



BARNARD CASTLE PREP SCHOOL

# A BARNEY EDUCATION

DEVELOPING CHARACTER IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



## Introduction

We have seen, not just in the past two years, but the past two months, how quickly the world around us can change. If it is scary to us as adults, imagine being a young person trying to deal with the chaos going on around them. After the comparable peace and calm of the last three decades, our children are having to contend with adversity on a local and global level, a challenge that many of us did not experience in our childhoods. Throw into the mix the volatile and ubiquitous world of social media and it makes for a complex and uncertain existence.

This is not meant to sound pessimistic - far from it. Our children are very fortunate to be part of such a world, and at School they have a greater breadth of opportunities than the generations that came before them and the vast majority of their peers. However, we would not be doing our jobs, as parents or as educators, if we were not preparing them for this ever-changing world. Our children will be working in the 2060s and 2070s and, the world will look even more different than it does now.

The purpose of this brochure is to introduce how we are trying to address this evolution from within the confines of a magnificent Victorian structure.

How do we continue to strike the right balance between tradition and contemporary?

How do we provide genuine pastoral care whilst engendering resilience and mental strength?

How do we ensure academic potential is reached whilst providing access to a wealth of opportunity?

How do we develop our young people into characters that will not only survive in this ever-changing world, but thrive and flourish?

*We hope this brochure goes some way to illustrating how we at Barney will deliver this.*









## Top 10 skills of 2025

-  Analytical thinking and innovation
-  Active learning and learning strategies
-  Complex problem-solving
-  Critical thinking and analysis
-  Creativity, originality and initiative
-  Leadership and social influence
-  Technology use, monitoring and control
-  Technology design and programming
-  Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
-  Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

### Type of skill

-  Problem-solving
-  Self-management
-  Working with people
-  Technology use and development

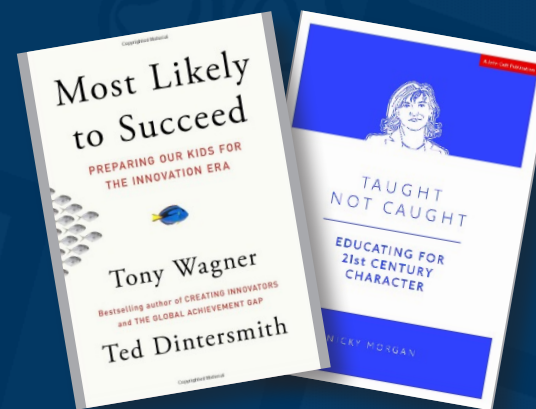
## Preparing for the Future

In many industries and countries, the most in-demand occupations or specialisms did not exist ten, or even five years ago, and the pace of change is set to accelerate. By one popular estimate, 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist.

The World Economic Forum update, on a biennial basis, the top skills they believe our future generations will need in order to thrive in the future.

As you can see, a significant focus is given to the importance of what we would call *'life'* skills, or perhaps *'soft'* skills. These skills for life cannot be studied as a discrete lesson, nor can they be developed overnight. Rather, they need to be fostered and established during a young person's formative years, and they should form a central part of a modern-thinking school's curriculum, not merely sit on the periphery.

There is a growing movement in education (led by the Jubilee Centre at the University of Birmingham) which strongly suggests that more focus should be given to **character education** as a whole.





## What is Character Education?

**Before answering this question, it is important to look first at what character education is not.**

“Character education is not the same as behaviour control, discipline, training, or indoctrination, it is much broader. Character is an inclusive term for the individual as a whole.” (Nucci et al, 2014)

It reinforces the “whole child” agenda that shifts the emphasis from academic achievement to long-term learning and development.

- Character education is not about “fixing” our young people.
- It is not about giving them pre-determined strategies on how to get along with their peers, teachers or family members.
- It is not about reinforcing accepted rules and teaching pupils right from wrong with the aim of improving their behaviour.

Establishing sanctions and rewards systems can lead to temporary changes in behaviour, but the outcomes will not be sustainable.

Character education requires us to dig deeper and look at moral principles, ethos and virtues that underpin human behaviours.

**It is defined by Dr Thomas Lickona (1996) as:**

***“The deliberate effort by schools, families and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values.”***

**Dr Marvin Berkowitz (1997) claims that:**

***“Effective character education is not adding a program or set of programs to a school. Rather it is a transformation of the culture and life of the school.”***

## Barney's Purpose

Barney has, for generations, developed people with character due to its geography, its background, its boarding environment, its staff and the type of people who send their children here. Our School motto from our inception in 1883:

***PARVIS IMBUTUS TENTABIS GRANDIA TUTUS***

*“When you are steeped in small things, you shall safely attempt great things”*

This is a wonderful illustration of our commitment to developing each child.

It is no longer good enough to just put a child in at a starting point and expect a fully formed character to evolve at the end. Expectations from teachers, parents, inspectors, society and children are much higher, and rightly so. Rather than character being developed implicitly, we have asked ourselves how we go about developing it more explicitly during their journey through childhood.

Prior to embarking on this, it was important that we clearly established what our School's purpose was to be in the 21st Century.

**Following a significant consultative process, it was deemed that this was our purpose:**

*“Through creating an inspirational, compassionate and unpretentious environment, we aim to develop young adults with character.”*

*“They are confident, resilient, intellectually curious, tolerant and driven, with an undercurrent of humility, ready and prepared to face, embrace and lead in an ever changing world.”*

***This is something which we are wholly committed to.***

## Project Umbrella

In 2019, a formal project was established to look at how we should deliver our purpose and a character education more explicitly. This developed into four strands:



Over the last three years we have lived and breathed this project across the whole School as we have tried and tested new methods, enhanced curriculum elements, and explored new initiatives to ensure that Barney's curriculum delivers its purpose.

*We strongly believe we already deliver a character education to our children, and this is not about re-inventing the wheel, but rather making it more aero-dynamic.*

## Language

Underpinning an explicit delivery of character education is the use of a consistent framework of language by all those involved. The language must be simple, relevant, understood and embedded into daily life, if it is to be used as part of an explicit character education.

Through an exhaustive, enriching and inclusive process, we identified four key pillars that we consider to be at the core of a Barney Education. They were:

**WELLBEING      CHARACTER      A SENSE OF COMMUNITY      WISDOM**

We wanted to summarise these words so that they could be easily remembered, be easy to understand, and easy to use. This led us to the simple words of **Feel** (Wellbeing), **Be** (Character), **Share** (A Sense of Community) and **Go** (Wisdom).

To support these pillars, twelve values were chosen which best reflected what we believe a Barney education to be about and what we felt our young people need most as they continue their journey through Barney and beyond.

*The values were divided into the four pillars, as below.*



This language has over the last year been introduced weekly across the whole School. Each week, the Prep and Senior Schools have a 'Value of the Week', with a different value identified and discussed in assemblies and within the classroom environment.

To ensure that the language remains relevant and purposeful for Prep School children of all ages, each value will be introduced utilising a character with an accompanying back story that children can relate to in September.

*Our hope is that by the time young Barnardians conclude their journey, they have a strong understanding and awareness about each of these values.*



## Time

Reaching academic potential remains a key driver within any school setting, and it goes without saying that it remains a core focus of our professional and dedicated teaching staff. How we structure this within a busy day and boarding life is of vital importance, and we have made some important changes to ensure we give ourselves the best chance of delivering high quality teaching and a character education.

We have also made subtle changes to the timetable which we think will make a significant difference. One such change has been to commence each day with lessons immediately, ensuring we start promptly with an academic focus as opposed to the traditional method of starting with assemblies. Research shows that the morning is the optimum time to expose children to new ideas and material. This has been trialled over the last couple of years and is supported by children and adults alike.

We have also taken the decision to reduce the number of lessons from eight to seven longer lessons each day, as well as renaming some of the lessons to allow for the creativity of the delivery of our curriculum to be reflected in the timetable as well.

Forest School and Outdoor Education sessions will also be incorporated into all year groups.

“*We should be preparing our children for the test of life, not a life of tests.*”



## Delivery

A Barney Education is not something that merely happens within the classroom or as part of an academic timetable. It is part of an **all-encompassing curriculum** that factors in classroom and non-classroom engagement. The issues our children have to contend with on a daily basis are increasingly complex and it is important we create the time to engage in such topics. Our children should not only be aware of, but also comfortable talking about and engaging with, such matters.

This year we introduced our whole School themes, with each year group following a different class text relating to the overarching theme. This has promoted closer connections between our lessons and powerful links with the world in which we live. The activities provided are challenging but achievable, thought provoking and rewarding.

Our thematic curriculum offers our young people a chance to identify links and develop curiosity across different subjects, whilst allowing them to see and then **use their learning for a purpose**, making their education more than just a series of isolated, unitary experiences.

The more creative that we can be with our teaching, the more we are able to offer to the immersive learning experience and facilitate development of the children's character. From workshops to visits, speakers to classroom enhancements, we are able to provide a growing 'hands on' experience rather than just a non-participatory education.

We have also created time within the week for our pupils to have time to reflect. We have three daily wellbeing sessions, watch Newsround, devote time to discuss issues in a safe and supportive environment or we may offer something back into the local community. These sessions are part of the timetable, not simply shoe-horned into the start or end of a day.

Finally, we have retained more traditional elements that we believe are vital to a Barney Education. Hymn practice, where every pupil in the School learns to sing new hymns or songs once a week, is a true highlight. House competition time on Tuesdays remains a weekly bout of friendly yet intense rivalry, from 'House Hide and Seek' to 'House Singing', they are all a staple part of the Barney curriculum, in which these life and character skills are developed.

## Portfolio

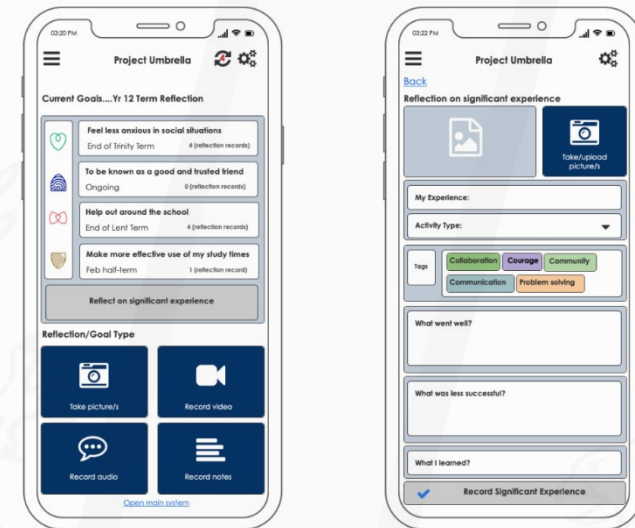
*It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of character education as its outcomes are “a complex set of psychological characteristics that motivate one to function as a moral agent”*

*- Berkowitz, 1997*

One of the most exciting aspects of this project is working out how we best monitor progress in a child's character. The traditional method of assessing progress has been through the quantifiable method of numbers in formal tests and assessments. There remains a place for this, but it should not be the sole measurement of progress.

Academic reports tend to be snapshots at any one point in the year, that are written between the teacher and the parent. However, over the last year you will have seen a little more involvement from the children, as they themselves reflect and comment on their term's progress as a learner and also their character development.

We are keen that the child continues to be placed at the heart of any conversation. It is **their** progress, **their** journey, **their** life. The quicker they take responsibility and ownership for their development, the quicker they will develop in all aspects of life. It is important to note that academic reports will not be replaced. We simply want the child to have more of a voice in the conversation about the progress they are making.



*Portfolio App*

To this end, we have rolled out a number of pilot schemes over the past three years, looking at how best to do this. From pupil self-assessments to rubrics, from more formalised target-setting to identifying significant events from which they have developed character.

Over the past eighteen months, we have developed an app which we will be rolling out from this September, which places the child at the centre of their own development. This is a tremendously exciting development and one we very much hope you engage with as parents. The app can be accessed using Prep School's iPads and laptops and then on individual smart devices when in Senior School.



## What Next?

**We all want the same thing when it comes to the development of our children.**

Ultimately, we want our children to be happy, to have supportive friends, to have developed interests, to have fulfilled their potential, and to be prepared and diverse for when they leave home and School. As parents and guardians, this is our biggest priority. As educators, coaches, mentors and adults who care deeply about young people, this is our biggest priority. We are more likely to see flourishing children if we continue to work together and communicate. It is for this reason that we are explaining this to you, and why we want you to be engaged with this.

If you identify aspects of your child's character that you feel need developing, please let us know. Similarly, if we see something we feel needs to be focused upon, we will articulate that with you and your child. So many character traits link into attainment and outcomes. If we can address issues at the source, the child is more likely to see positive outcomes.

As with anything we do, should you have any questions, please feel free to contact your child's class teacher or any member of the School's Senior Team.

“  
*Our role, as parents and as educators,  
should be to arm our children with the  
tools to clear their own path ahead; it is not  
to clear their path for them.*

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[WWW.BARNARDCASTLESCHOOL.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BARNARDCASTLESCHOOL.ORG.UK)