Character Curriculum at Bricknell Primary School

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	Bravery	Creativity	Curiosity	Fairness	Forgiveness
Gratitude	Honesty	Hope	Humility	Humor	Judgment
Kindness	Leadership	Love	Love of Learning	Perseverance	Perspective
Prudence	Self-Regulation	Social Intelligence	Spirituality	Teamwork	Zest

VIA Character Strengths

The VIA (Values in Action) Character Strengths are part of a framework developed to identify and measure individual character strengths. This classification was created by psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman and is a cornerstone of the positive psychology movement. The VIA Character Strengths provide a common language for describing the positive aspects of character and have been used extensively in research and practice within educational settings, including primary schools.

The VIA framework categorises 24 character strengths under six broad virtues:

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.**
   - Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things.
   - Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake.
   - Judgment: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides.
   - Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge.
   - Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others and taking others' point of view.

2. **Courage: Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition.**
   - Bravery: Not shrinking from challenge or difficulty.
   - Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action.
   - Honesty: Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way.
   - Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy.

3. **Humanity: Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others.**
   - Love: Valuing close relationships with others.
   - Kindness: Doing good deeds for others and approaching every person and situation in a kind manner.
   - Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others.

Aspiration   Knowledge   Achievement

4. Justice: Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life.
   - Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team.
   - Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice.
   - Leadership: Taking ownership of something and working productively with others.

5. Temperance: Strengths that protect against excess.
   - Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong.
   - Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves.
   - Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks.
   - Self-Regulation: Regulating what one feels and does.

6. Transcendence: Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning.
   - Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life.
   - Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen.
   - Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it.
   - Humour: Liking to laugh; bringing smiles to other people.
   - Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life.

Notable Researchers

- Martin Seligman: Often regarded as the father of positive psychology, Seligman's work on well-being and character strengths has been influential in bringing these concepts into educational settings.
- Christopher Peterson: Co-developer of the VIA classification, Peterson's research has been pivotal in establishing a scientific basis for the study of character strengths and their impact on well-being.

Studies and Findings

- Impact on Well-being: Research has shown that students who recognise and use their character strengths report higher levels of well-being, life satisfaction, and academic achievement.
- Resilience and Coping: Studies indicate that character strengths can enhance resilience and provide effective coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and adversity.
- Social Relationships: Strengths like kindness, social intelligence, and teamwork are associated with better peer relationships and a more positive classroom environment.

Why do we do it at Bricknell?

The development of a child's individual character traits, such as perseverance, self-regulation, and social intelligence, can significantly contribute to academic success by fostering behaviours and attitudes conducive to learning. Perseverance enables students to persist through challenges and setbacks, ensuring they stay motivated and engaged with their studies despite difficulties. Self-regulation helps children manage their time effectively, stay focused on tasks, and control impulses that might disrupt their learning. Social intelligence enhances their ability to work collaboratively with peers and seek help when needed, creating a supportive learning environment.

Moreover, character traits like curiosity and love of learning drive intrinsic motivation, making students more likely to explore subjects deeply and retain information better. These traits create a foundation for academic resilience and achievement, as students equipped with strong character skills are better prepared to navigate the demands of their educational journey.

By integrating character education, we help students develop virtues like empathy, integrity, and perseverance, which are essential for personal and professional success. This comprehensive approach nurtures well-rounded individuals who are equipped to face life's challenges with resilience and a strong moral compass, ultimately contributing to a more compassionate and just society.

Aspiration   Knowledge   Achievement

Character Progression in our Children

Wellbeing, Relationships and Behaviour policy

Our wellbeing, relationships, and behaviour policy reflects our understanding that all behaviour is a form of communication. We are committed to identifying the unique character strengths within each child and using these strengths to develop targeted support that helps them manage their self-regulation and behaviour. By focusing on the individual needs and intrinsic qualities of each student, we aim to create a supportive environment where every child can thrive both emotionally and socially.

Aspiration Curriculum

Our Aspiration Curriculum has been carefully designed to meet the unique needs of our school demographic. It is woven through all of our curriculum opportunities and developed to ensure that children grow into well-rounded young people with a diverse range of experiences. This comprehensive approach not only focuses on academic excellence but also on the holistic development of each student, preparing them for future success in all aspects of life.

Curriculum Intent

At Bricknell, we celebrate our pupils as individuals and uncover their interests and strengths to enable them to have a solid foundation to further themselves. We recognise that all children are different and whilst celebrating these differences, we invest in enabling all pupils to have the same opportunities to reach their full potential.

Our aim is to provide inclusive and aspirational environments and learning experiences where pupils thrive and build the cultural capital they need to make aspirational choices about their own futures, overcoming any barriers. In order to achieve this, our curriculum is underpinned by the principles highlighted in our Aspiration Curriculum.

Whole School Rewards

Our whole school rewards system is intrinsically linked to our character curriculum, with a different character trait highlighted each week during the head teacher's assembly. Every award given is tied to these character traits, and teachers take the time to explain how each child has demonstrated and excelled in the specific skill being recognized. This approach not only celebrates students' achievements but also reinforces the importance of character development, ensuring that our values are consistently integrated into all aspects of school life.

Character Medium Term Plan

Our character medium term plans are meticulously designed to provide teachers with a progressive document that outlines the development of individual character traits. These plans detail how children can successfully demonstrate the acquisition of these traits at each stage. By offering clear, structured guidance, we ensure that character education is seamlessly integrated into our curriculum, allowing students to steadily build and showcase their personal strengths over time. This systematic approach supports both teachers and students in fostering a rich, character-focused learning environment.

Higher - Level Support

For some children requiring higher-level support, whether in behaviour, academics, pastoral care, or friendships, we tailor every meeting and conversation around their individual character strengths. By focusing on their inherent qualities, we aim to empower them to navigate challenges and develop resilience. In these discussions, we utilize the VIA character strengths chart as a framework for understanding each child's unique attributes and how they can be harnessed to provide targeted assistance. We encourage active participation from parents, staff, and all professionals involved, fostering a collaborative approach that prioritizes the holistic development of every child.

Aspiration   Knowledge   Achievement

Character Progression in our Parents

Supporting parents in their own character progression is crucial as it directly influences the development and well-being of their children. When parents grow in knowledge, empathy, and understanding, they create a nurturing environment that fosters positive behaviours and attitudes in their children. This holistic approach ensures that children are not only academically prepared but also emotionally and socially equipped to navigate life's challenges. By investing in parents' character development, schools can enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to a more supportive and cohesive community.

Our school offers parents various opportunities to develop their character through SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and pastoral coffee mornings. These sessions provide parents with valuable knowledge about different educational and emotional needs, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of their children's experiences. By engaging in these discussions, parents can share insights, learn from one another, and build a supportive network, which in turn helps them to better support their children's unique challenges and strengths.

Additionally, the Jigsaw Families program is designed to support parents in fostering positive engagements with their children. This initiative offers practical strategies and resources for building stronger family relationships, emphasising the importance of communication, emotional intelligence, and positive reinforcement. By participating in Jigsaw Families, parents learn how to create a nurturing home environment that promotes their children's emotional and social well-being, ultimately enhancing the family unit's overall harmony and resilience.

Furthermore, our school hosts a range of parent open events that showcase their children's character development. These events provide parents with an opportunity to observe and celebrate their children's growth in areas such as leadership, teamwork, and empathy. By witnessing these achievements first-hand, parents gain a better understanding of the school's character education program and its impact. These events also encourage parents to reflect on their own character growth, inspiring them to continue supporting and modelling positive behaviours for their children.

Aspiration   Knowledge   Achievement

Character Progression in our Staff

Working at Bricknell School provides a unique and enriching environment for staff to develop their own character, ensuring they can bring out the best in our students. Our commitment to continuous professional development (CPD) is a cornerstone of this philosophy. We offer a robust CPD program tailored to individual needs, encompassing workshops, seminars, and access to advanced training courses. These opportunities not only enhance pedagogical skills but also foster personal growth, resilience, and a passion for lifelong learning. By investing in our staff's development, we ensure they are well-equipped to inspire and nurture the children they teach.

Character development is seamlessly integrated into our performance management and appraisal systems. At Bricknell, we believe that personal and professional growth are interconnected. Our performance appraisals go beyond evaluating job performance; they also assess and encourage the development of key character traits such as empathy, integrity, and perseverance. This holistic approach ensures that staff are not only meeting educational standards but also embodying the values we seek to instil in our students. By recognising and rewarding these traits, we create a culture that values character as much as competence.

Our induction process is designed to welcome new staff into this supportive and character-focused environment. From the outset, new team members are introduced to the school's ethos and values, ensuring they understand the importance we place on character development. Induction programs include mentorship from experienced staff, opportunities for self-reflection, and collaborative goal setting, all aimed at fostering a strong sense of community and personal purpose. This comprehensive approach helps new staff quickly integrate and begin their journey of growth and contribution.

At Bricknell, we are dedicated to bringing out the best in our staff so they can, in turn, bring out the best in our students. By prioritising character development through CPD, performance management, and a supportive induction process, we create an environment where both staff and students can thrive. This commitment to personal and professional growth ensures that our school remains a place of excellence, where the values we cherish are lived out every day.