



BARNARD CASTLE 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 contend 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 have 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 scare-monger - far from it. Our children are very fortunate to be part of such a world, country and School, and they have more 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 document 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 being forward-thinking? 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 document goes some way to illustrating how we 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

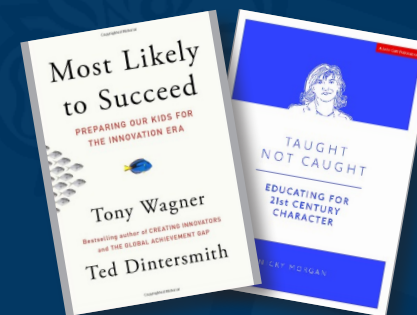
Preparing for the Future

In many industries and countries, the most in-demand occupations or specialities 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 don't yet exist.

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

As you will 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 at GCSE or A Level, nor can they be developed overnight. Rather, they need to be fostered and established during a young person's formative years, and it 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 which strongly suggests that a more central focus should be given to **character education** as a whole, and this is being led by the Jubilee Centre at the University of Birmingham.



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 by dint of its geography, its background, its boarding environment and the type of people who send their children here. Our very own motto from our inception as a School 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 in the round.

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

It was important that we clearly established what our School's purpose is 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 we are wholly committed to.

Project Umbrella

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



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.

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.



This language is already well-established within the School. Each week, the Prep and Senior Schools have a 'Value of the Week', with a different value identified and discussed in assemblies and in tutor group sessions, by pupils and adults alike.

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

We have also made subtle changes to the timetable which we think will make a significant difference. One such change is the shift to commence each day with lessons immediately, ensuring we start the day 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 this year and is supported by pupils and teachers alike.

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 that 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 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 young people have to contend with on a daily basis are increasingly complex, and it is important we create the time to engage on such topics. It is of vital importance they are not only aware of, but also comfortable talking and engaging in, such matters. To do this, we have created time within the week for our pupils to listen to talks from external speakers, as well as follow-up time to discuss them in safe and supportive environments in both groups and one-to-one sessions. These sessions are part of the timetable, not simply shoehorned into the start or end of a day.

Furthermore, we are identifying ways in which our subjects cover similar messages or themes at similar times. For example, from September 2022, the Year 7 students will learn about ‘Origins’ across all topics, from the **Big Bang Theory in Physics**, to **Genesis in Religion, Ethics & Philosophy**, to the **birth of language in English** and the **conception of music** as we know it, and so much more.

It is giving our young people a chance to identify links and develop curiosity across different subject matters.

Finally, we retain elements that we believe are vital to a Barney Education. Congregational practice, where every student in the School learns to sing new hymns or songs once a week, is a true highlight. House competition time on a Wednesday remains a weekly bout of friendly yet intense rivalry, from Cake Decorating to the Inter-House Quiz, it is a staple part of the Barney curriculum, in which these life and character skills are developed.



Portfolio

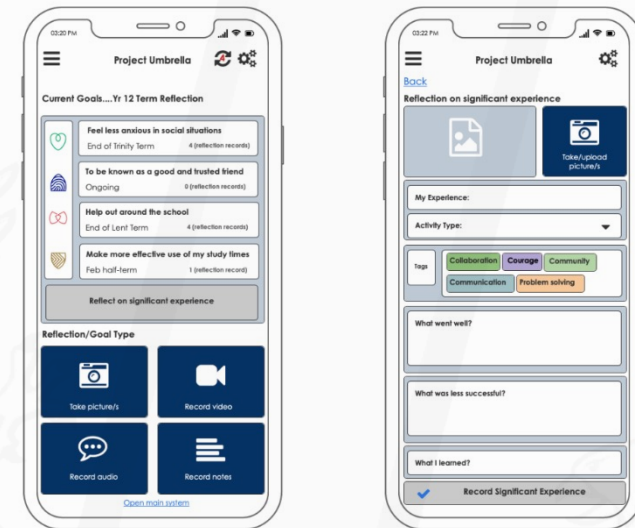
It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of character education as its outcomes are “a complex set of psychological characteristics that motivate one to function as a moral agent”

- 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; far from it. As a collective, we have seen young people who achieve academic 'success' in the form of a letter or number, but who simply do not possess the characteristics or personality to succeed in life. In all of our professional settings, we will have examples of interviewing people with stellar CVs, but who simply do not light up a room when they walk in.

“Exams results and a strong CV will open doors and opportunities; it is what you do when you walk through that counts.”

Academic reports tend to be snapshots at any one point in the year. They are written between the teacher and the parent, with little involvement or engagement with the pupil. We are keen that **the child is placed at the heart of this 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 want them to be more meaningful and comprehensive. We simply want the child to have more of a say in the conversation about the progress they are making, as both a learner and a character, and to reflect upon how they are succeeding and developing in all areas of their Barney life, having a greater understanding, visibility and articulation of their characteristics and values.



Portfolio App

To this end, we have rolled out a number of pilot schemes over the past three years, looking at how best we do this. From student comments on reports to self-assessments against learning behaviour rubrics, from more formalised target-setting involving parents to identifying significant experiences from which students have developed character.

We have modified the School day and calendar to ensure that **all students have one-to-one time with their tutors to discuss their goals, progress and ambitions** helping them navigate their own journey.

Over the past 18 months, we have developed an app which we will be rolling out from this September; this looks at placing the child at the centre of their own development and allowing them to evidence their journey. This is a tremendously exciting development and one we very much hope you engage with as parents.

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 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 Tutor, HSM 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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“We rarely employ straight “A” students. What we’ve discovered over the years is that their field of knowledge is too narrow and they haven’t developed as people. We find that they just can’t cope with life, and they cause endless problems and frictions. *We like to choose students who are bright, but broad, with character.*

The thing is, if somebody’s intelligent we can teach them the skills we need – and in this modern world what they learnt at school will probably become outdated anyway. But what we can’t do is teach them to be rooted.

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Sundhar Pichai,
CEO OF GOOGLE



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