



University
of Glasgow

Pathfinder Research Study Report

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July 2020

Acknowledgements

The Research Team wishes to thank all the members of the school leadership teams, the teachers and pupils in all the schools involved for so willingly participating in this study.

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1. Introduction

This is the Report of the Research Study: *Researching an intentional approach to developing character in Scotland's Schools* commissioned by Character Education Scotland. The Research Study was commissioned by Character Education Scotland to investigate and report on the approaches that the four schools involved in the **Pathfinder Project** (see section 2) took in their implementation of intentional character education and the contribution it made, if any, to the *National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education* (Scottish Government, 2016), focusing on excellence and equity in Scottish education.

The Research Study was conducted by researchers from the School of Education, University of Glasgow, during the period March 2018 to June 2020. The research was conducted in the four schools involved in the Pathfinder Project and aimed to explore:

- *What* is understood by character education?
- *Why* has character education been recognised as important in the school?
- *What* is included in the implementation programme for character education?
- *How* is character education implemented in the school?
- *Who* is involved in the implementation process?
- *To what extent* is intentional character education contributing to pupil development and the *National Improvement Framework*?

2. Character Education Scotland

Character Education Scotland (CES) is a registered charity in Scotland and provides a national context for the advancement of character education in Scotland. The vision of CES is: All young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and flourish. The aim being to promote the development of character in young people and intentional character education in schools. Three main goals currently shape the work of CES:

Goal 1: Inspire purpose and a way of being in all young people through character discovery activity

The main approach to realising Goal 1 is via implementation of the *Inspiring Purpose* Project. The aim of the project is to give young people the opportunity to think about their values and character strengths. A poster template (designed for 10 to 16-year olds) guides pupils in self-reflection on who or what inspires them in their aspirations and goals for the future.

Goal 2: Develop a framework for recognising 'Intentional Character Education' in Schools

Character Scotland initiated the **Pathfinder Project**, engaging with four schools across three local authorities, to explore the potential for an intentional or planned approach to developing character in pupils. Intentional character education is understood to mean that a school has a visible planned approach for the character development of all the pupils. Definitions of intentional character education will be explored more fully in Section 4 of this report.

The Pathfinder Project was initially developed in partnership with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (<https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/>). The promotion of 'intentional character education' is a central aim of the Jubilee Centre. A framework for the implementation of 'intentional character education' is set out in the Centre's publication, a *Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017). This framework document will be discussed further in the Literature Review section in this Report. The Pathfinder Project was launched in March 2017 with the school leaders from four schools invited to attend an event in Edinburgh. The event provided the school leaders with an opportunity to reflect on character development along with representatives of Character Education Scotland and hear about the *Framework for Character Education in Schools* from representatives of the Jubilee Centre. Following the initial event, the school leaders were invited in October 2017 to visit a school in Birmingham associated with the Jubilee Centre to see first-hand the work of the school in Character Education. On their return the school leaders agreed to continue their engagement in the Pathfinder Project and share how character education is implemented in their schools.

It is Goal 2 that is most relevant to this Research Study as it concerns researching intentional character development in the four schools involved in the Pathfinder Project.

Goal 3: Influence policy to improve the status of character education in Scotland.

The aim of Goal 3 is to promote coherent messages on character education and how its development is in alignment with the Scottish curriculum. This goal also aims to promote the benefits of character education to policymakers in Scotland.

3. Policy Context

The Pathfinder Project, initiated by Character Education Scotland, was set up to learn from school leaders and teachers in Scotland from their reflections of character education and the implementation of intentional character education in their schools. The aim was to develop an intentional approach to character education in the Scottish context, building from the framework proposed by the Jubilee Centre.

This section of the report sets out the educational context in which the four schools implement character education.

Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004; Scottish Government, 2008) provides a series of guidelines which inform the learning and teaching contexts in Scottish schools. *Curriculum for Excellence* was designed to support all children and young people to become, successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals (known as the four capacities). To achieve this aspiration for children and young people the *Curriculum for Excellence* guidelines set out values, purposes and principles for education aiming to give direction to the curriculum. The first document published by the Curriculum Review Group about *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) identified the values on which the curriculum should be based and drew attention to the words which are inscribed on the mace of the Scottish Parliament: Wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. A broad general education approach is taken to the curriculum. It is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond (3 – 18 years). The curriculum guidelines encourage a ‘joined up’ approach in that schools can plan the totality of the curriculum so learning can be experienced across four contexts: curriculum areas and subjects; interdisciplinary learning; ethos and life of the school; and opportunities for personal achievement. The potential flexibility of the curriculum guidelines and context for learning appear to offer school leaders and teachers in Scotland multiple opportunities to plan and implement intentional character education. However, a number of other national policies and initiatives in education operate in parallel to *Curriculum for Excellence* and also shape what happens in Scottish schools.

An OECD policy review (OECD, 2015) to inform the ongoing development of education policy, practice and leadership in Scotland, provided an independent review of the direction of *Curriculum for Excellence*. In the report, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective* it was recommended that the Scottish Government should ‘Be rigorous about the gaps to be closed and pursue relentlessly ‘closing the gap’ and ‘raising the bar’ simultaneously (OECD, 2015, p.11). The focus of the Scottish Government’s current policy in education is on achieving excellence and equity in pupils’ academic attainment. The intention of the policy is to improve in particular the pupils’ literacy and numeracy and their health and wellbeing. The main focus being to close the gap in the academic attainment of Scottish pupils, in line with their different socioeconomic circumstances. That is, pupils from affluent areas tend to be associated with high levels of academic attainment, whereas pupils from economically ‘deprived’ areas tend to be associated with low levels of academic attainment (OECD, 2015). The challenge for the Scottish Government is to break these associations so that low academic

attainment is not specifically associated with geographical areas of deprivation. In recognition of this 'gap' the Scottish Government named education and redressing attainment issues as the single defining measure of its own performance as a government. The *2018 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education* (Scottish Government, 2017) was introduced with a renewed vision:

to deliver both **excellence** in terms of ensuring children and young people acquire a broad range of skills and capacities at the highest levels, whilst also delivering **equity** so that every child and young person should thrive and have the best opportunity to succeed regardless of their social circumstances or additional needs (p.4, emphasis added).

Among its ambitions, the *National Improvement Framework* has been introduced to monitor pupil performance, so that the Scottish Government and the education system can determine both the extent of the attainment gap and also whether this gap is closing or widening. The *National Improvement Framework* has six key drivers of improvement that provide a focus and structure for gathering evidence to identify where further improvements can be made. The six drivers are:

- School Leadership
- Teacher professionalism
- Parental engagement
- Assessment of children's progress
- School improvement
- Performance information (Scottish Government, 2017).

A range of data is collected in relation to each of the drivers including teachers' professional judgements of pupil progress. A feature of the *National Improvement Framework* is the introduction of national standardised assessment (a national test) created by the Australian Council for Educational Research. The *National Improvement Framework* has an Improvement Plan which supports schools in their activity towards realising the ambitions of Scottish Government in achieving **excellence** and **equity**.

In an effort to close the attainment gap the *Scottish Attainment Challenge* was launched in 2017 (Education Scotland, 2019). The focus of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is particularly on improvement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in specific areas of Scotland. Nine local authorities in Scotland are currently designated as *Challenge Authorities* and are the primary focus for these initiatives. Efforts to close the attainment gap also supports and complements a broader range of initiatives and programmes to ensure that all of Scotland's children and young people reach their full potential.

The most recent *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan: 2020* (Scottish Government, 2019) introduces 'school empowerment reforms', being developed by Education Scotland. The plan highlights the contributions that key partners (school leaders, teachers and practitioners, learners, parents and carers, support staff, Local Authority and Regional Improvement

Collaboratives, Scottish Government and national organisations, partners) can make to improve outcomes for children and young people in an empowered system (see

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/an-empowered-system>).

The national improvement activity complements the ongoing implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* and two other major initiatives *Getting It Right for Every Child* (Scottish Government, 2014b) and *Developing the Young Workforce* (Scottish Government, 2014a). The strong support for the well-being of all children and young people in Scotland is evident in the national policy framework *Getting It Right For Every Child* (Scottish Government, 2014b). The aim of the framework is that children and young people in Scotland are fully supported as they grow and develop to be:

- Healthy - experiencing the highest standards of physical and mental health, and supported to make healthy safe choices
- Achieving - receiving support and guidance in their learning – boosting their skills, confidence and self-esteem
- Nurtured - having a nurturing and stimulating place to live and grow
- Active - offered opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities – helping them to build a fulfilling and happy future
- Respected - to be given a voice and involved in the decisions that affect their well-being
- Responsible - taking an active role within their schools and communities
- Included - receiving help and guidance to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities; accepted as full members of the communities in which they live and learn
- Safe - protected from abuse, neglect or harm.

The *Getting it Right For Every Child* framework again offers schools opportunities to focus on the character development of their pupils. Similarly, *Developing the Young Workforce* strategy aims to build on the foundations of *Curriculum for Excellence* by contributing to the development of the four capacities with particular focus on ‘...the entitlement for all children and young people to experience opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.’ (Education Scotland website, <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/developing-the-young-workforce-dyw>).

Together *Curriculum for Excellence*, *Getting it Right For Every Child* and *Developing the Young Workforce* are the three supporting pillars of the Scottish education system and the context in which the Pathfinder Project was implemented.

4. Literature Review

This section provides a short review of literature in relation to character education – exploring what it means and approaches to implementation. The definition of character education and intentional character education is not straight-forward and is open to different interpretations and different views about how it should be implemented. The first part of this section (4.1) explores the different terms used. In the second part (4.2) literature regarding *Curriculum for Excellence* guidelines and the potential opportunities and/or barriers for schools in Scotland that may arise in the implementation of character education are reviewed.

4.1 Exploring terminology

Different terms are used in the literature, and in practice, to describe the development of character in children and young people - character education, values education, moral education, personal and social education, citizenship education. Both Arthur (2010) and Berkowitz (2011) highlight the use of different terminology.

The terms used in relation to moral and character education are not fixed, and are sometimes used apparently in different senses, by different contributors, and for different purposes. (Arthur, 2010, p.2)

... whether called values education or character education (or for that matter any of a number of other current terms; e.g., moral education, social–emotional learning, positive psychology), is a semantic morass (Berkowitz, 2011, p.153).

It would be a pity if school leaders and teachers get caught up in a debate about which terminology is most appropriate rather than engaging in dialogue about what character education means, why it is important and how it should be implemented in the totality of the curriculum offered in their schools. The Jubilee Centre (2017, p.1) emphasise, 'A society determined to enable its members to live well will treat character education as something to which every child has a right.' This recognises that questions of character formation are viewed as inseparable from educational goals.

According to Berkowitz, character education is defined as,

...those educational practices that foster the development of student character. Character is defined as the set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable the individual to function as a competent moral agent, that is, to do 'good' in the world (Berkowitz, 2011, p.153).

In The Jubilee Centre's *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017) a Neo-Aristotelian Model of Moral Development is proposed. The philosophical underpinning of The Jubilee Centre's approach to character education is influenced by an interpretation of Aristotelian virtue ethics and this leads to the idea that character education is not simply knowledge of the virtues, but the practice of them too. This puts the focus firmly on 'becoming a virtuous person'. In their framework document several definitions of character education are presented including,

Character education is about helping students to grasp what is ethically important in situations and how to act for the right reasons, such that they become more autonomous and reflective in the practice of virtue (The Jubilee Centre, 2017, p.2).

Helping young people to flourish is described as the ultimate aim of character education in the framework document, and the proposed approach is acquisition and development in children and young people of intellectual, moral, civic and performance virtues along with the integrative virtue of practical wisdom to make well founded judgements and wise decisions.

The active nature of character education underpins these definitions and signals that character education does not only concern learning *about* something. It is also about learning *how to act* and about *becoming* a good person. Attention therefore needs to be paid to what character education is about, but also how character can be developed and contribute to shaping and supporting children and young people in becoming a person who is able to make wise decisions in how to be and how to act in society and throughout life. According to Aristotle, 'The aim of our studies is not just to know what virtue is, but to become good.' More recently Jacques Delors said in the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century Report (*Learning: The Treasure Within*) we must not only educate our children and youth 'to know' and 'to do', we must also educate them 'to be' and 'to live together' (1996, p.21). These four pillars of education need ongoing consideration and discussion to remain at the forefront of thinking in curriculum planning and implementation. The challenge is that meanings that are under discussion appear to change. As Arthur (2010, p.3) argues,

... Britain today is a pluralistic society in which our values appear to be constantly changing and where children are presented with a number of different models and exposed to a variety of perspectives on moral right and wrong.

He continues, saying,

It is therefore not surprising that most academic discussions of moral character or character education have been rife with controversy, with constant disputes about definitions and methods.

The problematic nature of identifying which virtues and values and whose values leads to further controversy. According to Arthur (2010, p.3) these concerns have led many teachers and academics to attempt to construct a rationale for moral education that is independent of any particular set of values. However, this would seem an impossible task for others who view values education as synonymous with 'moral', 'character', 'ethical' and 'spiritual' educations (Bowden, 2013). Other researchers would disagree and draw attention to the distinctions between character education and values education. Again, this highlights the challenge facing teachers in this confusing and contested landscape of differing views and terminology. Looking beyond the definition of terms, questions about why intentional character education is important and how schools and teachers implement character education or values education in schools remain.

In considering why character education is important the *Framework for Character Education in Schools* reminds schools and teachers of their role in enabling pupils 'to become good persons and citizens,

able to lead good lives, as well as become successful.’ (The Jubilee Centre, 2017, p1). A virtue important to Aristotelian understanding of character is phronesis, meaning practical wisdom. This may be understood as the prudent understanding of what should be done in practical situations (Gadotti, 1996). Pollard (nd) says,

Aristotelian character developmental theory postulates that young people who have acquired the correct moral traits through habituation and role modelling must develop the virtue of phronesis, or practical wisdom, to guide their decision-making. If they cannot apply practical wisdom when determining the correct course of action, given the situation and the virtues at play, then they are more likely to make errors in decision-making, and more fundamentally, will lead uncritical lives lacking in intrinsic value.

Drawing on Aristotelian theory is a reminder of the importance of the cultivation of character through education and schooling since ancient times. However, while many teachers may continue to believe in the need for character education it has become less explicit in the curriculum documents in contemporary times in Scotland. In the Pathfinder Project emphasis was specifically placed on the ‘intentional’ aspect of character education and this term also needs to be explored. An intentional approach to character education in schools is described in the *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (Jubilee Centre, 2017). It is suggested that it is likely that some form of character education is always taking place in school but not always consciously. It is emphasised that character education should be ‘intentional, planned, organised and reflective’ rather than ‘assumed, unconscious, reactive and random’ (ibid, p.2). This suggests a visible and explicit approach to character education. Intentional character education is taken to mean there is a clear programme of character education in a school which encompasses:

- A school ethos, simply expressed and visible to all
- The values associated with this ethos carried through to school settings, including rules about behaviour and what happens when rules are broken, staff behaviour to pupils and to each other, pupil behaviour outside school when on outside activities, parental engagement and expectations that this ethos will permeate school/parent communications
- The values associated with ethos resonating throughout the curriculum in subject appropriate ways
- Time planned in the curriculum for pupil discussion and reflection on character development
- A range of activities planned to enable the pupils to ‘internalise’ the values and demonstrate they have become part of who they are as a way of being and acting.

Character education in this interpretation is not understood as a separate subject or something that is confined to any particular subject domain. Rather ‘character education permeates all subjects, wider school activities and a general school ethos...’ (The Jubilee Centre, 2017, p.1). In this description character education joins another group of topics, such as citizenship education, global education, rights education, sustainable development education, where permeating the whole curriculum is proposed as the approach for implementation.

Permeation approaches have met with challenges in implementation and have been the subject of much research. For example, in their research into how cross-curricular themes were enacted, Whitty *et al.* (1994) used the metaphor of 'permeation' to capture the degree to which 'the teaching of the themes was distributed across a variety of separate subjects' (p.28). Their research investigated whether the recommended design of cross-curricular permeation could work given the disciplinary nature of the broader curriculum, and which themes gained their own 'discrete curriculum slots' (p.29) and 'quasi-subjects' status (p.30). Their analysis of survey responses from headteachers suggests that a permeated design risks becoming invisible:

Those themes that are heavily reliant on a permeation model are likely to become invisible to teachers and pupils in the context of the strong classification and strong framing associated with conventional academic subjects. Even those themes that have established a distinctive presence may lose their visibility as schools become constrained by the pressures of the National Curriculum to try to deliver all the themes via the core and other foundation subjects (Whitty *et al.*, 1994, pp. 31–32).

This challenge of permeation is one that continues to be debated and has resurfaced in Scottish education with the emphasis on interdisciplinary learning in *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Government, 2008).

The curriculum should include space for learning beyond subject boundaries, so that children and young people can make connections between different areas of learning. Interdisciplinary studies, based upon groupings of experiences and outcomes from within and across curriculum areas, can provide relevant, challenging and enjoyable learning experiences and stimulating contexts to meet the varied needs of children and young people (Scottish Government, 2008, p.21).

It appears that each concept considered in this review of policy and literature is fraught with ambiguity and/or confusion. Klein has observed that 'interdisciplinarity is a concept of wide appeal' but adds that 'it is also one of wide confusion' (Klein, 1990, p.11). Interdisciplinarity is defined by Moran (2010, p.14) as '... forging connections across the different disciplines; but it can also mean establishing a kind of undisciplined space in the interstices between disciplines, or even attempting to transcend disciplinary boundaries altogether'. However, he then argues for flexibility in interpretation of interdisciplinarity by saying, 'I take interdisciplinarity to mean any form of dialogue or interaction between two or more disciplines: the level, type, purpose and effect of this interaction remain to be determined' (ibid, p.14). Opportunities for flexibility in implementation through permeation approaches also bring challenges when this approach is utilised for character education. In the Jubilee Centre's framework document careful planning for intentional character education in schools is described so that it is not only 'caught' through the culture and ethos of the school but also 'taught'. However, understanding of what intentional character education means for teachers and pupils, as well as how it can be implemented in different school contexts, remains challenging especially when the expectation is for teachers to facilitate pupils in ethical and moral discussions. Teachers and pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may feel uncomfortable or lack understanding of how to deal with these sensitive discussions when family upbringing, values and beliefs may be surfaced.

A brief review of policies and literature in the next section considers the opportunities and barriers for implementation of intentional character education in Scottish education context.

4.2 Implementing Character Education in the Scottish Education Context

In Scotland, the implementation of intentional character education needs to be considered and planned within *Curriculum for Excellence*. Curriculum 'guidelines' suggests greater flexibility for decision making for school leaders and teachers than a prescribed or mandatory curriculum. A review of the curriculum guidelines in Scotland, demonstrates the opportunities for schools in the implementation of character education. The broad aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* is to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today's world. The emphasis on young people flourishing aligns with the ambitions for intentional character education. Flourishing is an Aristotelian concept and requires the acquisition and development of virtues. 'Flourishing is the ultimate goal of character education.' (The Jubilee Centre, 2017, p.1). The Centre's *Framework for Character Education*, is grounded in a neo-Aristotelian view of moral development. It presents a model with the development of virtues as the building blocks of character: intellectual virtues, moral virtues, civic virtues, performance virtues all leading to practical wisdom and ultimately to flourishing individuals and society.

The reference to the development of knowledge, skills and attributes to think critically in the broad aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* also aligns with the virtues identified in the Jubilee Centre's framework document. The authors go as far as to say, 'Critical thinking is thus a vital facet of a well-rounded character' (The Jubilee Centre, 2017, p.2). Despite this underlying alignment, the review of the curriculum documents in Scotland shows that there are few explicit references to character education. The emphasis in the curriculum documents is on values and values education. The first document published about *Curriculum for Excellence* by the Curriculum Reform Group in 2004 set out the broad principles of the reform proposal, including the values that underpin the curriculum:

It is one of the prime purposes of education to make our young people aware of the values on which Scottish society is based and so help them to establish their own stances on matters of social justice and personal and collective responsibility. Young people therefore need to learn about and develop these values. The curriculum is an important means through which this personal development should be encouraged (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.11).

The curriculum documents from 2004, leading up to the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* in full in schools in 2010/2011, and since then, have all signalled the ambition to have values education at the core of the education provision for children and young people in Scottish schools and remains evident in recent curriculum guidelines. The most recent *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2020: summary* document states,

We want to develop with our partners an empowered and collaborative system, where everyone's contribution is heard and valued, and improving children and

young people's outcomes is at the heart of everything we do (Scottish Government, 2019, p.1).

Despite, consistent reference to values in the curriculum documents, there has been criticism of vagueness and a lack of fleshing out of the rationale for the decisions made about the values and principles that underpin *Curriculum for Excellence* (Gillies, 2006, Priestly, 2010). Humes, (2013, p.19) argues that values in *Curriculum for Excellence* are 'asserted rather than argued for'. The need for more dialogue about values is emphasised. Priestly, 2010 says that it is necessary for dialogue about the values that are integral to particular schools. While, Hedge and MacKenzie (2016) suggest that scrutiny of the value presuppositions and assumptions of *Curriculum for Excellence* is required if the underlying principles are to drive curricula implementation. In particular, they argue for a deeper scrutiny of the four capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors) and their practice in schools, through discussion and in debates that engage teachers and pupils. In particular greater discussion and debate is needed for pupils to understand the significance of the four capacities and what they mean for the way they live their lives not only developing understanding of values but living their lives by them in and out of school.

Hedge and Mackenzie (2016) also take an alternative position to the criticism of insufficient clarity about values in proposing that 'vagueness leaves room for choice, interpretation, flexibility, reflection, collective deliberation, and responsiveness to emerging needs and ideas' (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2016, p.9). Indeed, they suggest that since *Curriculum for Excellence* was designed to give teachers greater autonomy and application of professional judgement according to the needs of the pupils they work with, it would be surprising to find prescriptions on what to teach, when and how. However, the underlying assumption is that teachers know how to approach values education and feel comfortable doing so with pupils.

To support teachers in reflecting on their own professional values and on identifying values in educational policies, in the teaching standards and in their practice the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) have a tool on their website (<https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-values-into-action.aspx>). School leaders and teachers in Scotland also regularly reflect on the values that underpin what they do in the school and its community. This is part of the self-evaluation process that is expected of Scottish schools through the use of guidance in *How Good is Our School* (Education Scotland, 2015). In the section on 'Leadership of change' there is an expectation that all schools will focus on 'Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community' (p.24). This regular reflection on the values of the school results in the agreed values being displayed prominently on the walls of the school and in classrooms, and often also on the lanyards of teachers' school and name badge. However, values pinned up on walls around the school could become empty mantras rather than embodied by teachers and pupils able to demonstrate their meaning in day-to-day action in schools and in life.

Hedge and MacKenzie (2016) identify other opportunities within *Curriculum for Excellence* for debate and discussion about values, in its focus on mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. They suggest this focus might be 'positively developed by fostering a safe, caring, supportive, purposeful environment' (p.4). As explained in the Context section above, *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Getting It Right For Every Child* work in tandem in framing the work of schools and teachers. The *Getting it*

Right for Every Child framework embeds the articles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* into practice and promotes a rights-based approach. Schools in Scotland can engage in a *Rights Respecting Schools Award Programme* offered by UNICEF UK. The aim of the Award Programme is to recognise achievement in putting the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* into practice within the school. This award is one example of a growing number of initiatives that offer schools value-adding experiences and resources to support pupil reflection on values. For example, in Scotland, many schools proudly highlight their involvement with programmes such as the Keep Britain Tidy's *Eco-Schools*, *Duke of Edinburgh Awards* and the *Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI)*. Often schools, such as the four schools in this study, engage in more than one of these Award programmes offered by 3rd sector organisations. These initiatives offer interesting and enjoyable activities for the pupils to participate in and practical ready-made resources for teachers but they do not necessarily lead to the embodiment of values in action beyond these activities. In addition, the array of opportunities in school, with sometimes competing underpinning philosophies or aims could be confusing. This is evident for example in the *Rights Respecting Schools* approach, with a particular focus on rights and responsibilities, which while complementing a virtues ethics approach to character education is distinct from it. As Hedge and Mackenzie (2016, p.10) argue, 'It is not clear how pupils can become self-deciding, self-governing, self-authoring and self-determining ...' The problematic issue of translating policy guidance in *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Getting It Right For Every Child* to enacted practice remains full of challenges.

This brief review of policy and literature demonstrates that there are opportunities and barriers for character education in Scottish schools. It is the aim of this project to explore the reality in four secondary schools in terms of these opportunities and barriers for intentional character education. The next section outlines how the research project was conducted.

5. Methodology

This section sets out the research approach taken and the research methods employed, the research aim, the ethical considerations and the analytical approach taken.

5.1 Research approach and design

The four schools in Scotland were invited by Character Education Scotland to participate in the Pathfinder Project and took part in a training event that took place in Edinburgh in March 2017. The schools were encouraged at the training event to take an intentional approach to character education. Character Education Scotland wanted to understand more about the four schools' approach to character education and invited each school to participate in a research study as a follow-up to the training event. The University of Glasgow was commissioned to carry out the Pathfinder Research Study.

An exploratory approach was taken to investigate the implementation of character education in the four schools which were located in three different local authorities in Scotland. The aim of Character Education Scotland was to gain a deep understanding of how the schools were implementing character education from all those involved in order to understand better how to support schools in

this endeavour. For this reason, the research design involved the collection of qualitative data, including the collection of data from pupils, teachers and school leaders, in each of the four schools. The intention of the research study was not to make systematic generalisations to other schools about the implementation of character education, rather the aim was to undertake an in-depth (deep-dive) exploration of school leaders', teachers' and pupils' views, by gathering rich data about their experiences and understanding about intentional character development. While generalisation was not the aim any commonalities arising or underpinning principles could inform the development of and support for character education in other schools.

The data were collected through two methods:

semi-structured interviews - with leaders (one school leader (Headteacher) in some schools and more than one school leader in others (e.g. Headteacher, Depute Headteacher).

focus groups - these were the chosen method when there were multiple participants (e.g. pupils and teachers) to minimise the inconvenience for the school and to enable access to a variety of perspectives.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups provided a consistent framework of themes to guide discussion and enable flexibility to explore the nuances of the different sites with interviewees. The design allowed each school and each participant to articulate their views about the implementation and impact of the intentional approach to character education in the school. Both methods of data collection were similar in that they are conversational and facilitated the researchers and the school leaders', teachers' and pupils' engagement in dialogue which enabled open responses in the participants' own words. The semi-structured interviews and the focus groups also provided flexibility and space for unexpected topics to arise and enabled further in-depth exploration and opportunities for the researchers to ask secondary questions, to elicit more detail to ensure understanding of responses made. The average length of the interviews and focus groups was 60 minutes.

A total of 48 participants took part in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups: 6 school leaders; 14 teachers; and 28 pupils.

Data were also collected, where available, through the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, about the schools' implementation approach and any tracking processes to identify the outcomes of the Pathfinder Project, including any contribution to individual pupil character development and to the *National Improvement Framework*.

Two visits were made to each school to collect data involving both researchers in data collection (with the exception of the second visit to one school when only one researcher was present due to unforeseen circumstances). The first visit in the academic year 2018- 2019 and the second visit in the academic year 2019-2020. The second visit enabled follow-up questions to be asked and to find out the sustainability of plans, actions and outcomes reported during the first visit by school leaders, teachers and pupils.

The questions set out below were used as a starting point for discussion in each of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups to frame and provide consistency in the data collection. However, as the participants answered the questions relevant secondary questions were asked in relation to the responses given to gain greater understanding of the participants' views. Both researchers asked questions in a conversation style with the participants.

5.2 Research aims

Our approach aims to identify in each of the schools:

- *What* is understood by character education?
- *Why* has character education been recognised as important in the school?
- *What* is included in the implementation programme for character education?
- *How* is character education implemented in the school?
- *Who* is involved in the implementation process?
- *To what extent* is intentional character education contributing to pupil development and the *National Improvement Framework*?

5.3 Ethical considerations

The Research Study gained ethical approval from the University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Permissions and ethical clearance to conduct research in each school was gained from each school via the headteacher in the first instance. Headteachers then identified and initially invited teachers and pupils who were involved in character education.

Invitation packages, including an Information Leaflet about the Research Study and a Consent Form, were provided for each participant (school leaders, teachers and pupils). Invitation packages, including an Information Leaflet about the Research Study and a Consent Form were also provided for the parents of the pupils involved. Participants were asked to email or mail informed consent forms to the research team if they agreed to participate. Contact was then made with the headteacher to arrange dates and times for both researchers to visit the schools at a time convenient to them.

It was made clear in the Information Sheet that participation was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any stage. Confidentiality was respected at all times within legal constraints and professional guidelines. The names of any people, places or schools were replaced by codes (e.g. School 1, 2, 3, and 4). No names were used in the data analysis or in this research report.

As explained above, in some schools only one school leader was interviewed. However, it should be noted that in order to protect the anonymity of the school and the school leader in the Findings and Discussion Sections of this report we refer only to school leaders. Reference to a school leader may have identified that particular leader. Similarly, there is no reference in the report to 'him' or 'her' as this may identify a particular school leader, a teacher or a pupil. It is recognised in some places this

means a grammatical error in using 'their' when referring to a single person, however this was deliberate to protect identities and adhere to the promise of anonymity as far as possible.

5.4 Process of data analysis

The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups are summarised in the Findings Section of this Research Report. The process from gathering the data, to analysing the data, to summarising and reporting the findings of the study, are outlined in this section of the report.

All the semi-structured interviews with school leaders and focus groups with teachers and pupils on both visits to the four schools were audio-recorded, with the consent of the research study participants. All the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim to enable the analysis of the qualitative data gathered.

A series of 5 steps were followed by both researchers in the analysis of the data involving reading, re-reading to identify initial themes emerging from the data, clustering/connecting themes, agreeing final themes, analysis:

- i) **Familiarisation and coding participant responses:** this was labelled Phase 1 Analysis and involved both researchers independently analysing the same transcripts from the first visit to one school. This involved the researcher reading and re-reading the transcripts and coding responses. For example, coding all the responses relating to participant definitions of character education or values education. Following independent analysis, the codes and justifications were shared and discussed until both researchers agreed the approach for coding and identifying themes.
- ii) **Identifying initial themes:** Phase 2 analysis involved each researcher independently identifying initial themes using the codes identified in the transcripts: each researcher identifying initial themes from two schools then sharing and discussing them together.
- iii) **Clustering and connecting themes:** Phase 3 analysis involved each researcher independently reviewing the themes addressing specific research questions then sharing and discussing them together.
- iv) **Reviewing and finalising themes:** Both researchers reviewed the first three phases of analysis in order to agree and finalise the themes. The themes that emerged across the school leaders', teachers', and pupils' responses were clustered together. Triangulation was employed through the convergence of responses from the three different sources (school leaders, teachers and pupils) and from the two different methods (semi-structured interviews and focus groups) to identify similarities and differences in understandings, views and experience.
- v) **Producing the report to address the aims of the Research Study:** Each researcher wrote up the analysis from 2 schools identifying specific quotes to evidence the themes emerging. The themes were re-visited again in relation to the research questions in order to produce the report of the findings. The analysis of the participant responses in relation to each research question are set in the Findings Section presented below.

6. Findings of the study

In this section the findings of the analysis of the responses from school leaders, teachers and pupils during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups are provided. The findings are presented to address each of the questions that framed this research study. In addition, in each of the following sections, the key themes emerging from the analysis of the findings are listed at the beginning of each sub-section.

6.1 *What is understood by character education?*

Summary of key themes emerging:

- Understanding of character education as values education
- Definition of character education and the understanding of character as values
- Preference for using terminology of values education rather than character education
- School improvement aligned to school ethos
- Pupil development linked to values education

Character education was understood in terms of values education. In all schools, the school leaders expressed their understanding by linking character education to the values of the school and, all schools had undertaken recent reviews of their school values. In School 3, teachers related character education to developing values in the school with specific reference to the values on the Scottish mace. In School 4 there was a less overt understanding of character education and how character could or would be developed. The 'values agenda' appeared to be the vehicle to bring about this change. Consideration of what is meant by values education or character education or their differences was not explicit. As a term 'character education' was not prevalent in three out of the four schools.

Not only was character education seen in the context of values education but there was a preference for using terminology of values education rather than character education. The school leaders in Schools 1 and 2 said they preferred to refer to 'values education' rather than 'character education'. In School 2, the school leaders were concerned that changing terminology would be confusing for pupils, teachers and the school community generally.

We don't use the expression 'character'. It tends to be 'values' so I think to bring character in would have been confusing for our whole school community because I'd say we were kind of down a path (School Leaders, School 2).

In School 2, both school leaders and the teachers had reflected carefully on character education through discussion about what it means and its implementation, particularly following the Pathfinder Project event organised by Character Scotland in March 2017. They saw 'character education' as an umbrella term to bring values-based education together. Following discussions and reflection the school leaders made the conscious decision to continue to use the language of values education rather than character education.

Because when we had this discussion we were like, 'Character? Is it just values?' There are crossovers, I appreciate there are different aspects to character, but then going down a different route with XXX [name of commercial programme removed], I feel like there's things that we've added to our school in terms of extra, over and above behaviours and rules and expectations that build character and then we've aligned that with the values (School Leaders, School 2).

Character education and its link to the school ethos was highlighted in all schools. In School 1 and School 2, character education was seen as being part of the school ethos. This was exemplified by a teacher in School 1, who referred to the influence of the way teachers act having an impact on pupils, saying, 'they [the pupils] respond to the way that we act and we behave' (Teacher 4, School 1). The school was using a commercial package which they said linked character education to the school culture. In School 2, character education was seen as aligning with a different commercial programme designed to provide a consistency in behaviours and which had the development of school culture as a key element of the programme. The school leaders in School 3 also expressed the belief that through reviewing values a better environment had been created, and a teacher in School 3 said that their work with the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme, and its focus on values, was linked to the culture and ethos of the school. The *Rights Respecting Schools* programme was used by all schools and all linked values education to the programme. In School 4, there was a belief that values were instrumental to developing the culture of the school.

In all schools the importance of values was linked to pupil development and in all schools there was a strong sense that the school staff, both teachers and school leaders, were aiming, through a clear set of values, to develop positive characteristics, attributes or traits in pupils. This was echoed by pupils who believed that values were important because 'it makes you who you are' and '[values] encourage you to be a better version of yourself' (Pupil, School 3). Values-based education was seen as a way of developing character education. This sentiment was also echoed in School 3 where the school leaders believed that character is 'about self and about what we are, and what we 'good people' think' and had the ambition of character education being embedded within classroom practice. 'We are here to teach them Maths and Geography, but we are also here to teach them to be decent individuals and humans'. In addition, the teachers in School 3 focused on pupils being able to recognise their own strengths, everyone being unique and special, and the development of characteristics and empowerment to better equip pupils for their future.

It's about recognising that people have different characteristics. Different people are unique and special as well. I think it's about developing your characteristics and your strengths. And it's about empowering young people to move forward equipped in the world, to cope within our school, but beyond, to go and to succeed in the world of work, higher education, further education. ... (Teacher 2, School 3).

This focus on values impacting on pupils' development was present in School 2 where both school leaders and teachers, in discussing their review of school values, expressed their belief that character development was strongly linked to improving the behaviour of the pupils.

To support the understanding of character education, and the link to values with their importance for pupil's development, teachers and pupils drew on practical examples. In School 1, teachers linked character education with the school's engagement in the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme and to skills development. In particular, one teacher who had been researching character education referred to civic virtue and intellectual virtue. In relation to civic virtue the aim is, 'To get the pupils to understand their place, not just locally, but also nationally and internationally' (Teacher 2). In relation to intellectual virtue, 'skill' and 'virtue' were understood to be interchangeable in some areas such as critical thinking. The teacher said the aim is 'to highlight skills for life, learning, and work are with their young people' (Teacher 3). This work was directly related to taking forward the skills agenda in school in line with the *Developing the Young Workforce* and *Curriculum for Excellence* policy guidance.

The pupils in School 1 understood character education as developing morals to raise awareness of giving back, with a strong emphasis on volunteering. These pupils' views echoed those of their school leaders who emphasised the importance of duty.

They're making a difference to the lives of others and whatnot and that sense of duty is really quite important to us (School Leaders, School 1).

The pupils also said they understood character education as '...pupils doing the right thing to inspire others' (Pupil 1). They also said it was about human rights and, similar to the teachers, linked their understanding to the *Right Respecting Schools* programme. Their view was that character education was about 'making sure everyone knows that, what they're supposed to have in life' (Pupil 1).

6.2 Why has character education been recognised as important in the school?

Summary of key themes emerging:

- Leadership with a clear vision and commitment to values education
- School improvement and the importance of values in driving change
- The development of Intentional character education and the link to school 'activities'
- The link between character education, learning and personal development, including restorative approaches and changing behaviours
- The importance of parental engagement in instilling character
- Sustainability of character development and the challenges

In all discussions with the school leaders, and others who had leadership roles in the school, a clear vision and commitment to values education was evident. In all schools, the reasons for their interest in character education were similar and generally it was the belief that the emphasis on values, and activities related to values, would bring about change and improvement. In all schools a focus on core values was seen as instrumental to school and pupil improvement. For example, in School 3, the school leaders believed that the strong focus on core values, such as respect, the introduction of the mission statement of 'excellence for everyone' and changing the code of conduct to a code of learning, was instrumental in bringing about improvement. This had all arisen from the review of the values of the school. Part of the programme of school improvement in School 3 was 'a year of ...' initiative. Engaging with Character Education Scotland through the Pathfinder Project had promoted thinking to do a year of character. In School 4, as well as identifying core values as a key driver for school improvement

values were also seen as instrumental to developing the culture of the school, one with a very diverse community where young people lived in a range of socioeconomic groups, and with many different ethnical and cultural backgrounds. This diversity was identified as a strength of the school. Values were seen as the vehicle for guiding the action of all school staff. This was borne out by one of the two teachers from Religious and Moral Education interviewed, who saw how the school had developed during their service, becoming more pupil-focused, with the school leaders being seen as child-centred.

How the schools are developing and embedding character education was explored from the perspective of character education being 'intentional' i.e. planned in and embedded into the school curriculum. In two schools there was a view that this was already happening. In Schools 1 and 2, they believed that they were already doing many activities that were relevant to character education. In School 1, this was specifically mentioned in relation to the activities ongoing on citizenship, community engagement and developing pupils' understanding of the values underpinning the life of the school. One of the teachers, who was new to School 1 and had been involved in the development of character education in a previous school, highlighted that the many activities the school are engaging in are related, in their view, to character development but had not been explicitly labelled as character education. In School 2, school leaders said they were interested in character education because in their view they were already 'doing it'. This was particularly important to the ethos of the school and developing a sense of community. The school leaders in all four schools explained that engagement with the Pathfinder Project training day in Edinburgh, and the visit to the school in Birmingham, had affirmed much of what the school was already doing.

The interest came from a lot of what Character Scotland and Pathfinder was doing or saying, we felt we were already doing (School Leaders, School 2).

The teachers in School 3 agreed with the importance of character development being intentional. 'It then raises it [character development] and gives it a focus. It becomes everyday language, which is a legacy that continues on' (Teacher 2). In School 4, the school leaders spoke of their commitment to embedding the core values. A year on from identifying the core values and beginning to embed them in school practice, the school leaders saw the work of Character Education Scotland and the school's involvement in *Rights Respecting Schools* as aligning with the work being undertaken in the school on values.

In all schools, values were linked to pupils' personal development. For example, in School 3, there were concerns previously about some pupils exhibiting poor behaviours and lack of respect, and there had been a lack of calmness in the school. In School 2 they had similar issues and were addressing behaviours through a values-based approach. In School 3 through their focus on values, including the year of character, which was to partly address disruption in classes and disengagement from school amongst some pupils, a better environment had been created, which the school leaders believed had brought about change and improvement. The school leaders voiced their opinion that as well as a gap in attainment, there was a 'gap' in character. 'As we talk about closing the gap, we often talk about closing the attainment gap but there is a genuine gap around character, respect and so on' (School Leaders, School 3). A similar view was expressed by the school leaders in School 4 who placed a high value on health and wellbeing and its link to raised attainment. 'I believe we can't improve anything,

for example attainment, without trying to improve a young person's health and well-being in the first instance' (School Leaders, School 4).

Teachers in School 3 believed in restorative approaches being firmly linked to character development. 'Restorative practice ... is about doing more than embedding. It is doing more than deliberately showing. It's modelling.... it is creating a new climate in a community' (Teacher 1). During the subsequent visit to School 3, the school leaders stressed character education being important during current times when all sectors of society, including families, were experiencing a lack of funding, and families a lack of support, with families being challenged to see character as a priority. Schools were therefore needed to deliver character education, and 'to be promoting kindness and respect and empathy for others' (School Leaders, School 3). The teachers also voiced a similar view with the belief that the school helped pupils succeed, 'to make our young people go on and have resilient communities and succeed in the world of work' (Teacher 2). Pupils also had a similar view that the school had fostered helping others '... when you realise, ... your traits ... as you build yourself up, you end up building up the people around you as well' (Pupil 3). Pupils also voiced that consideration given to character could help with relationships e.g. forgiveness and not holding a grudge, thinking about why others are feeling and behaving the way they are.

You didn't realise what other people were going through ... when I was busy being caught up in my own feelings towards them, I never stopped to think, 'Oh, why might they behave that way with me? What's happening?' So, especially last year, it made me realise that it's not – it sounds bad that I thought this way before, it's not always about me (Pupil 1, School 3).

Parental input was also raised by some teachers. Teachers in School 3 also voiced the view that if character development were not supported at home, it would be difficult for schools to instil character, recognising that for some families other challenges they faced were overwhelming.

Challenges in developing and sustaining character education were also raised. The school leaders in School 3, emphasised that schools are not without their challenges and so, in developing character education, all the contexts within the school needed to be considered, e.g. role changes, funding etc. Sustainability was specifically raised as an important issue, and the school had tried to continue to address character education after the year of character ended, recognising the general need, and the new cohort of pupils, and new staff joining the school each year. This was brought into focus when one of the new subject teachers, who had not experienced the year of character, stated not being conscious of developing values but acknowledging that this was something that should be made overt to give a more powerful message. One teacher suggested that it could be challenging to take character development from the classroom environment to other contexts.

6.3 *What is included in the implementation programme for character education and how is character education implemented in the school?*

Summary of key themes emerging:

- Wider curricular activities and whole school practices linked to values, providing opportunities for personal development of pupils
- Pupil engagement in values education through ‘pupil voice’
- Intentional character education as part of the curriculum
- A character education framework/process to support character development across the school
- The leadership role in developing and sustaining character education
- The engagement of parents in character development

In all schools there was strong evidence that a range of activities and practices was in place to support values and character education. The most prevalent were those providing opportunities at whole school level. These were wider curricular activities as well as whole school practices linked to values that were supporting pupil development. In School 1, The teachers provided a long list of examples of the many activities that were being implemented in the school that they identified as contributing to character education. Many of the activities being implemented involved a selection of different pupils from across the year groups working towards specific awards. For example,

- *Dynamic Youth Award* (senior pupils not on exam leave)
- *Prince’s Trust* (pupils not on exam leave)
- *Saltire Award* (senior pupils)
- *Rights Respecting Schools* run by UNICEF UK

Different teachers took responsibility to lead and coordinate the awards. The teachers found the awards helpful as there is a list of criteria to be met. The criteria helped them to identify more explicitly what was going on in the school. One of the teachers said, ‘... it was basically making explicit a lot of things that we already did, and it just needed some, somebody to organise them, and you know, collate what we do with regards to that’ (Teacher 2, School 1). The teachers emphasised the *Rights Respecting Schools* awards gave them the opportunity to identify community engagement locally and globally and could be linked to the virtue of civic engagement. This was particularly linked to a variety of volunteering opportunities available to the pupils. The teachers and pupils also highlighted that the school had a high number and a wide range of different extra-curricular activities, many of which they suggested contributed to the implementation of character education in the school.

I think that we give them lots of opportunities. The amount of opportunities they’re given is unbelievable, and they take these opportunities up, and it’s building their character all the time. It’s building up their resilience (Teacher 4, School 1).

School 1 had been involved in the *Inspiring Purpose* Poster Competition but they were no longer involved in it when the participants were interviewed.

The Inspire Aspire I did when I was the PT [Principal Teacher] of RE [Religious Education]. It wasn't done this year. When the PT came back, it's not been done (Teacher 1, School 1).

In School 1, the list of school values was visible around the school and the school leadership team encouraged the teachers to use the values when opportunities arose. Examples provided included use of pupil reflection on the values for behaviour management. Detention for poor behaviour was re-named Reflection Time '... to get young people to reflect upon the impact of what they've done on others, which fits in with some of our key values' and 'more in line with character development' (School Leaders).

The school leaders, teacher and pupils in School 1 all mentioned the implementation of character education through the use of a commercial programme. The programme is marketed as a positive education programme and is designed to support teachers and schools in the development of positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience and to build safe and supportive class and school learning environments. The programme package provides teachers with practical resources, lessons and relationship-building strategies for teachers. The programme aims in an explicit way to a whole school approach, which contributes to a positive school culture. In School 1 the pupils referred to a week of activities across the school using the title of the commercial programme. They also referred to school morning assemblies linked to the programme activities, again using the programme name to refer to the assemblies.

Similarly, in School 2, the values underpin all the work in the school, are prominent, and are very visible. The school relied heavily on two different programmes to implement values education, preferring that term to character education. However, the school leaders emphasised that in their view both the programmes align with character building with values.

But really, these values that we have so many skills within the values and that potentially could be character, so if you think of perseverance, you think about resilience, you think about hard work and, and you can break it down. And I think the next step might be to really hone in on the values that we have, rather than introduce completely new values or completely new characters (School Leaders, School 2).

The first programme is a commercial programme, predominantly about developing consistency of behaviour and the development of respect for self and others. It is the main platform being used across the school in developing a positive ethos for behaviour and improving learning. The programme has culture building as one of its strands and the school leaders said in their responses that the programme aligns with values education and character development. They regard it as a ready-to-learn approach that is trying to change people's mindsets with the ambition being to change the mindset of pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and the whole school community.

Using the language of values is intentional. All the teachers are using the same consistent language across the school. Using a commercial programme, the school leaders and teachers are developing a blueprint.

On the blueprint, it says, 'This is how we do it here.' And that's just, that's what I keep saying to staff: 'This is how we do it here' (School Leaders, School 2).

The school leaders in School 2 explained that every teacher uses the same 'microscript', and uses the same language, when addressing pupil behaviour. This provides a consistency of language and the same steps in the actions taken across the school for every pupil. The aim is to strip back and simplify and clarify the message to pupils.

This commercial programme that is being used has many elements that demonstrate how character education is being developed. There is a strong emphasis on identifying the school culture and the development of 'visible adult consistencies' (School Leaders). The teachers in the school have a key part to play through their own value systems.

And then the journey with the staff as well, making them realise that they use values in their everyday life and what values they have. Again, there was a lot of, a lot of time spent making staff aware of the impact it can have on their lessons and the school life. So, I think it's very similar for us (School Leaders, School 2).

The second programme outlined, run by a Scottish-based charity, involves teachers and pupils in a week-long residential course focusing on values education, reflection, resilience and confidence-building. There are follow-up activities to encourage continuing ongoing reflection and positive action when the teacher and pupils return to schools.

... with the week residential at XXX [name of programme removed], the pupils get so much experience they get such an experience there, when they come back, they know everything about their values (School Leaders, School 2).

Other activities mentioned, which were similar to School 1, were the use of the *Rights Respecting Schools* Programme to raise awareness of the school values. One of the teachers explained how the *Rights Respecting Schools* initiative is taken forward in the school. They explained there are 20 pupils ranging from 1st to 4th Year and they work in groups and each group focuses on how 'rights' match up to the school values. They present their work at school assemblies using PowerPoint presentations and video clips.

So it's quite a big group [of students] and each of them have got a focus in the group on how they're going to take the UN Rights Charter forward in the school and how that can really enhance, the values of the school and just make the student and the staff body a little bit more familiar with what rights they can access, what we are building into the curriculum and these guys have really taken the lead in terms of driving that forward (Teacher, School 2).

The responses from the school leaders and teachers showed that a great deal of work had gone into deciding on the values and on the language the teachers use so there is a consistent message. It also highlights that it would be confusing to propose different language to use in the school when school leaders and teachers had spent a lot of time on in-service days and follow-up meetings on agreeing

together the school values and the consistency of language and approach they all wanted to use in their interactions with pupils across the school.

You do hear a lot of staff now just saying, 'I want you to come in and I want you to be ready to learn.' You know. And they're using the terminology, which I think is important, whether it's character education or the values. Our staff are starting, everybody's using that speak (School Leaders, School 2).

They had developed a plan of the behaviours and approaches which would be implemented, such as teachers welcoming pupils into classrooms and calm and collected behaviour from staff and pupils. The behaviours and values are emphasised across every year group and also with primary 7 children who come to the secondary school one day a week as part of a strong primary/secondary transition programme.

As part of the emphasis on embedding the school values and behaviour approaches the teachers are encouraged through awareness raising in-service and staff meetings to 'use the values every day in lessons and across the school' (School Leaders, School 2). There is also an electronic tracking system of class charts to track pupil behaviour, attendance and learning. This gives a record of negative and positive behaviour.

But then that links in to the Class Charts account, which is all the classes in the school, and every teacher gets their own classes, so if you click 'my class', it comes up with the classes that I teach. Um, but I'll display all students. And it's got all the information for all the pupils (School Leaders, School 2).

So, it breaks it down into what behaviours are going really positively and what they're showing. So, contribution's the biggest one, which is nice for us to see, actually. But also, um, we really need to work on being respectful as a school. So that's the character we need to build (School Leaders, School 2).

In School 3, as mentioned earlier in this report, the school values were reconsidered and relaunched, narrowing to a smaller number, with teachers, pupils and parents consulted. The Year of Character allowed all staff and pupils to focus on character with all pupils having the opportunity to consider their own character traits. This opportunity was provided through a session during the school year. Character was a word used widely in this school. One of the extra-curricular activities given as an example to demonstrate the direct alignment to values was '12 days of Kindness' at Christmas, which was aiming to develop a feel-good factor amongst those who engaged positively, but it was stated that so many pupils did not engage; and the shoe box challenge was also developing a sense of feeling good about doing something positive for others.

In School 3, as in the other schools, addressing behaviour challenges was raised and linked to values. The school adopted a restorative approach¹ to deal with challenging behaviour, with restorative

¹ Restorative approach: 'Children and young people require the opportunity to hear about and face up to the harm and distress they have caused others. Restorative approaches are built on values which separate the

officers appointed. This approach allows there to be a voice, to develop understanding, and to talk about emotions and how behaviour could be changed. Some pupils were being targeted to provide support with their behaviours and character traits. The school leaders expressed a view that there is less negativity when there is a culture of having a voice. Teachers voiced that courses in character development could improve the success of restorative approaches.

The school was moving towards a new merit system with values being integral, with 'above and beyond' behaviours rewarded. This was seen as being able to support the middle 60% rather than the top and bottom 20% as at present. There was some debate amongst the teachers about awards. Teachers felt there should be an opportunity for hard work to be recognised with a tangible award, whereas another teacher's view was that certificates could switch some pupils off.

Restorative approaches were also raised in School 4. A review of restorative practice, planned for all staff, was underpinned by values. The intention was to help staff better support their dealing with young people with challenges. The school leaders stated that value systems were fundamental to how staff were able to deal with challenging situations. The school had also introduced the 'four ways to be': to be here, to be prepared, to be respectful and to be calm, which are linked to the values. The school values and these 'ways to be' have high visibility and aid teachers in their communication with pupils.

Pupil development through 'pupil voice' was raised explicitly by three schools. In School 1, there was a strong emphasis on encouraging pupil voice and the school leaders' view was 'pupils have a real role to play within the school' through Pupils Councils for each year group, engagement in the *Rights Respecting Schools* initiative, volunteering in the community and a large number of wider curricular activities. The school leaders said that through the many opportunities available to the pupils, 'They're making a difference to the lives of others and that sense of duty is really quite important to us' (School Leaders, School 1). The pupils' responses highlighted their engagement with volunteering and their understanding of the importance of thinking of others.

I mainly do volunteering out of school ... It is like volunteering with people with learning needs, special needs. It's like really rewarding (Pupil 2, School 1).

I think that just all the different opportunities in school, volunteering has made you want to do it outside of school more (Pupil 1, School 1).

However, many of the activities identified by the pupils were out-of-school activities linked to youth clubs and sports clubs and volunteering had been initiated by them. Some of the pupils said that more could be done in school to embed the values and volunteering across the school. For example, one pupil said,

person from the behaviour. They promote accountability and seek to repair any harm caused in a situation.'
<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/additional-support/specific-support-needs/social-and-emotional-factors/restorative-approaches/>

Personally, I would make it more compulsory for just showing people what you can do with volunteering. The only reason I started volunteering and started *Duke of Edinburgh* was because my brothers did it and they said it was good. I don't think the true thing that you can get out of volunteering and starting clubs is really promoted throughout this school. I think if it was people would realise that you can do much more than just get these Highers.

Some of the pupils remembered engaging in activities relating to values education but could not remember anything about them now. For example, when asked about one of the initiatives highlighted in the teacher interviews, one of the pupils said,

Ye we did that for a bit, we got involved with some charities but I think, I can't remember much of that sadly, it was before the summer so it's kind of lost from my mind.

The importance of pupils' voice was mentioned in all schools by the school leaders. As in other schools, in School 3, pupils were involved in various initiatives within the school including pupil voice, recognising the challenge of giving every pupil a voice, with the current Pupil Voice groups being for each year and each class. The school leaders emphasised the importance of pupil voice. 'Days of children being seen and not heard are finished. Children have much more of a voice' (School Leaders, School 3). Other initiatives were Junior leadership in S1 to S4 – 24 to 30 in total; *Youth Philanthropy Initiative* (delivered through Personal and Social Education in S5, building in values), and helping with the food bank.

Pupils in School 4 explained what was important to them and the link of these activities and programmes to values. *Inspiring Purpose* and *Youth Philanthropy Initiative* were raised by the pupils as being values-based and Diversity Day was another values-based activity identified by pupils. Pupils stated that pupil voice gives pupils opportunities, e.g. Pupil Climate Council, Senior pupil groups: buddying. and supporting health and wellbeing and values.

As well as the wider curricular opportunities and practices, there was desire to see character education delivered within classrooms and the subject curriculum. This was exemplified in some subjects in the schools. In School 1, teachers identified some curriculum areas where elements of character education were included, but not explicitly named. In some cases, the purpose was directly linked to finding ways to engage pupil not taking examinations in wider curricular activities by linking directly to some of the awards discussed above.

When XXX [school leaders] first mentioned to us that we were pursuing the route of character education connection ... it fits obviously ideally with Modern Studies and the citizenship element of my remit to do with the civic virtue and as lead teacher of the *Rights Respecting Schools Award*, which we've received bronze.' (Teacher 2, School 1)

Another teacher, who was not familiar with character education, believed that skill and virtue were interchangeable but was '...really keen on looking at evidence, how we cover things like critical

thinking' (Teacher 4). They indicated they were implementing an Elective Course with second year pupils discussing skills and making them aware of how the skills they gain in school can translate into the world of work. They said, 'I find all of these things are really developing important character virtues in the pupils' (Teacher 4).

The school leaders identified other areas of the curriculum where they suggested that character education could be incorporated.

Simple examples sprung to mind, when Higher English classes are doing *The Crucible*, they are talking about the character of John Proctor and his values and so on and so forth. Similarly, in History, doing Martin Luther King or Gandhi or whatever, so I thought, well, that would be okay because we do that anyway and it's about maybe just tweaking things ever so slightly to focus more on the issue of character. But then that takes you to how do you build character? What are the values that you instil within the young people and you start looking at what you do? And we do, I think, quite a lot on that. (School Leaders, School 1)

The school leaders identified within the curriculum, other opportunities to encourage reflection on the school values, in particular explicitly through Personal and Social Education which 'is an important driver for a lot of things with regard to values and development of character' (School Leaders). 'Philosophical enquiry' or 'ethical enquiry' has been introduced in the curriculum for 5th and 6th Year pupils through Ethics Education. However, 'intentional' character education did not appear to be understood. This was demonstrated in the tentative question posed by the school leaders, 'if you're doing what you already do, if you tweak it ever so slightly so the John Proctor, is that not intentional?' (School Leaders, School 1). In School 2, as part of the emphasis on embedding the school values and behaviour approaches the teachers are encouraged through awareness raising in-service and staff meetings to 'use the values every day in lessons and across the school' (School Leaders, School 2).

In School 3, the aim was also to embed character education into classroom practice, and in the school more widely, having a vision of effective use of the new core values and moving beyond simply discussing values. Values underpinned everyday teaching in social subjects (History, Geography, Modern Studies and Religious and Moral Education, Craft Design and Technology/Home Economics (building in teamwork), Physical Education and Personal and Social Education. The Art teacher emphasised the importance of teaching pupils to be 'decent human beings, that you are trustworthy, that you are honest, that you own up. All these are characters, and, and that's what I try to instil in them'. There was a desire expressed by one of the teachers to build in attributes such as empathy and relationships rather than having in stand-alone lessons. Some teachers felt they were developing character traits but not raising this overtly with pupils, and not making values overt could explain lack of visibility: making values/character education more explicit would give a more powerful message. Teachers stated that there was no conscious link between courses delivering character education (Personal and Social Education) and other aspects of curriculum delivery, and the teachers believed this would be useful.

A similar ambition was found in School 4. All teachers were expected to deliver raising awareness and use of the core values in their daily practice and interactions with young people, building these core

values into their classroom practice. In practice, there were some areas of the curriculum that were seen as developing character. The bulk of intentional character development was planned to be delivered through Religious and Moral Education. The Religious and Moral Education staff appeared to be central to the delivery of values education within the school, and aspects of their curriculum were mentioned as having school values embedded: diversity, racial discrimination, *Inspiring Purpose* poster, and the *Youth Philanthropy Initiative*.

We keep on coming back to the ‘treat others as you like to be treated yourself’. So that’s the underlying principle, the value, really, and whatever we’re doing, you know, whatever religion we’re studying when we’re looking at, say, what do Christians think about abortion in 4th year, we’ll come to, back to, well, you know, some Christians think, ‘treat others as you like to be treated’ (Teacher 1, School 4).

The *Inspiring Purpose* poster was valued by teachers because pupils could work on their own.

I think from the teaching point of view, I definitely prefer, personally, that it’s still the poster because it’s...it’s easier. You know, there’s so many other things to be doing and this is a time of year that we really look forward to because it is quite straightforward for us (Teacher 1, School 4).

School 4 was the only school that was actively engaging in the *Inspiring Purpose* Poster Competition. In Schools 2 and 3 the participants in the interviews and the focus groups made no mention of involvement in the *Inspiring Purpose* Poster Competition. The teachers in School 4 said they would like feedback from Character Education Scotland about the posters. They also highlighted that the involvement with the poster competition was more popular with the girls than the boys. The pupils said they preferred the original *Inspiring Purpose* poster rather than the *Sustainable Futures* poster because the new poster limited pupil choice because an inspiring person for a pupil may not be involved in sustainability. This view was echoed by teachers, and more generally they said the poster becomes less inspiring when a specific category is selected. The more specific the poster is, the less flexibility there is for the way teachers choose to use it with pupils. Digitising the posters was also not popular amongst teachers in School 4. The pupils suggested that Character Education Scotland should consult with them about their views about the poster rather than making assumptions about what pupils would like to reflect on – for example, sustainability without any consultation with young people.

In Social Subjects there was also work on values education through the *Achieve Programme* developed by Prince’s Trust. The intention was to have character development as a theme in other subject areas across the school. However, the teachers in Religious and Moral Education did not yet have links with teachers in Personal and Social Education about curriculum delivery of values.

In some of the schools there was a sense of organising or auditing the different activities and practices within a framework, or through processes and programmes, to support character development across the school, to try to establish a more holistic approach to character education. Less emphasis was placed on how ‘intentional’ character education was being developed and embedded. The teachers did not use that terminology. In School 1, as mentioned earlier there was a belief that character

education was an integral part of the workings of the school. From the school leaders' perspective, they believed that they were already doing a lot in the school to develop character. They did not think it was necessary to make big changes to what they were doing, rather small changes to make what they were doing more explicitly linked to the school values.

'Well, if it's going to be a big workload issue for us, I'm not interested ... but if it's tweaking what we already do then I was okay with that' (School Leaders, School 1).

According to one of the teachers, 'Much [is] being done without realising it is being done' (Teacher 1) to develop character in the school. Consequently, some of the teachers interviewed were in the process of auditing what they were doing. The auditing process was expressed as '... another way of looking at the things that were being done and how we could put labels and titles on them' (Teacher 1). Similar to School 1 the school leaders in School 2 said that much was being done in relation to values education already and they linked this work to character education.

The school leaders in School 3 acknowledged that a framework would be useful when driving initiatives citing the *Rights Respecting Schools Award* as the example, which the school is taking part in. However, it was emphasised that the school's priority was not being driven to gain awards. Another framework that was suggested was one built around the quality indicator 3.1, about equity and wellbeing from *How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) 4th Edition* (2015) the school leaders voicing the link between equity and wellbeing and character. However, a note of caution was voiced by the school leaders against simply being about ticking a box. He went on to explain that *HGIOS* is used by schools because they are judged using *HGIOS*. If *HGIOS* were to be used to judge values, schools would drive towards that. Currently schools are judged on attainment but there also needs to be recognition for their love and nurture.

In School 4, at the first visit, the school leaders explained that the identification and promotion of core values was linked to a growth mindset approach, using the language of these values every day. '[Values] should drive everything from passing an assessment to walking down the corridor, to going out on a school trip or whatever it may be, our daily interactions' (School Leaders, School 4). The school leaders believed that there was a message of intentional character and values development, and self-reflection, with school values being embedded consistently. The school was using the *Rights Respecting Schools* approach which was cited as a useful framework for current work, and to develop intentional character development.

We would use *Rights Respecting Schools* as a way to certainly try to develop intentional character development. I wouldn't see it as a prescriptive forced thing' (School Leaders, School 4).

The school leaders in School 4 cautioned against *Rights Respecting Schools* being a 'toolbox agenda' they believed that the work of embedding values would never be completed. This was also the view of teachers, who said that time would be needed, and the values would need to be continually revisited, to remain high profile. But teachers did acknowledge the change in a year.

The last time we met our school values were not particularly embedded at all because xxxx [name removed] had just created them and now you see them all over the school, referred to all the time, at all assemblies and it is visible, when it probably wasn't the last time we spoke (Teacher 2, School 4).

One area that had a limited focus in relation to values was parental engagement. Teachers in School 4 touched on this aspect. Small steps had been taken to engage parents with the values particularly those who attend for behavioural and other issues, for example through the Centre (an inclusion setting within the school) which provides support for mainly behaviour but also mental health. 'I'm sure the values start to be something they're [parents are] aware of' (Teacher 2). The work in the Centre is primarily about relationships and solution-focused on young person's needs. Information sent out to parents also raised values. From one teacher's perspective parental engagement about values was not a priority. 'I can't say it's [values] a major...focus of my interactions with parents ... because normally there's a pressing issue' (Teacher 2, School 4).

6.4 Who is involved in the implementation process?

Summary of key themes emerging:

- School Leadership as a driver for implementation
- Teachers, particularly in specific subject areas and with specific responsibility linked to values implementing values-based work
- Ambition to have all teachers embedding values within daily practice
- Pupil consultation and specific groups of pupils leading values-based initiatives
- Consultation with targeted groups of parents
- Limited engagement of parents in character development

In all schools, the school leadership appeared to be key drivers for the introduction and embedding of values. In some of the schools, there was clear evidence that teachers and pupils, and some with targeted groups of parents, had been consulted on the values for the school. The evidence shows that the general ambition in the schools was for teachers to embed values within their classroom practice and across the school. For example, In School 2, teachers had been trained in the commercial programme (mentioned in the last section), which is used both within and outwith classrooms, and which has an emphasis on values. All teachers in this school are expected to embed values and implement positive behaviours using this commercial programme. As the school leaders emphasised it is about changing the mindsets of everyone, pupils, teachers, support staff, parents and the whole community.

In some schools there are staff dedicated to skills and values development. For example, in School 1 there are Coordinators of Character Education and Skills for Life, and a member of staff dedicated to citizenship.

The staff in schools were involved in wider school opportunities that benefited pupils' character development. In addition, in some schools both staff and pupils were involved in delivering extra-curricular activities.

We've got staff that run clubs, not just in PE [Physical Education], but across all the departments. There's a club in all the departments, lunchtimes, after schools, pupils from third year up to sixth year get the opportunity to go on sports leaders' award, and then they run clubs, they support clubs. So, if a member of staff's there, there's maybe a pupil helper as well, but we have clubs that are exclusively run in XXX [name of school] but also in our feeder primary schools because they've done sports leaders opportunities here. The S6 community mentors that come into junior classes run charity events, sports day events, you know (Teacher 4, School 1).

In School 2, the school has a partnership with a Scottish-based charity and pupils were engaged with the programme delivered by this charity which instils values through week-long residential programmes. In School 1 there was evidence of pupils taking the lead in running some of the additional activities themselves and some had been trained as leaders of sport. All four schools were involved in the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme. In School 2 pupils were on the *Rights Respecting Schools* Group and leading related activities through school assemblies (some had been involved in *Rights Respecting Schools* in primary school). These were all examples where schools were encouraging pupils to take responsibility and use their voice and agency to lead activities as part of the policy emphasis on the importance of developing pupil voice.

There was limited evidence of parental involvement in the implementation shared during the interviews and focus groups other than in Schools 2 and 4 and in both cases this involvement was mainly linked to improving behaviours. School 2 did have a small group of parents who had expressed interest in what the pupils did when they engaged with the Scottish-based charity running the week-long residential reflecting on values. This group of parents had been given the opportunity to engage in the residential and the pupils suggested that more parents should be given this opportunity.

6.5 To what extent is intentional character education contributing to pupil development and the National Improvement Framework?

Summary of key themes emerging:

- Character education not explicitly aligned to the *National Improvement Framework*
- Evidence of character education supporting pupil development, with the ambition of improving engagement in learning and raising attainment
- Limited 'measurement' of the impact of work on character education

Although this research question was aimed specifically at pupil development and the *National Improvement Framework* which is a key driver for Scottish schools, the interviewees did not explicitly link character education to the *National Improvement Framework*. There was some reference to the national priorities particularly in relation to skills improvement.

I found that a lot of what character education stands for dovetails really well with a lot of the national priorities. ... a lot of my job this year has been highlighting what skills for life, learning and work are to the young ones ... eventually, we want to compile that just so we've got an idea of the coverage, and then in S2, they're going to use another partner that the school works with Skills Development Scotland and

they have a website, *My World of Work*, and they're hopefully going to use the digital profiling on there to help guidance staff as well. But it's so much more than just a profile. It links to so many things outwith school. It brings in advice in a whole load of areas. It really is about building character as well, a lot of what's on there, so that's something I'm excited about, and that'll be introduced in S2 (Teacher 3, School 1).

There was also a reference made in School 1 to the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* when describing how pupils had an understanding of their place, locally, nationally and internationally, and there was evidence of their development of political literacy. Both of these aspects are expectations of the capacity 'responsible citizens' as set out in the four capacities.

There was a strong belief expressed by most school leaders and teachers that character development was supporting pupil development in general. For example, School 2 linked character education to improving perseverance and improving behaviour with the aim of improving engagement and learning across the school. The school's aspiration was that this would lead to improved attainment.

And then 'over and above' what we're looking for as a school just now in terms of behaviours that we'd like to see, as improved attainment, perseverance and contribution. That's a kind of ... um, so that falls into the character that we're trying to build within the school. That links into our vision, which is to get everyone engaged more (School Leaders, School 2).

The programmes that the school had used to support their ambition to develop character education appeared to have impacted positively on pupils' development. The pupils interviewed in School 2 shared their view that the programme adopted by the school provided by the Scottish-based charity and being part of the *Rights Respecting Schools* Group had a positive impact on their development.

I don't know. I feel like I'm becoming, like, a better person because before in S1 and 2, like, you can have fun and that in school, but see, now I feel like I need to, like, work a little harder because obviously exams and stuff are coming, and...I feel like I need to help the school a lot more as well, with like the younger ones, to help them, like, learn their rights and their values and stuff like that, because the S1s and S2s have nae been up to XXX [place removed to protect anonymity] yet, so we need to try and teach them the values before they go up (pupil, School 2)

In School 3, the focus on values and character had created a better environment for learning, which in turn was supporting pupil development. This was exemplified by a Social Subjects teacher explaining that in Social Subjects the impact was helping pupils by allowing them to see more than one side to the argument. Teachers believed that developing pupils' values/character had a positive impact on the LGBT+ agenda, and they also saw the impact of the *Youth Philanthropy Initiative* building in values and providing some notable successes in pupils' engagement, lasting beyond school. From the school leaders' perspective, there was some success in embedding values with pupils using the language, and understanding character, but it did not develop beyond this. Pupils held the view that teachers were fostering pupil responsibility and most of the pupils interviewed were seeing the importance of their having to do things for themselves.

The school leaders in School 3 believed that the Year of Career, which ran the year before the Year of Character, had been successful due to the ability of teachers, and pupils being more familiar with the skills for employability. However, developing thinking about character had been more challenging and particularly measuring the impact of the work on character, although the teachers interviewed felt that the Year of Character had been valuable and was appreciated by teachers. It had allowed them to find out what pupils thought of themselves, sometimes traits that the teachers had not recognised in pupils. On the second visit to the school, leaders did express a view that there was development of positive characteristics in the vast majority of young people by the time they left school, although it was not clear how these characteristics were tracked.

The school leaders in School 3 also expressed a view that values education was observed as going on in classrooms but not all the time. However, staff were committed to working on values such as respect and this was seen as a two-way process in the school between pupils and staff, with the vast majority of pupils showing respect. 'Respect is one of the big values that we are striving towards getting and instilling in people' (School Leaders, School 3). The school receiving the *Rights Respecting Schools Award* (at gold level) identified the school as valuing young people, what they say and their rights. The vast majority of pupils in the school were showing higher levels of character but some were not and the reason for this gap widening was believed to be societal. The school leaders voiced that progression in character could be negative, with adolescence and brain development during adolescence having an impact. Teachers felt that in some circumstances pupils receiving a negative reaction from a peer would find this difficult to deal with and potentially difficult to demonstrate positive character traits. Teachers also held the view that not all year groups responded in the same way to character education.

Pupils in School 3 shared some thoughts on their development. They felt that the lessons designed to examine character had helped them understand themselves better and what needed to be improved, but their interest was not sustained beyond the first few minutes of the first lessons, with some pupils considering the lessons a waste of time and repetitive. Older pupils wanted to be in subject classes rather than in these dedicated lessons, but some considered the lessons to be potentially beneficial for younger pupils. Some of the older pupils felt the lessons helped by improving manners and building confidence, but not for all. One pupil felt it had helped with career choice because of considering strengths, and another felt this had supported fifth year pupils when applying for roles in sixth year, and younger pupils with confidence in doing junior leadership roles. Pupils did believe that they developed closer relationships with peers as they went through the school. 'I think you get closer with people as you get older as well. I've noticed in our year this year we're all a lot closer than we were, and we're all helping each other' (Pupil 3). A year on, there was still a sense of values playing a part in development. One pupil stated that they had 'citizenship' in S1 but did not really understand what respect, values etc meant. Another pupil suggested that older pupils, being more mature, were more respectful. Older pupils felt they were better at modelling behaviour.

The assessment of the impact of values and/or character education was more problematic and was seen as challenging. In School 4, at the first visit, the belief was expressed by the school leaders that the drivers of values and vision has led to much improved examination results (evident in 2018 diet), a measure that is quantifiable and easy to track, and a measure that is used by all schools to assess pupils' and the school's success. This could imply that the examination results were a proxy measure

for the impact of values education. A year on from the revision and ambition to embed the core values across the school, there was no tracking of these core values or the impact of the values on young people, or on their character development, other than for a small number who were on an alternative curriculum where character development was a focus, and for the lowest 20% in S4.

Teachers views were that pupils' development of values was difficult to assess,

I mean that is the issue with all this kind of thing about values. How do you assess it? Because if it's Maths or English, you know, it's easier, but you're – It is difficult to assess whether somebody has developed. They, the pupils, will have really strong values that are encouraged from home, you know, or are innate within them, but how can you assess it? (Teacher 1, School 4).

and difficult to quantify progress.

It is quite difficult to actually quantify the progress. I mean... I remember in our subject RMPS [Religious, Moral and Philosophical Education], it is one of the things we used to have, a personal search, which is all about values. That was always the big issue. It is not a thing you can actually necessarily test in the way that you could test other kinds of progress (Teacher 1, School 4).

Nevertheless, teachers did suggest that although it was not clear about the impact of work on values or virtues, their observation showed that there was positive involvement.

I don't think we can see if it [development of character/values through Religious and Moral Education curriculum] has that big of an impact but the involvement is there and the enthusiasm is there for sure. At the very least they are being exposed to people of good character and virtue.... (Teacher 2, School 4).

This view was exemplified with reference to the *Inspiring Purpose* poster in School 4. The teachers viewed the *Inspiring Purpose* poster, delivered to all in S2, as engaging and noted how it developed skills. The *Youth Philanthropy Initiative* programme was also seen as having a positive impact on pupils, particularly through the presentations given by pupils to other pupils. Pupils views in School 4 were that some of the value-based activities such as the *Inspiring Purpose* poster, the *Youth Philanthropy Initiative*, and the Diversity Day did have some impact but had mixed views about whether these values have changed views or attitudes. The school motto of 'perseverance' highlighted by the school leaders was also raised by the pupils as being important to develop their understanding of this value, and encouraged them to try. However, on revisiting the school there was more of a sense of pupils wanting to have activities that they saw as having more practical relevance to their futures.

Probably some of the stuff that I have learnt but a lot of the stuff can be pointless sometimes. Writing CVs that is probably more important than learning about relationships (Pupil, School 4).

This section of the report has presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews with school leaders and the focus-groups with teachers and pupils during the two visits to the four schools. The

findings were set out in relation to each of the research aims that were identified to be explored. From the findings a number of key themes emerged and will be further discussed in the following section.

7. Discussion

In this section of the report the following overarching themes to emerge from the findings are discussed:

- Preference for terminology of values education rather than character education
- Preference for a tailored approach to values education taking into account the circumstances of the school concerned.
- Importance of leadership and whole school commitment to values education
- Implementing intentional character education
- Identifying impact of values education and learners' progress and the challenge of sustainability in embedding character education

7.1 Preference for terminology of values education rather than character education

In all four schools in this study the language of values was used, in the main, in explaining what the school leaders, teachers and pupils understood as character education. Priestley (2010) emphasised the importance of schools engaging in dialogue about values of *Curriculum for Excellence*. What was evident from the findings was that the schools all recognised the importance of dialogue about values, specifically dialogue about the values that underpinned their own school culture and ethos. All the schools had recently reviewed their school values through deliberative discussions between teachers, pupils, parents and the school community. Not only was character education expressed in the context of values education, but there was a preference for using terminology of values education rather than character education. Indeed, concern was emphasised in one school that changing terminology would be confusing for pupils, teachers and the school community generally. In the pupil responses in all four schools the findings showed that they were familiar with the language of their school values and values education rather than character education.

The term 'character education' was used by the school leaders and teachers in relation to their involvement in the Pathfinder Project, although their explanation of understanding of character education was expressed mainly in the language of values. The synonymous use of the terms character education and values education is not surprising given the ambiguity and lack of clarity of terms that is evident in the literature reviewed. The research (Berkowitz, 2011) suggests a 'semantic morass' and similarly the findings in this study showed confusion over terminology. For example, in one school, the school leaders said in their discussion with one another, 'we were like, 'Character? Is it just values?'. There was recognition of 'different aspects to character', but they chose to continue to use the terminology of values as they and the whole school community were familiar with this terminology. In one school in the focus group with teachers, values and employability skills appeared to be conflated. The teachers suggested that values tie in with social education and employability skills, e.g., teamwork and active listening, and these are seen as transferable skills. Given the consistent emphasis on values in *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance documents, *Getting It Right For Every Child*, *Developing the Young Workforce* and in more recent documents related to the *National Improvement*

Framework in Scotland, it is not surprising that the school leaders and teachers are more familiar with and more comfortable using the language of values. Also, in the *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance documents the term character education is not used explicitly. Similarly, many of the activities the schools are engaging in are related in the school leaders' and teachers' view to character development but are not explicitly labelled character education. They believe that they are providing multiple opportunities for character development. They are doing so using the terminology they and the school communities are familiar with and is evident in *Curriculum for Excellence, Getting It Right For Every Child* and *Developing the Young Workforce* policy guidance.

What is surprising was the limited explicit mention of the four capacities outlined in the *Curriculum for Excellence* guidelines. When Curriculum for Excellence was implemented, the four capacities were mantras that could be regularly heard in schools, expressed by school leaders, teachers and pupils. However, the school values identified by each of the four schools were more evident as their mantras in this research study. It is acknowledged that this could be because the aims of this research study were at the forefront of the school leaders' and teachers' minds when they were interviewed. Alternatively, it appears they have adopted the specific values that have been agreed by the school community and they prefer to use them regularly. The findings demonstrated a desire to use consistent language across the schools so that pupils, teachers, support staff and parents are familiar with it. As the school leaders emphasised in one school, 'we have simplified the language' and the teachers and support staff use a 'microscript' so that consistent language is used and embedded across the whole school. Introducing new terms such as the virtues of character education would disrupt the school's efforts to use consistent language and move away from the language of values they are working hard to familiarise everyone with in the school community. It would also differ from the language of values used in the curriculum guidance documents. This highlights the importance of understanding the context of the school, their starting point for any new initiative and what they are aiming to achieve as a school community.

Values contributing to character development were expressed by the school leaders and teachers as beliefs and underpinning philosophies for leading one's life, as well as desirable goals to guide the development of pupils in relation to behaviour, actions and commitment to learning. The values were linked to the pupils' self-development as well as care for others. For example, the values of 'respect' and 'duty' were linked to the development of a pupil as a 'good person'; and 'commitment' and 'perseverance' were linked to self-improvement, readiness to learn and improved attainment in school. The pupils expressed their understanding of character education in relation to 'doing the right thing' and 'helping others' or 'acting as a role model' for younger pupils. Pupils referred to their school values or particular values that had been explored during school-based activities and initiatives, as well as activities, such as youth clubs, that they participated in outside of school, when asked about their understanding of character education. The pupils who were specifically engaged in school-led programmes or initiatives focusing on values, such as the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme or other Scottish-based charity programmes or one of the commercial programmes, referred to specific values and provided examples of what they understood they meant. However, this was not the case for all the pupils involved in the focus groups. The school's belief that the values were visible to all pupils was not evident in some of the pupils' responses and perceptions of values and their importance.

The four schools all have their school values prominently displayed around the school and in some cases on the lanyards of the teachers' name badges. The schools had engaged in dialogue about the values underpinning what they do. The choice of school values in each school had been discussed and reflected on and chosen in relation to the aims and ambitions of the school and in relation to the context of the school and to the development needs of the pupils. For example, in one school the values were specifically related to improving behaviour and motivation of pupils to learn, as well as raising their aspirations of what is possible in life. In another school the focus was on developing a sense of duty and on volunteering in the community. This underlines that there was a strong emphasis on the development of meaningful values education that was specifically connected to the context and needs of the school, its pupils and the community in which it is located. The starting point for the discussion of values education in the school was not a prescribed framework of values or virtues which they tried to align with the aims and the work of the school. Rather the starting point of their discussions about values was about improving the learning and lives of the pupils, the school and its community. This is an important distinction which needs to be recognised. The bottom-up approach of identifying values that are relevant to the pupil and community needs was at the forefront and appeared to be more meaningful to all involved. This highlights the importance of avoiding a top-down or prescribed framework approach; understanding the particular context of the school – its pupils, teachers and community; and supporting and guiding the development of character education in a way that builds on what the school is already doing and makes sense to the school. Schools should be free to construct their own approach to values education/character education according to their own circumstances.

7.2 Importance of leadership and whole school commitment to values education

In all discussions with the school leaders in the four schools, their commitment to values education was evident. This highlights the importance of the school leaders' role in relation to a whole school commitment to values education. The teachers were leading specific initiatives and making strong contributions to values education, however, the school leaders' role in recognising the importance of commitment to and emphasis on values education was evident and important in the findings. In all cases the school leaders recognised the importance of the totality of the curriculum provision in school for the pupils, referring to the importance of the school ethos, the subjects, cross-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities. Similarly, in all cases it was apparent that the driving force for the emphasis on the totality of the curriculum was to achieve the best for their pupils. All school leaders and teachers spoke of this as their key purpose and, within that agenda, for children to be or become 'good people' able to 'flourish in today's world'. Their views were in line with the broad aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* - to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today's world. It also accords with Berkowitz's (2002, p.43) view that 'character education is not philosophical distinctions, pedagogical ideologies, politics or other conceptual disagreements, rather it is the development of children.'

In all schools, the reasons for the school leaders' interest in the Pathfinder Project and in character education were similar and generally it was the belief that the emphasis on values, and activities related to values, would bring about change and improvement. However, the responses relating to school improvement and pupil progress and development were not expressed explicitly in the

language of the *National Improvement Framework*. However, while there were not many explicit references made to the *National Improvement Framework* the selection of their specific school values was linked to both school and pupil development. For example, *perseverance* for the pupils to keep going in their studies and *respect* in order to listen to one another, to teachers and be ready to learn. A combination of the development of individual behaviours to benefit the individual development of the pupils was evident as well as behaviours that would benefit the whole school learning environment for pupils and teachers. There was an emphasis on improving behaviours of pupils to create a calm and respectful learning environment for everyone. In one school the school leaders emphasised ‘we are aiming to not only close the attainment gap but also a character education gap.’ In another school while the school leaders did not mention the *National Improvement Framework* explicitly, they did say that the identification and promotion of core values was linked to a growth mindset approach, using the language of values every day to promote development. The notion of changing mindset was also evident in another of the four schools where the school leaders referred to changing the mindset of everyone in the school community (pupils, teachers, support staff, parents) in relation to learning development through familiarity and use of the language of values.

In the exploration of the development of intentional character education there was evidence in all four schools of a focus on developing school values and on attempting to embed them consciously in what they do. The Jubilee Centre’s Framework document suggests that character education should be ‘intentional, planned, organised and reflective’ rather than ‘assumed, unconscious, reactive and random’ (ibid, p2). In the four schools, the work on developing values education, explained by the school leaders and by the teachers interviewed who held leadership roles or were involved in various initiatives to develop values education, was not assumed or unconscious. It was recognised that values education cannot be understood as a separate subject or something that is confined to any particular subject domain. Rather, the school leaders’ and teachers’ understanding is that values education, which some school leaders viewed as synonymous with character education, ‘permeates all subjects, wider school activities and a general school ethos...’ in line with the Jubilee Centre’s proposal (2017, p1). However, as the research suggests, (Whitty *et al.*, 1994) where a permeating the curriculum approach is taken, the implementation process is far from straightforward. While the school leaders and teachers believed in and were attempting to promote an intentional approach, the challenge of the intention becoming invisible in a permeating approach was evident. For example, one teacher said, ‘Much is being done without realising it is being done’ (Teacher 1, School 1) to develop character in the school. While the role of the school leaders in initiating and/or driving the emphasis on values and values education for individual, school and community development was clear across the four schools, what was less clear was how a coherent whole school approach was being put in place and how progress was being realised in achieving the aspirations the school leaders and teachers expressed for values education. The next sub-section explored the implementation approaches in more detail.

7.3 Implementing intentional character education

The purpose of this research study was investigating what the four schools were doing regarding intentional character education. The schools were all engaged in many activities that were related, in their view, to values education but had not explicitly labelled them as character education with the exception of one school who put in place a 'Year of Character Education' approach. However, by the time of the second visit to the school the aim of the 'Year of' had changed and a new focus had been identified for the school year. This raises questions regarding the sustainability of character education in the school.

It was evident from the findings that all four schools are busy and offer a wide range of activities for pupils. The school leaders, teachers and pupils all provided examples of the range of activities going on in their schools during the interviews and focus groups such as:

- Pupil mentoring – e.g. senior pupils mentoring younger pupils
- Role modelling – e.g. school leaders, teachers and senior pupils
- Volunteering in the community – e.g. with older generation, young people with learning needs
- School Assemblies based on values education
- Curriculum subjects – e.g. Social Subjects, Religious and Moral Education, Personal and Social Education
- Extra-curricular activities – e.g. various sports, youth clubs, choirs
- Engaging with 3rd Sector organisations – e.g. *Youth Philanthropy Initiative* etc (one school was engaged in the *Inspiring Purpose* Poster competition)
- Engaging with Award Programmes – e.g. *Right's Respecting Schools*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Prince's Trust*, *Eco Schools* etc
- Use of commercial programmes - e.g. relating to developing school culture, values education and behaviour improvement.

Within the schools their specific school values are linked to school assembly activities and to specific initiatives such as Pupil Councils, senior pupils acting as mentors to younger pupils, volunteering and other extra-curricular activities. In each of the four schools they were also using either commercial programmes or engagement with one or more 3rd Sector organisations in an attempt to link values to actions. There were also examples in all the schools of specific subject areas including activities linked to values education (Social Subjects, Religious, Moral Education, Personal and Social Development). Only one school out of the four schools was using the *Inspiring Purpose* poster within Religious and Moral Education classes. In this case the teachers linked it to values education/character education with pupils in the broad general education phase of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

In all four schools the school leaders and the teachers talked about developing certain behaviours such as respect or perseverance or changing poor behaviours to positive behaviours to achieve a calmer atmosphere in the school, and a readiness to engage in learning. They were able to articulate the plans that were already in place that just needed to 'be tweaked', or the developments that were planned or underway but not fully in place. The findings suggested that each school had a slightly different focus in what they were trying to achieve. For example, one school had a particular focus on the pupils understanding a sense of duty and community engagement. The pupils were able to recognise that volunteering and mentoring younger pupils was important but felt the school could do more to encourage all pupils to engage in volunteering. Some of the pupils in the focus group in that school

suggested it should be compulsory for all pupils to engage in volunteering. In another school the leaders focused on role modelling positive behaviours in an effort to begin to change mindsets and behaviours and develop a new school ethos. The other two schools were also focused on changing behaviours to improve focus on learning and again to develop a positive school ethos. In one of these schools a commercial package was introduced and all teachers were strongly encouraged to follow a sequence of processes to change behaviours. The aim was for consistency in use of the approaches set out in the package and for all teachers to follow the same approach and use the same language.

All four schools engage in the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme. This well-established *Rights Respecting Schools* programme is an example of one 3rd sector programme that is and has been used extensively in Scottish schools over a number of years. The expressed aim of the programme is **embedding** values into the community and attempting to sustain values through a series of awards (bronze, silver and gold) with more expectations of the pupils and school as a whole at each level. As part of gaining the *Rights Respecting Schools* Award the associated rights and values are expected to be linked explicitly to the culture and ethos of the school. Embedding a 'child-rights approach' into all aspects of school life is the overarching aim rather than through a tick list of rights and values to be learned but not put into action by teachers and pupils. Becoming a *Rights Respecting Schools* according to the information provided to schools involves re-evaluating the school's ethos and practices to ensure they embed the principles of the *United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Some of the school leaders and the teachers suggested that the work to achieve the award of a *Rights Respecting Schools* could be linked to the development of values specifically rather than character but with its message of a community commitment to participation and impact on culture and ethos. They suggested that as their schools were already involved in the *Rights Respecting Schools* programme it could be used a framework to increase the intentionality of values education in the totality of school life. The implication being they already have a potential framework that teachers and pupils are familiar with so why add another framework.

While the School Leaders in School 3 acknowledged that a framework is useful when driving initiatives, citing the *Rights Respecting Schools* Award as the example, they emphasised that the school's priority was not driven to gain awards. They emphasised that *How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) 4th Edition* (Education Scotland, 2015) is a framework used by all schools in Scotland to self-evaluate the quality of all they do and to plan and report on their school development. The school leaders' suggestion was linking the planning for intentional values education to the quality indicator 3.1 in HGIOS, which concerns equity and wellbeing. The school leaders identified links between equity and wellbeing and character development. However, a note of caution was voiced by the school leaders about frameworks in making sure their use did not simply become ticking a box, nor did they want to 'see it as a prescriptive forced thing' (School Leaders, School 3). The school leaders suggested because the quality of schools is judged using the HGIOS quality indicators, if the HGIOS framework was used to judge pupil and school development in values, they acknowledged that schools would maybe be driven towards that approach. Nevertheless, they recognised the need to ensure that values do underpin their work, saying that currently schools are judged on attainment but there also needs to be recognition of their nurturing role – emphasising that values should drive everything. These views about the use of frameworks to support intentional character education need careful consideration to ensure that the provision of any framework helps rather than hinders the development of values education or character education. For example, the school leaders indicated that there are already

too many frameworks provided by others (e.g. Scottish Government, Education Scotland) that indicate what is expected. The school leaders said that too many frameworks can be distractors and any additional framework offered by Character Education Scotland was seen in this light – another framework for them to consider.

There was no mention by any of the school leaders or the teachers of values education in relation to Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) which was surprising. IDL is an expectation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. There is emphasis on providing IDL opportunities for pupils in Scottish schools and it also offers another framework for thinking about cross-curricular implementation of values education. However, despite the emphasis of IDL it is still an area of ambiguity in terms of how to implement it in a meaningful way in the totality of experiences for pupils.

Intentionality was evident to some extent in all four schools to different extents in relation to developing pupil voice as part of values education. This is not a surprising finding as there is a strong policy focus on encouraging pupils' voice and is clear in the *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance documents and in *Getting it Right for Every Child*. The findings showed there was general sense of pupils having a voice and having opportunities to engage in and/or lead activities. However, this appeared to be limited to a relatively small number of pupils who were committed to engaging in certain award activities or extra-curricular activities. Encouraging pupil voice is also an important element for gaining the *Rights Respecting Schools* Award for example. Again, the pupil responses in the focus groups suggested that the Award Programme was a means to provide values education with particular groups of pupils, rather than a whole school approach. This may send a message that values education is for, or even necessary, for only some pupils. Encouraging all pupils to have a voice, to have agency and to demonstrate their values in action was not evident in all schools. A shift is needed in moving from encouraging pupil voice to encouraging pupil agency. There were examples of individual pupils taking the initiative themselves and seeking out opportunities to develop agency in community endeavours. These pupils said that schools should do more to encourage pupil agency for everyone.

Parental engagement with the schools in relation to values education was also limited. The findings suggested that small steps had been taken to engage parents with the values in some way in each of the schools. Some parents had for example been involved in the review of school values in each school. Parents also engaged with the schools in relation to behavioural and mental health issues. However, there was less evidence of intentionally involving parents in a sustained way with values development beyond specific initiatives such as the refresh of the school values or improving pupil behaviour. Parental engagement continues to be an area that dominates strategies to improve learning and is a key plank of the Scottish Government's *National Improvement Framework* (Scottish Government, 2016). Working with parents as partners in a child's education and in values education could see a shift both in engagement of parents and in outcomes for pupils, as they work with schools collaboratively to better understand learning and the importance of values in how their children live their lives. It is acknowledged that this approach is challenging for everyone, school leaders, teachers, parent and pupils but a more collaborative approach to values education that can be sustained in and out of school is necessary. A new type of professional learning for teachers could support this type of partnership working with parents through joint activities.

7.4 Identifying impact of values education and learners' progress and the challenge of sustainability in embedding character education

As the discussion in the section above shows the four schools are engaged in values education in different ways. All four schools demonstrated their continuing interest in values education. They had taken an intentional approach and had sought ways to develop teachers' and pupils' understanding of values. The challenging step for all four schools is how to move from some pupils learning *about* values to all pupils learning *how to act* and *becoming* a good person. Without some way of monitoring the impact of the wide range of activities and initiatives they have already put in place the schools are limited in the evidence they can draw on to identify the impact of these activities on the young people's lives.

The data gathered suggested that the success of the many activities they are engaged in is based, to a large extent, on school leaders' and teachers' assumptions or feelings of success in relation to some pupils' understanding of values education or character development. There was little evidence of monitoring progress in terms of the pupils applying values consistently in their day-to-day actions. Across the four schools there was evidence of most, but not all, the pupils involved in the focus groups learning about values and some were able to name the specific values of the school or values they had identified as important to them. It was not clear if these values and behaviours had become embedded in their way of being in and out of school. Some of the pupils could not remember engaging in the activities or were not able to remember anything about things they did in previous school years in relation to values education. In one school the pupils had little to say about values education and some pupils involved in the focus group did not provide any examples of opportunities to develop values education or character education. Some pupils did provide examples of how they thought their behaviour had changed through engagement in the activities but there was little evidence that the values were embedded in their way of being – with a few exceptions. Engagement in activities in and out of school did enable a small number of the pupils to talk about increasing confidence or being more able to talk to people or show empathy towards others. A smaller number of the pupils were able to identify and talk passionately about how they were continuing to think about values in what they did. They said they had changed their behaviour because they better understood the values that were important to them.

In relation to Jacques Delors' recommendation that we must not only educate our children and youth 'to know' and 'to do', we must also educate them 'to be' and 'to live together' (UNESCO, 1996, p21), there was evidence of pupils developing knowledge of values, engaging in activities that were underpinned by specific values, and in activities that encouraged them to care and think about each other. What was not evident was how schools were contributing to enabling pupils to embody values as a way of being that can be sustained beyond their time in school. The challenge for schools is how such embodiment of values can be enabled, observed and monitored. Although the evidence suggests that schools are beginning to explore ways to monitor pupil development in values education there is not a systematic monitoring system used by all teachers. School 1 is using a commercial programme to monitor behaviour improvement, readiness to learn and learning achievement. Comments regarding values development were being added by the school leaders and being shared with parents but it was not clear the extent to which teachers were also commenting on values development in their pupils. School 1 was beginning the tracking process by auditing what they were doing to develop

character. The auditing process was expressed as ‘... another way of looking at the things that were being done and how we could put labels and titles on them’ (Teacher 1, School 1). In School 4 the evidence suggested the teachers were developing their awareness of the school’s emphasis on making values visible.

The last time we met our school values were not particularly embedded at all because xxxx had just created them and now you see them all over the school, referred to all the time, at all assemblies and it is visible, when it probably wasn’t the last time we spoke (Teacher 2, School 4).

Monitoring the visibility of values around the school and increasing understanding of the school values is an important start in developing values education. However, the next steps in monitoring progress in the application of these values in pupils’ actions in school and embedding them in their character in and out of school is much more challenging. Words such as ‘assessing’, ‘measuring’, ‘judging’ progress in values education or character development do not sit comfortably with some school leaders and teachers. Research shows that concerns about exploring values with pupils have led many teachers to attempt to construct a rationale for moral education that is independent of any particular set of values (Arthur, 2010). This highlights the sensitivity around monitoring and tracking. However, without some way of tracking progress it is not possible to know the impact of intentional character education. Dialogue about ways to track progress in values education and what evidence should be drawn on is needed involving the whole school community. It is recognised that this is challenging and more support for schools in this endeavour is needed.

Professional learning for school leaders and teachers that goes beyond strategies, packs or posters is needed with a greater focus on a deep philosophical understanding of values and character and how this is influenced by the society and culture in which we live and learn. Further discussion is also needed with school leaders and teachers how the impact of values education can be monitored to know what activities and initiatives are successful in developing young people’s character development in a way that is sustained in and out of school. Deepening professional learning about values/character education has the potential to have a greater impact on what the school leaders in one school called closing the ‘character gap’ (School Leaders, School 3) and changing behaviours. In today’s society values education is important and dialogue about values needs to be ongoing. As Robb (2008) pointed out any definition of values is only right for the time being. Opportunities to engage critically in the dialogue and debate about what values matter now is important for all children and young people.

Further questions need to be addressed with school leaders and teachers through ongoing dialogue and support. For example,

- What values are pupils bringing with them to school... and how is this impacting on their behaviours ...?
- What is the dominant ethos/culture the school itself reflects to pupils?
- What kind of role models does the school want and expect of its teachers?
- What kinds of initiatives/strategies/projects should teachers be undertaking with pupils to instil and embed values?

- How will impact be assessed/judged?
- How will progress be monitored?

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

A recent refresh of *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance states,

as part of their learner journey, all children and young people in Scotland are entitled to experience a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18, in order that they have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today's world (Education Scotland, 2020a, online)

Scotland's curriculum places learners at the heart of education. At its centre the four fundamental capacities remain. These capacities reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. They:

- recognise the need for all children and young people to know themselves as individuals and to develop their relationships with others, in families and in communities
- recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes that children and young people need to acquire to thrive in our interconnected, digital and rapidly changing world
- enable children and young people to be democratic citizens and active shapers of that world (Scottish Government, 2020a).

The following sections of the Conclusions and Recommendations are set in the context of the vision, principles and purposes of *Curriculum for Excellence* which guide the work of Scottish schools.

8.1 Definition of character education and the understanding of character

Conclusion:

To describe and define character education can be problematic, particularly when the predominant terminology used in Scottish education is not 'character' education but 'values' education. Changing language and definitions, for example mapping the four capacities as a set of 'virtues', could be confusing for schools and could be a disincentive for schools engaging with a charity like Character Education Scotland.

Recommendations:

- Character Education Scotland should simplify and clarify the definitions of character education to align with the nomenclature of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

- Schools should ensure that all stakeholders are clear about what is meant by values education in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and the rationale for having values education at the heart of the school curriculum as defined by *Curriculum for Excellence* guidelines.

8.2 Leadership and vision, culture and school improvement

Conclusion:

The evidence gathered in this Research Study showed the importance of school leadership and commitment to values education. School leadership needs to have the capacity to bring about transformational change if Scotland's children and young people are to flourish in this rapidly changing world. Leadership is needed in securing school improvement that nurtures a culture and ethos of achievement. High quality leadership at all levels is the driving force that improves outcomes and experiences for learners where the needs of learners are at the heart of decision making.

Recommendations:

- Schools should develop a whole school strategy on values education with school leadership being the driving force. This should take into account the advice given in the *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2020: summary* (Scottish Government, 2019) and align with the ambitions of *Curriculum for Excellence* in terms of values. This strategy may find a framework useful in planning for coherence and sustainability. For example, building **intentional** values education into *Curriculum for Excellence* to ensure sustainability is crucial.
- Character Education Scotland should reconsider the use of a framework for intentional character education development in Scottish schools in the light of the findings from this Pathfinder Research Study. Any framework should take into account Scottish Government policy and guidance on *Curriculum for Excellence*, *Getting It Right for Every Child*, *Developing the Young Workforce* and *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2020* and the school empowerment reforms being developed by Education Scotland to explore the contributions that the eight key partners can make to improve outcomes for children and young people in an empowered system. Character Education Scotland has the potential to be a key partner but should be mindful of the school leaders' comments about there already being too many frameworks to consider.
- Schools should strengthen leadership of change with the focus on 'developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community' (Education Scotland, 2015). Referencing the Level 5 illustration of QI 1.3 in *How Good is Our School 4*, and within QI 1.3, the 'features of highly-effective practice' and 'challenge questions' (pp 24-25), school leadership should work towards building a school where **all members of the school community are working together** to take ownership and reinforce the vision and values identified by the school, with the vision and values underpinning all aspects of the work of the school and its community, to lead to **intentional** values education and sustainability.

- Schools should strengthen the culture of the school by constantly making values visible, communicating and promoting values at every opportunity but also using these values as a guide for action at whole school, classroom and individual level. However, it must be recognised that there may not be consensus on the specific school values selected and these values may change as teacher, pupils and parents regularly review them, notwithstanding that some universal values would be expected to remain as core values, e.g. respect, honesty, integrity. The school community should decide together on the values that are shared and relevant to their context, where the values of society and the individual overlap, and these values must be kept under review.
- Schools should have values at the forefront when considering aspects of school improvement.

8.3 Values education, learning and personal development

Conclusion:

In almost all schools, there are some aspects of the curriculum where values are explicit and used widely in discussion and debate, for example Personal and Social Education and Religious and Moral Education. However, the emphasis in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence* is on ‘the totality of all that is planned for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond’ (Scottish Government, 2020b). For example, one of the four contexts for learning identified as being part of this ‘totality’ is ‘opportunities for personal achievement’ where ‘personal achievement provides children and young people with a sense of satisfaction and helps to build motivation, resilience and confidence’ (Scottish Government, 2020b); and another context is ‘the ethos and life of the school’ which could be argued is the most important expression of a school’s value system.

Recommendations:

- Schools should develop, within the whole school strategy for values education, actions for values education to be spread across all areas of the curriculum, making values education explicit throughout the four contexts of learning within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Character Education Scotland should consider improving the *Inspiring Purpose* poster programme to be attractive to more schools and local authorities. It should be recognised that the poster is designed to be **part** of a progressive **intentional** values education programme. Support for intentional values education needs to be extended beyond the poster programme.

8.4 Character education, restorative approaches and changing behaviours

Conclusion:

Health and wellbeing is a key priority in the *National Improvement Framework*.

Since the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*, our approach to behaviour in schools has adapted and evolved to meet the needs of all children and young people. Our schools are places that promote positive relationships and behaviour, underpinned by strong school ethos and cultures based on the values of respect, inclusion and responsibility (Scottish Government, 2019).

This area of 'behaviour' was highlighted by all schools and all policy designed to change behaviours in all four schools had values at their heart, and restorative approaches as standard practice.

Recommendation:

- Schools should consider integrating 'changing behaviours' policy into a whole school strategy on values education, with the potential to link a 'gap' in character education to the attainment gap.

8.5 Professional learning for teachers and other staff on values education

Conclusion:

As with other aspects of quality delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence* there is a strong focus on teachers and other staff being aware of their own professional learning needs and support required. This is within the context of the teachers' professional standards (GTCS, 2011) and the *Teaching Scotland's Future* report (Donaldson, 2011). There is an expectation of teachers:

- Committing to career-long professional learning based around high quality, rigorous professional standards
- Belonging to communities of practice and enquiry
- Developing collaborative practice locally, nationally and globally (Scottish Government, 2020b)

Recommendations:

- Schools should develop a values education professional learning strategy that gives teachers:
 - more ownership of their own professional learning in this area

- opportunities to evaluate their own needs
- support where identified
- opportunities to be empowered to work collaboratively and have professional dialogue with others on values education generally, and the schools' values education strategy, to be delivered through their own subject and curricular area, and in the wider life of the school, taking account of the needs of pupils
- opportunities to develop values education to a stage where values are used pervasively and naturally but overtly in all activities and experiences with pupils, where values education is an **intentional** part of all planning and is leading to sustainability
- processes for evaluating their own and colleagues' effectiveness in delivery of values education that meets the needs of pupils.

8.6 Pupil voice/ Pupil agency

Conclusion:

The expectation of *Curriculum for Excellence* is that part of the process of curriculum design is understanding learners. This should be just as important for values education as for other aspects of the curriculum. This includes

- Listening to learners and being informed by their motivations and aspiration
- Empowering learners to have agency in their learning with opportunities for personalisation (Scottish Government, 2020c).

The *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2020: summary* highlights learner engagement as a key principle of *Curriculum for Excellence* (p.2) and there is an ambition to improve the voice of young people.

Recommendations:

- Schools should strengthen opportunities for pupils to have a say in what matters to them and in particular their views of values education and its delivery.
- Schools should develop further the opportunities and experiences available to all pupils to build and strengthen their values, in a progressive way as they move through the school, to allow them to question and critique their own learning within values education, and giving them a compass to live their lives in school and beyond.
- Character Education Scotland should seek young people's views when considering any developments or changes, e.g. changes to the *Inspiring Purpose* poster programme or any other new programme or initiative being developed.

8.7 Parental Engagement

Conclusion:

'Parental Engagement' is one of the key drivers of the *National Improvement Framework* and is explicit within *Curriculum for Excellence* as part of 'using meaningful learning networks: Collaborating with parents, carers, families and the community' (Scottish Government, 2020c). The *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2020: summary* (Scottish Government, 2019) also includes parental involvement, learning at home and family learning as well as parental engagement in their improvement priorities for 2020. This has relevance for the area of values education.

Recommendations:

- Schools should provide parents with clear information about the school's values and values education which raises awareness of what the school is doing, but also explains parents' integral role as part of the network that is supporting their child's learning and development in terms of values education.
- Schools should create opportunities for all parents to be involved in the school to work with staff on values education. For example:
 - Being part of a review of school values
 - Working with the staff to find out how they can contribute at home, including family learning, which could include some learning sessions
 - Giving feedback to staff on their child's needs and progress in values education
 - Giving feedback on the values education programme.

8.8 Judging/assessing impact of values education (including progress of learners)

Conclusion:

One of Scottish Government's improvement priorities for 2019 is assessment of children's progress for attainment and health and wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2019, p.5).

Recommendations:

- Schools should include in the values education strategy monitoring and evaluating of progress towards realising the ambition of the aims of the strategy, with associated 'measures' to assess impact based on evidence gathered in the school.

Schools should have processes and tracking in place to assess pupils' progress in their values development.

- Schools should include regular reviews of values education as part of the whole school strategy on values education, based on evaluation evidence to ensure that the strategy continues to have a focus on intentionality, and is sustainable, and maximises opportunities for all pupils.
- Schools should be prepared to adapt the strategy as the school progresses and values become embedded in practice, and young people have a deep sense of who they are through their engagement with their values.

8.9 The development of intentional values education

Conclusion:

This Research Study set out to research an intentional approach to developing character in four schools in Scotland by exploring the following key questions with the school leaders, teachers and pupils:

- *What* is understood by character education?
- *Why* has character education been recognised as important in the school?
- *What* is included in the implementation programme for character education?
- *How* is character education implemented in the school?
- *Who* is involved in the implementation process?
- *To what extent* is intentional character education contributing to pupil development and the *National Improvement Framework*?

Recommendations:

- Schools should use the recommendations above to develop an approach that is intentional and moves young people from learning *about* values to learning *how to act* and *becoming* a good person.
- Character Education Scotland should use the recommendations above to better meet their goals:
 - Goal 1: Inspire purpose and a way of being in all young people through character discovery activity.
 - Goal 2: Develop a framework for recognising 'Intentional Character Education' in Schools.
 - Goal 3: Influence policy to improve the status of character education in Scotland.

9. References

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