Learning across the curriculum as part of our approach to values education. We were interested in linking acquisition of hospitality traits to two school values 'relationships' and 'reconciliation', which we had planned to teach for one term.

We approached the introduction of What If Learning in same way we would any curriculum initiative: teachers were inducted into the nature of hospitality and What If Learning at a staff meeting. We then shared ideas for introducing this pedagogical approach into a whole school history project on World War One.

BENEFITS TO OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The focus on developing Christian traits across all subjects embedded the school's Christian ethos and made it 'more explicit'. We reflected on ways of recognising and celebrating development of hospitable traits. Before the project we mainly integrated the values into religious education, PSHE and collective worship.

We utilised the project as a means of strengthening hospitality towards parents and the community. For example, pupils visited the village war memorial and learnt about individuals listed with the help of the local history society. This raised a question about the contribution people with different faiths made to the War. As a community response to Remembrance children made poppies and created a school memorial. This enabled pupils to demonstrate the hospitality traits 'generosity of spirit' and 'charity'. We welcomed parents into school to view this and invited donations for poppies to raise money for charity.

'Lots of parents of the children are absolutely buzzing with what we've been doing. We're drawing parents into it.'

BENEFITS TO STAFF

Using What If Learning enhanced teachers' confidence to teach character education and offered a mind-set change in the way teachers approach the planning and delivery of traditional lesson content.

The Year 1 teacher/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and project lead provided strong leadership and encouragement to staff: 'coaching, staff meetings and informal chats' provided reassurance and opportunities for reflection on practice and the sharing of learning experiences.

These are examples of the comments made by teachers:

I think you've got to get away from that mind-set to thinking, actually no, it's not an add-on, because we are still going to stick with the same curriculum. It's just changing the mind-set. Changing the mind-set can take time for the children because you've got to build in time for the children to reflect.....How are we going to get children to think about hospitality rather than the teacher telling them that this is the hospitality?'

'It encourages you to be a reflective practitioner....What is the biggest sense of education here? Really, what is the journey these children are going on? What are we offering them in terms of their spiritual development?'

'Just having the supporting documentation allowed me to revitalise some planning and give it a new spin, a new twist that made it much more engaging to the children. I think building in time to reflect is a strength, in giving children time to absorb what they have learned, what they have been thinking about and consider how it is going to be used in their lives.'

BENEFITS TO CHILDREN

Over a short time, we noticed:

- Children's understanding of the concept of hospitality increased;
- Their use of the language of hospitality;
- Developments in pupils' hospitality virtues and tolerance towards others;
- Increased ability to work collaboratively in class.

Children had the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of not behaving hospitably through role-play, literature and world events, such as in the terrorist attacks that took place in Paris:

'It ties in excellently to the Church ethos of allowing children to be themselves, knowing it's okay to be different and knowing how to communicate in a way that people don't feel judged. ..Knowing that contributions from everyone are valued.'

'With such a packed curriculum you're in danger of just addressing the objectives and churning out robots rather than well rounded people, and it's striking that balance and it does allow you to do that.'

PROJECT EXAMPLES, INCLUDING WAYS OF USING WHAT IF LEARNING TO DEVELOP HOSPITALITY

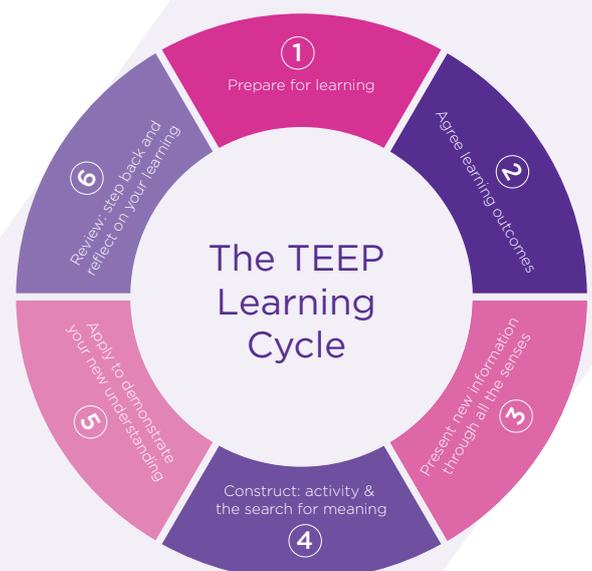
Planning for hospitality in lessons

We used our existing lesson planning framework, Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) learning cycle, to incorporate What If Learning.

In step 1, Seeing Anew, we agreed the learning outcome by considering which of our Christian values we could bring into the lesson and how it would help pupils develop specific hospitality traits. The project intervention materials were helpful as they provide examples of the traits children might exemplify.

In step 2, Choosing Engagement, we planned creative ways of presenting information, opportunities for pupils to 'search for meaning in their learning' and 'demonstrate understanding'.

In step 3, Reshaping Practice, we planned changes to the way we taught to facilitate hospitable responses from pupils. The following examples illustrate the approach.



www.ssatuk.co.uk/cpd/teaching-and-learning/teep

Example 1

Year 6 Religious Education/History	School visit to Sikh Temple and St Philips Centre in Leicester to understand how people remember
Seeing Anew	Towards controlling initial reactions; curiosity about other people's views
Choosing Engagement	Focus on virtue of respect; consider difference and contrasts
Reshaping Practice	Make connections with faith; hearing the views of others on an educational visit

The Year 6 teacher used a visit to St Philips Centre, a registered charity, and Sikh Temple in Leicester to extend children's understanding of Remembrance from a both Sikh and Christian perspectives. None of the children had visited a Sikh Temple. The experience enabled them to listen respectfully to the views of others and 'adapt to unfamiliar circumstances in appropriate ways'.

Pupil completion of project evaluation sheets provided insights into how engagement altered two children's perspectives:

'It taught me about Sikhs fighting in the First World War and how thousands of them were killed. A memorial has just been made to remember them.'

'It made me think about how many different religions and cultures that came together to fight for something that they all believed in.'

'It changed my mind about how we remember those that died. We can remember them by reading about them, going to look at memorials and many other ways.'

'It made me think about how hard it must have been when they were fighting in the Indian Army. It also made me think that we need to remember people who died in the war.'

'It made me want to respect the religion more than I used to. It also makes me want to learn more detailed information about the Sikhs.'



Example 1 (cont'd)

This is an example of the framework used to record teacher reflections across the school:

Hospitality trait	Teacher's views
Being good listeners	Listening respectfully to the views of others.
Able to explain why certain things are important to others	Understanding the role of Remembrance in both the Christian and Sikh communities and comparing and contrasting these roles.
Expressing their views with respectful conviction	The children were especially interested in the Sikh belief to protect the weak and poor/vulnerable.
Able to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances in appropriate ways	As a mono-cultural school none of the children had experience of visiting a Gurdwara although they have had experience of Sikh visitors in school.
Empathy	The children were given the opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of those who fought in World War 1 and those who remember them.
Desire to promote the common good	Concept of shared community response to Remembrance and realisation that there were many common factors between Sikhism and Christianity.
Generosity of spirit and action	Children's responses were thoughtful and expressed a desire to extend their learning. The children emerged from the visit better able to respond to diversity in a more hospitable way. They enjoyed the food provided by the Sikh community.

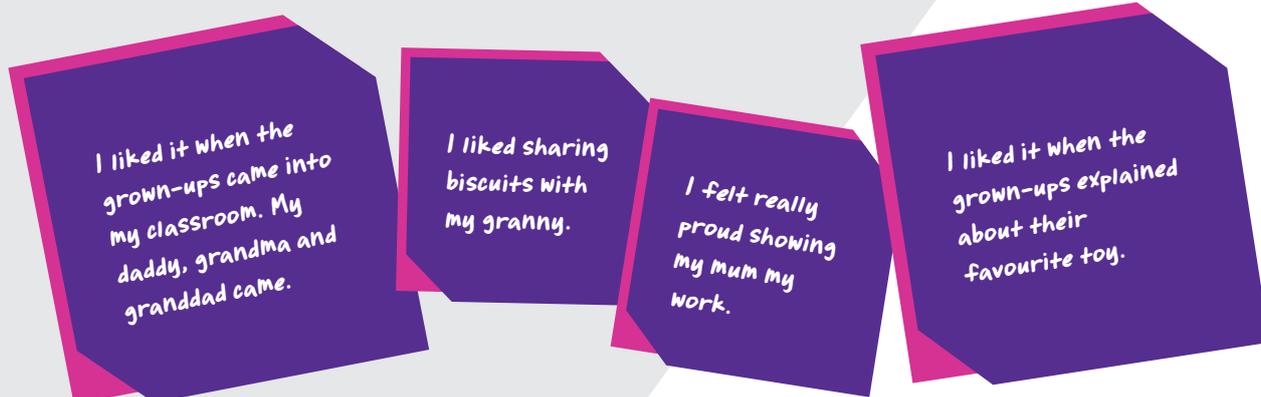
Example 2: Grandparents Day

Year 1 History	Identifying ways of welcoming people into the classroom
Seeing Anew	Towards curiosity of other people's views; towards hospitality (welcoming relations)
Choosing Engagement	Focus on the virtue of respect; openly expressing views
Reshaping Practice	Plan how to involve visitors to hear their views

The Year 1 teacher explored hospitality by holding a 'Grandparents Day' so pupils could find out about the toys their relations played with when young. Pupils would normally have asked their questions at home. Instead, they planned an event expressing their views about welcoming their families into school to express their views. They wrote invitations and demonstrated welcoming behaviour by offering seats, biscuits they had baked and singing songs. They engaged in good listening and experienced 'empathy' when thinking about the lives of others and ways of including families not able to come on the day. Their learning was recorded in a floor book. Children made thank you cards for visitors to express their appreciation.



Examples of children's comments:



Hospitality trait	Teacher's views
Being good listeners	Listening to family members explaining the games they played when they were young.
Being good 'welcomers'	Singing songs and offering refreshments. Being courteous, e.g. offering their seats to their grandparents.
Offering friendship to those they perceive as being different from themselves/welcoming the stranger	The children welcomed strangers into the classroom and were respectful of the different games they brought with them (families mixed up so children had an opportunity to meet others).
Empathy	Thinking about what it was like to be young in days gone by.
Expressing their views with respectful conviction	Sharing their ideas on how best to welcome families into school.
Generosity of spirit and action	Offering refreshments. Wanting to sing.
Desire to promote the common good	The children understood this was a shared enterprise.

St Marychurch C of E Primary and Nursery School

Developing Hospitality at Our School

St Marychurch C of E Primary and Nursery School has a mixture of single and mixed year classes and an ethnically diverse population. The school is part of the Diocese of Exeter. Our school participated in the Character Development Project. This focused on teachers using What if Learning, a Christian approach to teaching and learning, to develop the Christian virtue of hospitality over a three-month period.

We started to explore the nature of hospitality and What If Learning in a staff meeting with our Diocesan Advisor for Education. Through direct

teaching about hospitality and its exploration in school life, we facilitated children's understanding of the term. We planned specific opportunities for pupils to experience and demonstrate hospitable virtues.

The curriculum, pedagogy and Year 5/6 team leader led the project. One member from each teaching team led planning for hospitality amongst their year groups. The project lead perceives that the project 'encouraged staff to focus more on the Christian aspect of learning.'

BENEFITS OF USING WHAT IF LEARNING FOR STAFF, PUPILS AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The project benefitted the school. Pupil development of hospitable virtues fitted in well with the school's 'nurturing ethos' and realisation of all school values: love, kindness, peace and joy. Teachers already planned for children to develop positive learning attitudes and demonstration of one or more values. We combined the focus on planning for learning attitudes and realisation of values with planning for the development of hospitality virtues. The acquisition of hospitality virtues facilitated acquisition of learning attitudes and vice-versa.

'The idea of creating peace and harmony between people - all our values have been hit through the project. Every Church school should be able to say that this project would slot quite naturally into what they are doing and use it to enhance the school values and put them into the curriculum.'

PROJECT EXAMPLES, INCLUDING WAYS OF USING WHAT IF LEARNING TO DEVELOP HOSPITALITY

Example 1: Holding a parent work-sharing event with a difference

Year 3 & 4 Event	Planning and holding a friends and family event to celebrate learning
Christian values	Love, kindness, joy
Learning attitudes	Responsibility, aspiration, creativity
Seeing anew	Towards hospitality and valuing community
Choosing engagement	Trace connections between faith and learning through use of Bible stories
Reshaping practice	Think about use of body language; planning for visitors and adding a personal touch

Each team runs an event, where parents are invited into school to view their children’s learning. The Year 3/4 team strengthened children’s participation in planning, organising and running the event. They creatively reinvented it, turning it into a friends and family occasion to celebrate learning. The decision to engage children stemmed from a lesson about hospitality when children began to explore the meaning of hospitality and ways of demonstrating hospitality towards people they did not know so well.



Pupils selected and undertook the roles needed. They ‘swapped roles’ so everyone engaged in the hospitality aspect could also share their work.

- Greeters
at doors
to welcome
everyone
- Bakers
- Photographers
for the event
- Refreshment
providers
- Direction
givers

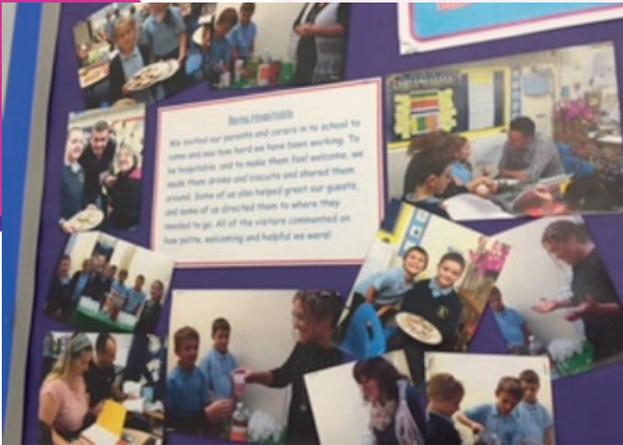
Example 1 (cont'd)

The class teacher's reflections:

All the lessons around hospitality have been a fantastic experience for both staff and children.

The event was a really positive change for the school community because the children absolutely loved doing it, Parents thought it was a really nice experience and they still talk about it now. So it is definitely something we will continue doing and will build on.

Staff, parents and carers commented on how amazing the children were and what a credit they were to the school.



Pupil photograph of the event from the hospitality display board

BENEFITS TO PUPILS

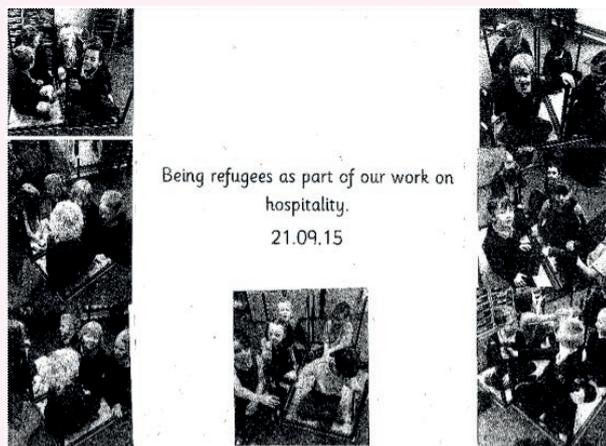
Pupils engaged well with the project and developed hospitable characteristics:

- Children 'flourished' in experiences where they could be hospitable to others;
- Their experiences 'made them feel positive about themselves';
- Children, 'not very adept at social situations were able to stand and greet people, show them around' and demonstrate 'the caring aspect of their personalities';
- Character education teaches children 'to be kind, responsible citizens'.

Example 2: The value of using drama to experience hospitable behaviour

Year 1 & 2 literacy/drama	Moving to a new place (Link to the Syrian Refugee Crisis)
Christian values	Joy and kindness
Learning attitudes	Spirituality and responsibility
Seeing anew	Towards hospitality
Choosing engagement	Enabling pupils to openly express opinions
Reshaping practice	Making connections with the wider world; changing the layout of the room

Using the story 'Cloudy with a chance of meatballs', Year 1 and 2 teachers invited their classes to imagine what they would feel like if they had been asked to leave behind everything they had ever known and start afresh in a new place. Whilst the story characters travel in boats made of bread to 'a new world' and experience a happy ending, the teachers changed the content of the lesson and took children beyond the 'comfort' of the story into considering hospitality issues in the wider world.



In Year 1, pupils were split into two groups and were treated differently upon landing. One group was treated well by a welcoming officer and given food and blankets. The other group was met by an unwelcoming officer, were given orders and were left to fend for themselves. Children reflected on the nature of their treatment. Children described themselves as 'angry', 'cold and scared' and questioned the fairness of some children receiving blankets. The Year 1 teacher observed them forgetting it was role-play and some children inviting those treated unfairly to join them.

Year 2 pupils walked through a 'conscious alley'. This was designed so that they could walk and listen to the different ways people felt about 'foreigners' moving into their houses or school and sharing their things. They were invited to reflect on the different perspectives and discuss their emotional responses.

In both year groups, teachers changed the layout of the classroom: upturned tables became boats and pupils enacted the lives of refugees arriving at a new land. Year 2, children shared either worries or excitement about the futures.

Year 2 Teacher's comments:

They listened and respected each other's views about having to share their toys with a stranger.

They found parts of the conscious alley troubling when they heard more negative than positive comments.

Year 1 Teacher's Comments

My confidence in teaching character education has developed:

'My ability to have a conversation with children about them putting themselves in the position of others has changed. My expectations of children have risen.

I have thought more about the language five-year olds can use and I expect more of them than just simple phrases' when describing emotions..'

Pupil Evaluation:

This project has made me think about...

If a new person started in our school I would ask to be their collaborative partner, show them where things are so they don't get lost. I would tell them the teachers' names and be kind to them even if they were feeling worried and support other people in being kind to them as well.

Over a short time, we noticed

- Making them stronger characters;
- Widening their use of vocabulary when describing emotions and hospitable behaviour;
- Enabling them to recognise and respond to hospitable/inhospitable behaviour.

Evidencing Character Development

Every class in the school has a reflection book. We put the themes we want children 'to think a bit more about' in this book. Children have 'lovely ideas', which are recorded and used to promote reflection. In the drama children were reminded of their responses to a photograph of an empty fridge without food recorded in the reflection booklet during Harvest Festival preparations. This helped them empathise with the refugees in need of food.

Christ Church C of E Primary School

Character education *'takes you back to what teaching should be about really and that's developing the child holistically so as well as their attainment and their progress it's also about developing their character.'*

Being part of character development project has its benefits

Christ Church C of E Primary School, for 4-11 year olds, is situated on the outskirts of the town of Chesterfield in the Derby Diocese. This case study illustrates our school's response to the Character Development Project, where teachers used What If Learning, a Christian approach to teaching and learning to develop the Christian virtue of hospitality amongst pupils over a three-month period.

We sought to develop pupils' hospitality virtues in lessons across the curriculum and promote children's understanding of the 'true meaning of hospitality' through daily school life and collective worship.

In launching the project, our Diocesan Advisor for Education led a staff meeting to explore the nature of hospitality and What If Learning. Teachers considered how these two elements might fit into the curriculum topics they had planned.

One teacher commented:

'It was really helpful to talk through something that was relevant to what I was teaching at the time and see how it fitted in...I realised I didn't have to reinvent anything...just kind of think a little bit differently.'

In each class, teachers built up their confidence in using What if Learning. Teachers initially adopted varying approaches to character education enabling them to discover what worked well. One teacher explored hospitality in literacy, using What If Learning to facilitate pupil reflection on hospitality in a range of texts. Other teachers incorporated hospitality in specific topics or individual lessons.

Establishing pupil hospitality ambassadors

Our school enabled pupils to gain a voice in school hospitality development. We selected two ‘hospitality ambassadors’ in each class, who had specific responsibility for promoting hospitality and ‘making everyone feel welcome in class’. They met regularly with the project lead to discuss ideas, write and then lead prayers on the theme of hospitality in collective worship. This initiative developed from our practice of having ‘values ambassadors’, where individual pupils take responsibility for promoting one of each of our school values.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

Teachers used Step 1 Seeing Anew of What If Learning as the starting point for planning pupil experiences, which led to changes in their delivery of lessons.

Example 1: How a heart can make a world of difference to someone

Year 4/5: Literacy (link to science)	Writing a recount of an interview and biography of a pupil in the school who has received a heart transplant
Seeing Anew	Towards curiosity about other people’s views; towards respect and reverence
Choosing Engagement	Focus on virtue of respect; practice listening skills
Reshaping Practice	Plan time for reflection; draw on a child’s experience

In a mixed Year 4/5 class, the teacher used a topic on ‘the heart’ to enable children to consider how a heart can make ‘a world of difference for someone’. Having researched the heart in science, the class welcomed a pupil who had received a heart transplant into class to interview her about her life. From a literacy perspective, information was collated to write recounts of the interview, letters of thanks and her biography. From a hospitality perspective children prepared for the event by considering ways of welcoming a visitor and potential questions to be posed. Pupils made notes during the interview and constructed a timeline of events in the child’s life. They reflected on and noted not only the emotions experienced by the child at different stages in her life but also their own emotional responses.

The notes, letters and biographies children produced illustrate deep reflection on the child’s story, empathy and an ability to express their views with conviction. This is exemplified in an extract of a thank you letter written by one pupil and a biography written by another.

It was interesting when we found out where the amazing and life-saving new heart came from. I didnt like it when I heard that the doctor said she might not make it. I didnt like it when she had to use four machines. It was really sad when you told us that she had to have an operation in hospital. I was sad because it hurt my feelings for her.

*The doctors had to fit a new heart into her body. I bet it was really painful and it took seven hours!
She is lucky that she survived and everybody is too. I should be grateful that this did not happen to me.*

The teacher reflections:

Pupils acquired ‘a deeper respect for others (within the school)’, demonstrated in their behaviour towards their peers and more ‘respect for their bodies’. The children raised a range of questions, reflecting their high level of interest and attempts to understand the child’s views and complexities of the wonders of science. Examples include:



Example 2: Caring for God’s creatures

Reception	Settling in, making friends, listening skills - caring for God’s creatures
Seeing Anew	Towards hospitality (how to look after a rabbit)
Choosing Engagement	Make connections with the wider world
Reshaping Practice	Experience God’s world through others’ eyes

The children planned and built ‘a hutch to keep it dry’ complete with a ball, straw and food. Choosing engagement was focused on pupils experiencing ‘God’s world through others eyes’ and Reshaping practice involved them making of connections with the wider world. Children discussed ‘how they could help each be kind to each other, like if somebody falls over you could pick them up and see if they are okay.’



BENEFITS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION TO PUPILS

- Pupils developed hospitable behaviour and understood hospitality, which aided both classroom and school ethos.
- Pupils were encouraged to reflect on world events, express their views and empathise with others by considering what it would be like if the events happened to them.
- In one class a group of children, who found it a challenge working with adults other than their class teacher, took responsibility for welcoming a teaching assistant. Gaining an understanding of hospitable behaviour and demonstrating this in terms of 'treating others how they would like to be treated' was 'in the teacher view 'time well spent' as children's' behaviours altered, aiding 'good learning'.

BENEFITS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION TO STAFF

The level of reflection enhanced teachers' professional practice. For instance one teacher said she was encouraged to think about ways pupils could 'experience things differently so their curiosity is pricked so that they can ask questions and have a discussion.'

Character development was worthwhile: It appealed to teachers' beliefs about the purpose of education.

For example, one teacher reflected that:

'As the emphasis tends more and more towards academic attainment and progress and all those things that Ofsted look for all of the time there is a danger of finding yourself focussing on children as numbers and pushing the attainment as fast as possible.'

The project 'takes you back to what teaching should be about really and that's developing the child holistically so as well as their attainment and their progress it's also about developing their character.'

He also added that you 'won't get that academic attainment if you've not got a happy, fully developed child.'

BENEFITS TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The focus on character education gave the school's Christian value system 'even greater prominence' unifying the school community in our actions and development of inclusive practices. One teacher described the strength of What if Learning as it being both 'distinctively Christian' and 'very inclusive'.

One teacher found that developing empathy in young children in response to world events is no easy matter, even in a supportive environment and that teachers need to be prepared to respond sensitively to children when tackling the need for hospitality in the world. For example, in a topic on the weather, Year 1 pupils were invited to respond to video clips showing impact of extreme weather on people's lives. Children demonstrated 'moving' and unexpected emotional responses 'as they have never experienced it,' requiring sensitivity in teacher response.

DEVELOPING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN PARTNERSHIP IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

The project leader perceived that opportunities to meet with other schools in the project facilitated by the Diocese, aided development of a community of learning and sharing of experiences.





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