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The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum: A Look Inside the Wardrobe

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Project Team

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Project Overview

- 2014-2019 John Templeton Foundation funded £1.2m
- 500 11-12 year olds in the UK
- 5000 international 11-12 year olds
- 6 virtues: wisdom, love, justice, self-control, integrity and fortitude

‘The Big Six’ Virtues



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WISDOM

LOVE

INTEGRITY

FORTITUDE

SELF-CONTROL

JUSTICE

Extract from 'Prince Caspian'



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Extract: Finding the Treasure Chamber (Curiosity)

—From Chapter 2, *Prince Caspian* by C.S. Lewis

'We can soon find out', said Edmund, taking up one of the sticks that they had laid ready for putting on the fire. He began beating the ivied wall. Tap-tap went the stick against the stone; and again, tap-tap; and then, all at once, boom-boom, with a quite different sound, a hollow, wooden sound.

'Great Scott!' said Edmund.

'We must clear this ivy away', said Peter.

'Oh, do let's leave it alone', said Susan. 'We can try it in the morning. If we've got to spend the night here, I don't want an open door at my back and a great big black hole that anything might come out of, besides the draught and the damp. And it'll soon be dark'.

'Susan! How can you?' said Lucy with a reproachful glance. But both the boys were too much excited to take any notice of Susan's advice. They worked at the ivy with their hands and with Peter's pocket-knife till the knife broke. After that they used Edmund's. Soon the whole place where they had been sitting was covered with ivy; and at last they had the door cleared.

'Locked, of course', said Peter.

'But the wood's all rotten', said Edmund. 'We can pull it to bits in no time, and it will make extra firewood. Come on'.

It took them longer than they expected and, before they had done, the great hall had grown dusky and the first star or two had come out overhead. Susan was not the only one who felt a slight shudder as the boys stood above the pile of splintered wood, rubbing the dirt off their hands and staring into the cold, dark opening they had made.

'Now for a torch', said Peter.

'Oh, what is the good?' said Susan.

[...] . . . Edmund interrupted. 'I still don't understand, but we can settle that later. I suppose you're coming down, Peter?'

'We must', said Peter. 'Cheer up, Susan. It's no good behaving like kids now that we are back in Narnia. You're a Queen here. And anyway, no one could go to sleep with a mystery like this on their minds'.

Project Aims



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- To evaluate the efficacy of the Narnian Virtues English Literacy Character Curriculum
- To evaluate the effectiveness of involving parents in their child's character education
- Ultimately to provide students with the knowledge and resources to help them in their character development

What are Virtues?



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Our definition:

A good moral habit; an admirable human quality such as wisdom, kindness, truthfulness or courage that is shown with some consistency in day-to-day behaviour

Operationalising the Virtues

Professor Thomas Lickona:

Head – understanding about the virtue

Heart – caring about the virtue

Hand – applying the virtue

Operationalising the Virtues



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- Head**
- Do the students understand the virtues?
 - Can the student see the situation as an ethical one?
 - Does the student frame the situation as requiring a virtuous response?
 - Does the student discern an appropriate response?
- Heart**
- Does the student have an appropriate emotional response to the stimuli?
 - To what extent do they seek intrinsic rather than extrinsic reward?
 - To what extent do students describe virtue when considering their motives?
 - To what extent do they see their actions as building towards ‘flourishing’ of themselves or others?
- Hand**
- Do students answer in a similar fashion across a range of scenarios, showing consistency?
 - Do students see virtue as an important part of their identity?
 - (Do students act in a virtuous way?)

From 'Understanding' to 'Application': How to develop virtue



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The curriculum uses activities that attempt to develop this head-heart-hand model with tasks that develop:

- Understanding
- Identifying
- Empathising
- Valuing
- Applying

- Previous research by Arthur et al. (2014) provides evidence for the efficacy of literature-based character education interventions delivered to primary school pupils aged 9 – 11
- This is the UK's first large-scale quasi-experimental study aimed at improving character in secondary school students through literature (Years 2 and 3 of the project include a matched control group and will include approximately 3600 students)

Background to Quantitative Study (Contd.)



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- Students undertake a 12-week curriculum aimed at enabling them to develop the 'Big Six' virtues
- The curriculum is based on C.S. Lewis's Narnia novels: *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Year 7 students), *Prince Caspian* (Year 8 students), or *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Year 9 students)
- The curriculum is delivered by teachers trained by the research team

Participants



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- **Recruitment (Year 1 of project)**

- 8 schools recruited from the Yorkshire and Teesside regions
- No exclusion criteria (at either school or student level)
- 723 students consented to take part
- Curriculum was delivered to students during Sep – Dec 2016*

- **Withdrawal and attrition (Year 1 of project)**

- 1 school withdrew part-way through the curriculum
- 1 school withdrew on completion of the curriculum
- Attrition (that research team were notified of) at student level was very low

- **Cohorts**

- 2 cohorts of students
- Cohort 1 participating 2016 – 2019 (Years 1 – 3 of project)
- Cohort 2 participating 2017 – 2019 (Years 2 – 3 of project)

Design (Project Year: 1)



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Year 7
students
(Cohort
1)

Pre-test

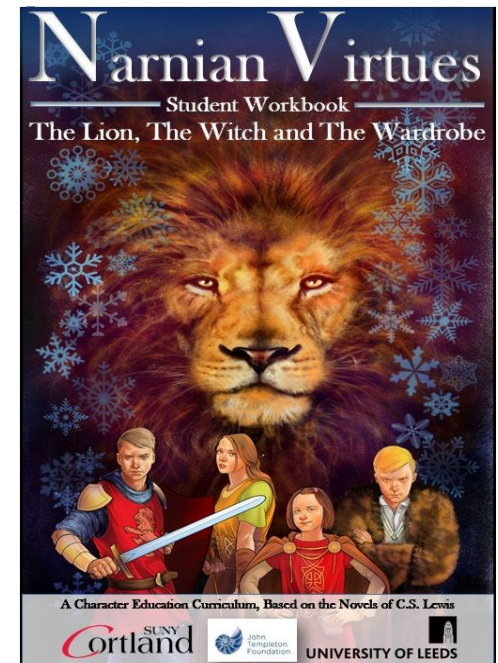


LWW Curriculum



Post-test

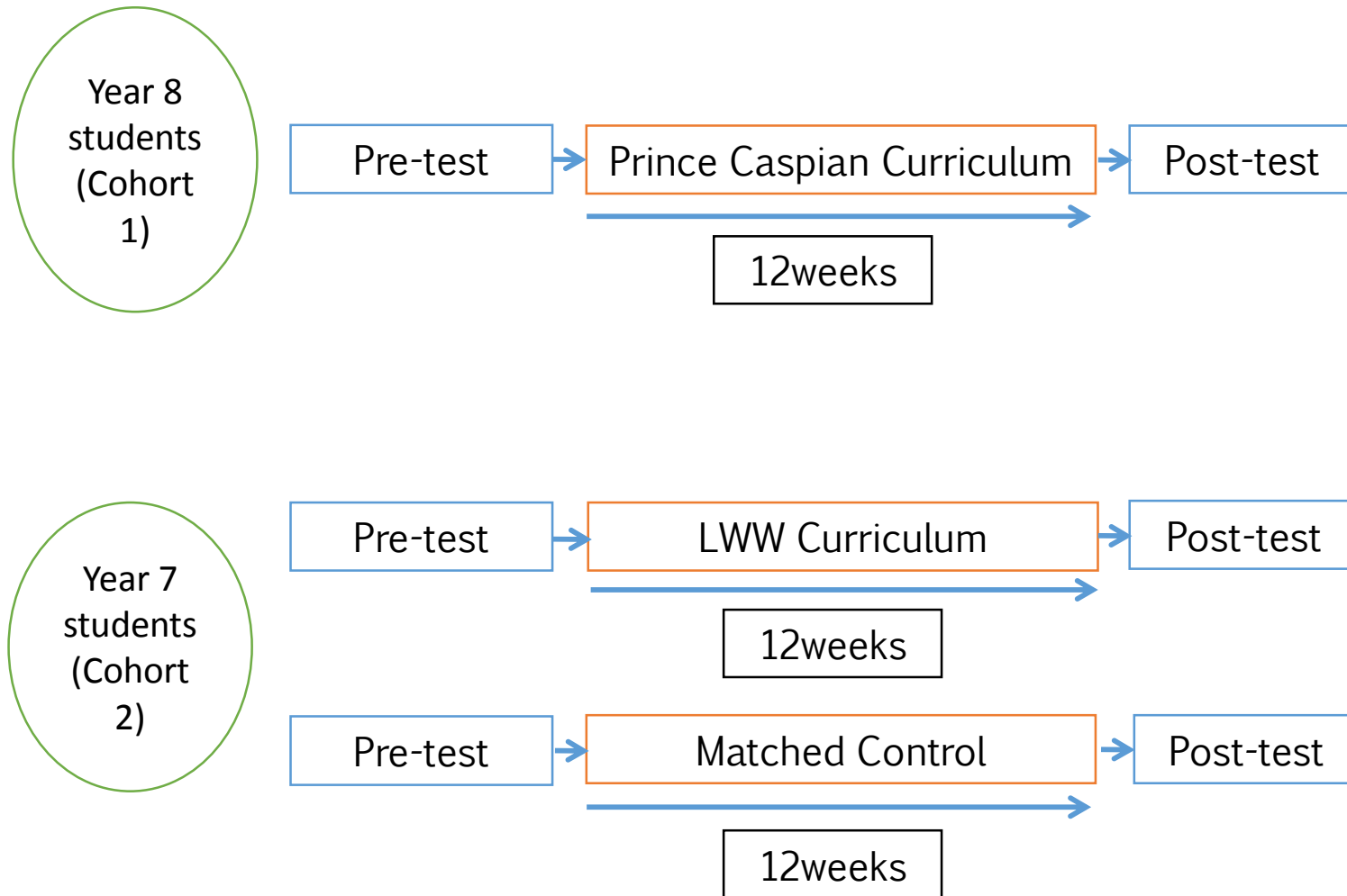
12weeks



Design (Project Year: 2)



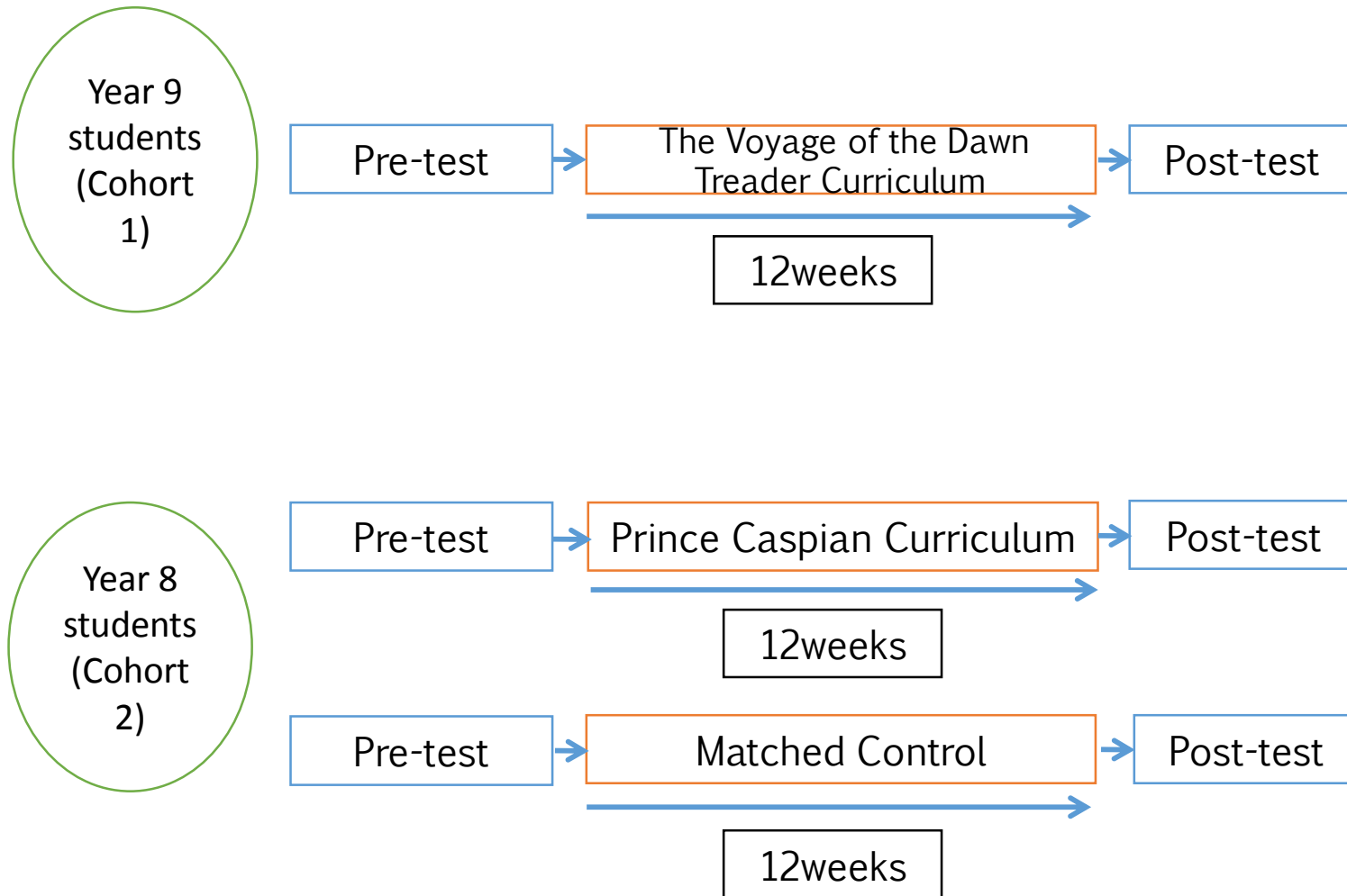
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Design (Project Year: 3)



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‘The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe’ Curriculum



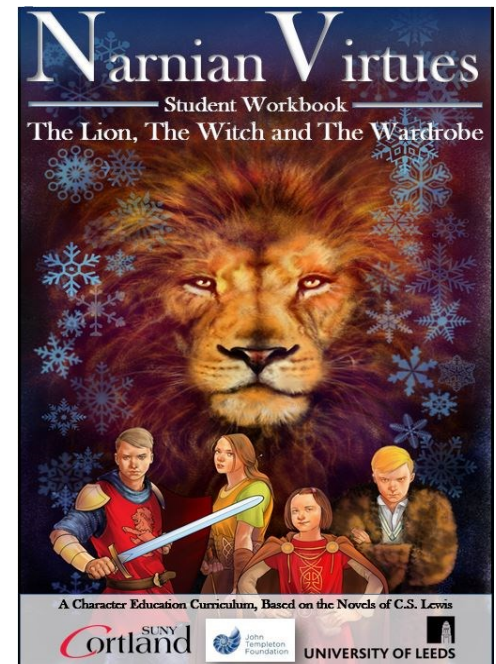
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Student Workbook:

- Highlighting virtues and vices from extracts of *LWW*
- Selecting weekly target virtues to work on and conversing with buddies about progress
- Virtue Improvement Plan (choosing two virtues to work on for a whole term)

Character Passport (Home Activities):

- Creating a family mission statement
- Holding a weekly family meeting
- ‘What is your Turkish Delight?’
- Watch and discuss the movie



- **Online Survey (comprised of 11 sub-scales; 89 items in total)**
 - **8 sub-scales (comprising either likert or categorical items) measuring the following psychological constructs:**
 - ❖ Classroom Behaviour
 - ❖ Emotional Responses
 - ❖ Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Rewards
 - ❖ Virtue as a Motive
 - ❖ Aiming for the Flourishing of Themselves and Others
 - ❖ Empathy
 - ❖ Recognising Situations to Practice Virtues
 - ❖ Social/Interpersonal Skills
 - **3 sub-scales (comprising likert items) directly measuring the extent to which the *Narnian* virtues are considered important, students' reasons for valuing them, and the degree to which students' report acting upon them in their own lives.**
 - ❖ Virtue as a Motive (Narnian virtues)
 - ❖ Attitudes to Virtues (Narnian virtues)
 - ❖ Assesses Behaviour (relating to Narnian virtues)

Measures (Contd.)

- **Online Survey**

- Example item from the Classroom Behaviour sub-scale:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: Please tick one box per row.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students in my class treat each other with respect.					

- Example item from the Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Rewards sub-scale:

Please tick Yes or No	Yes	No
I'll only help someone if I get a reward.		

- Survey also includes a question-set which directly measures student's understanding of Narnian virtues (for each of the six virtues, students are asked to select two behaviours [from a choice of four] which are the best examples of that virtue)

- **Character and Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire**

- Measures student's knowledge and understanding of character and virtue vocabulary (requires free-response answers which are marked by the research team)

Year 1 Data (thus far)

Table 1. Initial student numbers, completed consent forms, as well as questionnaires and surveys completed pre- and post-curriculum (by school)*

School	Initial pupil number	Consent forms returned	Pre- and post-test questionnaires matched (with consent)	Pre- and post-test surveys matched (with consent)
School 1	240	179	91	94
School 2	6	6	0	4
School 3	7	6	6	5
School 4	125	125	77	56
School 5	240	0	0	0
School 6	225	169	90	119
School 7	160	152	54	85
School 8	90	86	60	42
Totals	1113	723	378	405

Preliminary Results



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Table 2. Reliabilities, Pre- and Post-test Means (Standard Deviations are in brackets), and Effect Sizes (Cohen's *d*) for each of the 11 survey sub-scales

Survey Sub-scale	Reliability (Cronbach's α)	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Effect Size (Cohen's <i>d</i>)
Classroom Behaviour	.83	2.77 (.50)	2.59 (.68)	-.30
Emotional Responses	.74	2.96 (.60)	2.94 (.68)	-.05
Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Rewards	.73	.96 (.15)	.96 (.14)	0
Virtue as a Motive	.52	.93 (.15)	.91 (.17)	-.11
Aiming for the Flourishing of Themselves and Others	.59	.92 (.17)	.91 (.17)	-.05
Empathy	.61	2.47 (.60)	2.62 (.73)	.23
Recognising Situations to Practice Virtues	.69	2.99 (.56)	2.98 (.56)	-.02
Social/interpersonal skills	.71	3.01 (.53)	2.99 (.57)	-.02
Virtue as a Motive (Narnian virtues)	.77	2.97 (.55)	2.95 (.62)	-.03
Attitudes to Virtues (Narnian virtues)	.70	1.92 (.17)	2.83 (.53)	1.54
Assesses Behaviour (Narnian virtues)	.68	2.84 (.55)	2.80 (.61)	-.05

Preliminary Results (contd.)

Table 3. Pre- and Post-test Means (Standard Deviation's are in brackets), and Effect Sizes (Cohen's *d*) for the Narnian Virtues Understanding Question-Set in the Survey, and the Character and Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire.

	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Effect Size (Cohen's <i>d</i>)
Narnian Virtues Understanding Question-Set in the Survey	7.04 (2.27)	8.54 (2.50)	.57
Character and Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire	3.78 (3.94)	11.21 (4.44)	1.52

International Field Trial



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Aims:

- **To generate large-scale quantitative data, collected from ‘real-world’ use of the curriculum, where we can test how effective it is with little direct researcher involvement**
 - **To provide a powerful tool for validating the generalizability of the original results**
-
- We are aiming to recruit 5,000 students to participate in the trial from schools all over the world, and also home-schooled children
 - The trial starts from September 2017 and schools can deliver the curriculum at any time in the 2017-18 academic year. They will participate for two years
 - Students in the trial will complete the online survey, generating self-reported data on their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the virtues
 - Participating schools have free access to the electronic curriculum materials

Qualitative Results – Student Interviews



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Aim: To develop a theory around how character development was occurring, if it was.

- Interviews with 25 students from seven participating schools
- A grounded approach - students were asked open questions about their school life, narrowing down to specifics about their curriculum.

Example questions:

- Tell me about your English curriculum last term
- Which character did you relate to most, and why?

Provisional themes emerging from the data:

- Transfer of aspects of virtue
- Change through reflection
- Identifying and understanding the virtues

Qualitative Results – Student Interviews



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Transfer of aspects of virtue

“It made me think a lot because I have a younger brother and I don’t normally think about sacrificing for anyone... but now I just put into thought that I have got a family and I need to look out for them”.

Change through reflection

“Wisdom helped me a few times. I went to a park... where there was a little lake and it wasn’t very far apart [the banks] when I tried to jump it. I thought I could... I was about to go and I thought ‘is this a good idea? I could fall and I don’t have any towels with me’ so I didn’t do that”.

Identifying and understanding the virtues

“It’s definitely happened a few times [spotting virtues in other places] where I thought like in The Hobbit, where Bilbo Baggins didn’t want to go on the adventure.... And now he’s really brave and stuff”.

Qualitative Results – Parent Telephone Interviews



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Aim: To evaluate the effectiveness of involving parents in their child's character development

- Parent seminars were held in seven of the eight participating schools (attendance rate: 10-15% of parents/carers)
- Twelve follow-up interviews were conducted with parents/carers from five schools
- Parents/carers were asked questions relating to the home activities component of the project

Example questions:

1. Which home activity did you find the most helpful for developing your child's character?
2. In what way do you think this activity was valuable for your child?

Qualitative Results – Parent Telephone Interviews



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Four main themes emerged from the data:

- ‘Mechanics of the home activities’
- ‘Evaluative and self-reflective nature of the home activities’
- ‘Impact on children and families’
- ‘Parents’ views on character development’

Example of ‘Impact on children and families’:

“...and so even if we’re out shopping, even Harrison will say to me, because I’m mad on rabbits and he’ll say, when I pick up a rabbit, he’ll say, “Mum, that’s your Turkish Delight. Do you see what I mean? It’s had a big effect on the whole family, to be honest”.

(Parent from interview 4 responding to the question ‘Are you doing anything different or new with your child as a result of working with your child in the home activities?’).

Interim Conclusions



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- The fact that a positive change was evident in two of the subscales (Empathy and Attitudes to Virtues) provides some evidence for the efficacy of the Narnian Virtues English Literature Character Curriculum
- There are potentially a number of reasons why a negative change was evident in the Classroom Behaviour subscale....
- The improvement in Virtues Knowledge and Understanding is consistent with previous research (e.g. Arthur et al., 2014), and also with the results of the project pilot study (Francis, Pike, Lickona, Lankshear, & Nesfield, *in prep*)
- In terms of our “theory of change” we are seeing positive changes which map onto the first stages of the theory in both the quantitative and qualitative data

Next Steps



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- Currently revising the measure (survey) based on the preliminary findings -> more reliable measure for Years 2 & 3
- To add the data that is currently being collected to the Year 1 data-set and re-analyse -> the complete data-set may provide more evidence of change?
- Currently revising *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* curriculum based on feedback from teachers, students, and parents
- Currently recruiting schools for Years 2 & 3 of project

Thank You

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