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# **An Evaluation of Year 1 of The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Project**

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# Project Aims

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- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum in developing six virtues in secondary-school students
- 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

# Background to Study

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- 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 Study (Contd.)



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- Students undertake a 12-week curriculum aimed at enabling them to develop six virtues (wisdom, love, justice, self-control, integrity, and fortitude)
- The curriculum is based on C.S. Lewis's Narnia novels: *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Year 7's; 11 – 12 years), *Prince Caspian* (Year 8's; 12 – 13 years), or *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Year 9 9's; 13 – 14 years)
- The curriculum is delivered by English teachers trained by the research team

# Operationalising the Virtues



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Professor Thomas Lickona:

Head – understanding about the virtue

Heart – caring about the virtue

Hand – applying the virtue

# 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 cultivate:

- Understanding
- Identifying
- Empathising
- Valuing
- Applying



# Year 1 Methodology and Findings

# Participants



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

- 8 schools recruited from the Yorkshire and Teesside regions in the UK
- No exclusion criteria (at either school or student level)
- 847 Year 7 students (aged 11 – 12) 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
- Treatment attrition at student level was very low
- Measurement attrition??

- **Cohorts**

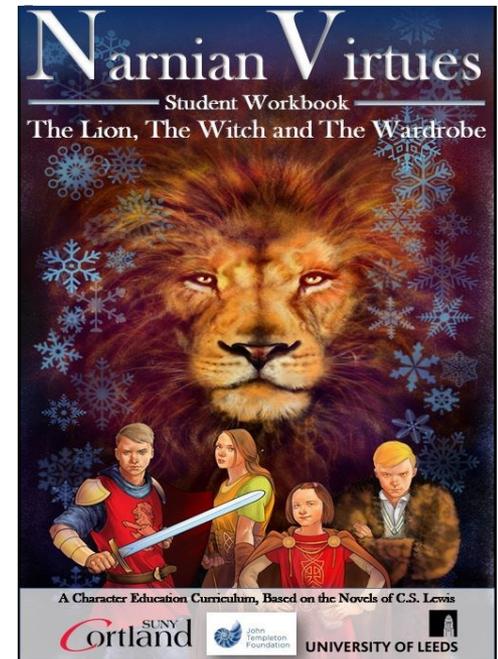
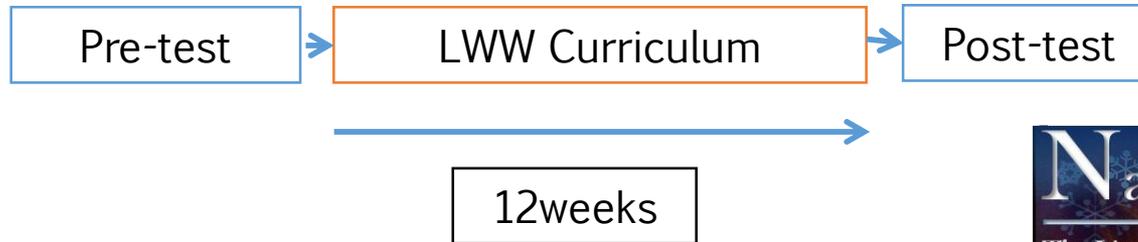
- 2 cohorts of students
- Cohort 1 participating 2016 – 2019 (Years 1 – 3 of project)
- Cohort 2 participating 2017 – 2019 (Years 2 – 3 of project)

# Design (Project Year: 1)



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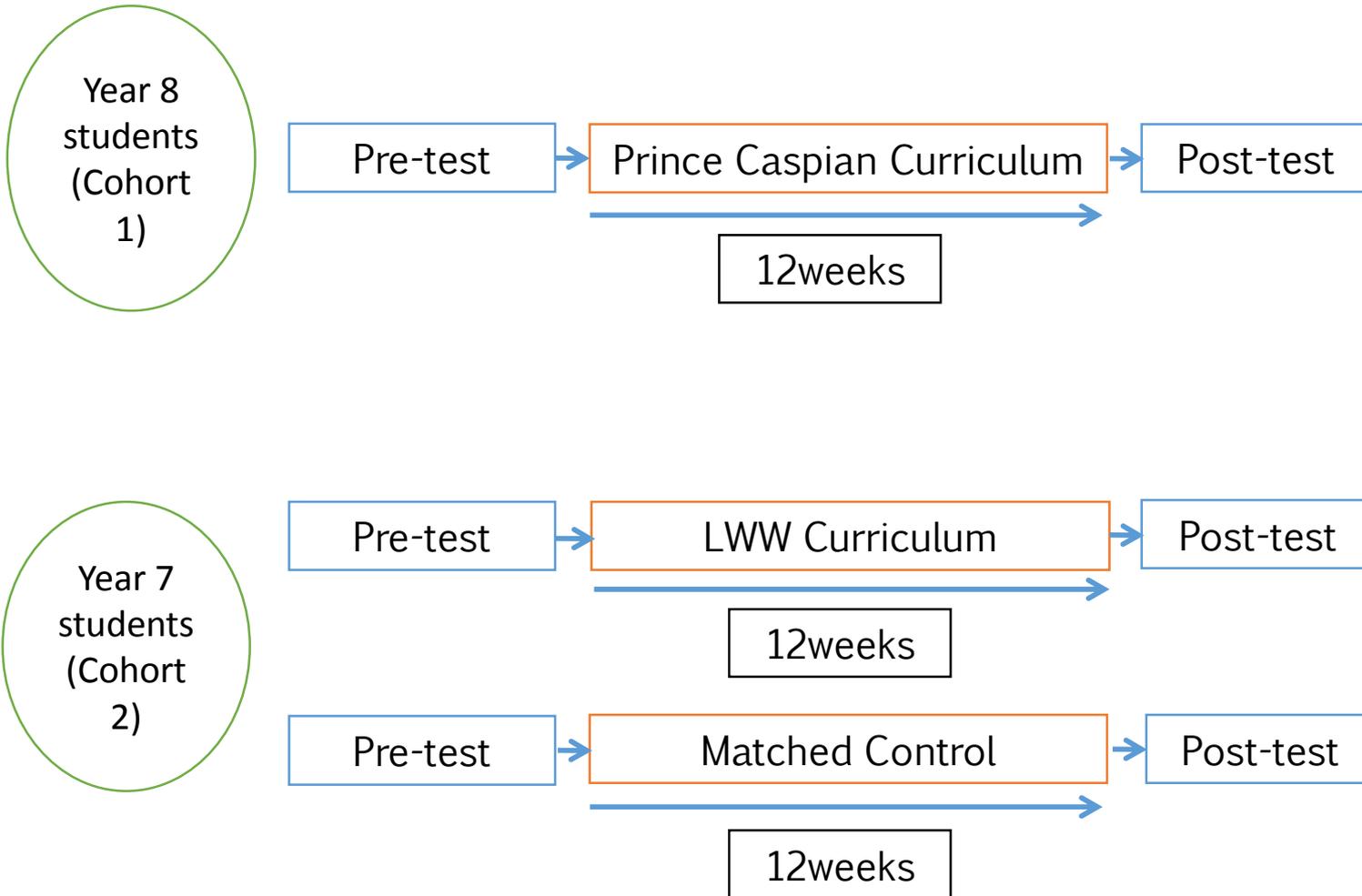
Year 7  
students  
(Cohort  
1)



# Design (Project Year: 2)



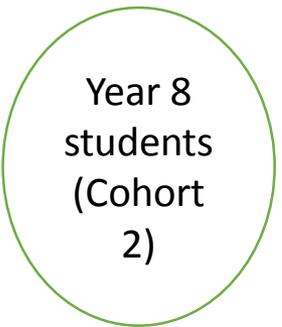
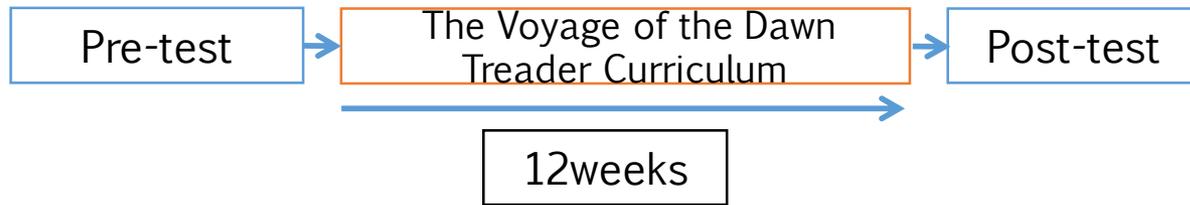
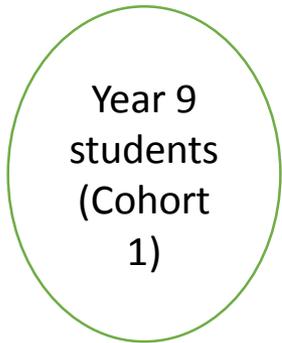
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# Design (Project Year: 3)



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# 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' Curriculum



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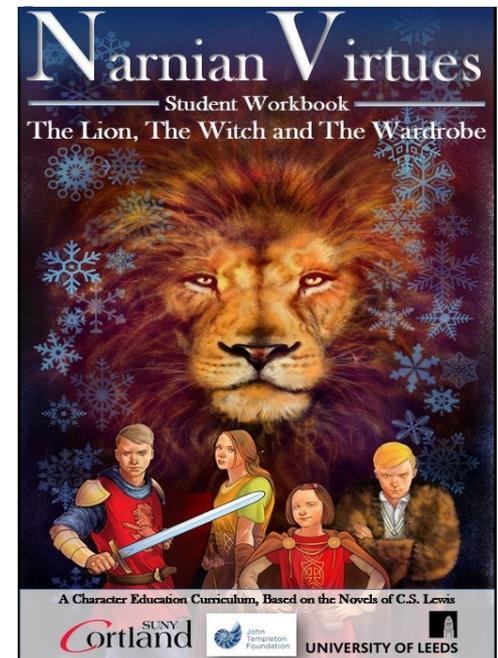
## Student Workbook:

- 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)

### examples:

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



# Measures



- **Online Survey (comprised of 11 sub-scales; 89 items in total)**
  - 8 sub-scales (comprising 53 likert or categorical items) indirectly 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**
  - 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 English class treat each other with respect.					

# Measures (Contd.)



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- **Online Survey (Contd.)**

- 3 sub-scales (comprising 36 likert items) 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.

- ❖ **Attitudes to Virtues (Narnian Virtues)**

- ❖ **Virtue as a Motive (Narnian Virtues)**

- ❖ **Assesses Behaviour (Narnian Virtues)**

- Example item from the Attitudes to Virtues sub-scale:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements saying how you feel about certain behaviours. Please tick one box per row.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It's important to me to control my feelings and desires and not let them control me.					

# Measures (Contd.)



- **Online Survey (Contd.)**

- 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)

Integrity	
Doing kind things for others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following your conscience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choosing the best course of action	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not lying to yourself or others	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

**1. What is a virtue?**

**[2 Marks]**

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# Year 1 Data



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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 (estimated)	Consent forms returned	Pre- and post-test questionnaires matched (with consent)	Pre- and post-test surveys matched (with consent)
School 1	240	179	93	97
School 2	6	6	0	6
School 3	7	6	6	5
School 4	125	125	84	62
School 5	240	0	0	0
School 6	225	169	97	132
School 7	160	152	55	91
School 8	90	86	66	52
School 8a	185	124	108	98
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>543</b>

# Year 1 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 $\alpha$ )	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Effect Size (Cohen's $d$ )
Empathy	.76	2.61 (.55)	2.68 (.64)	.14
Attitudes to Virtues (Narnian virtues)	.79	2.79 (.52)	2.85 (.55)	.12
Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Rewards	.75	.96 (.15)	.96 (.14)	0
Recognising Situations to Practice Virtues	.71	2.99 (.55)	2.98 (.55)	-.02
Virtue as a Motive (Narnian virtues)	.85	2.96 (.55)	2.98 (.63)	-.04
Emotional Responses	.80	3.00 (.60)	2.96 (.66)	-.05
Aiming for the Flourishing of Themselves and Others	.58	.92 (.17)	.91 (.17)	-.05
Assesses Behaviour (Narnian virtues)	.79	2.84 (.55)	2.81 (.60)	-.06
Social/interpersonal skills	.71	2.99 (.55)	2.95 (.55)	-.07
Virtue as a Motive	.64	.93 (.14)	.91 (.16)	-.12
Classroom Behaviour	.91	2.70 (.56)	2.52 (.68)	-.31

# Year 1 Results (contd.)



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Table 3. Reliabilities, Pre- and Post-test Means (Standard Deviations are in brackets), and Effect Sizes (Cohen's *d*) for each of the 6 'Narnian Virtues' subscales.

Survey Sub-scale	Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Effect Size (Cohen's <i>d</i> )
Integrity	.57	2.49 (.67)	2.66 (.64)	.25
Wisdom	.69	2.84 (.58)	2.86 (.61)	.05
Love	.71	2.73 (.63)	2.76 (.67)	.05
Fortitude	.68	2.77 (.59)	2.79 (.62)	.03
Self-control	.60	2.91 (.61)	2.90 (.64)	0
Justice	.77	3.13 (.62)	3.08 (.68)	-.08

# Year 1 Results (contd.)



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Table 4. 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	7.38 (2.27)	7.83 (2.30)	.19
Character and Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire	3.66 (3.80)	11.71 (4.63)	1.61

# Interim Conclusions



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- The fact that there was some evidence of a positive change in three of the sub-scales (Empathy, Attitudes to Virtues, and Integrity) provides some evidence for the efficacy of the Narnian Virtues English Literature Character Curriculum.
- 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*).
- The significant negative change apparent in the Classroom Behaviour data may be a ‘sensitization’ effect. This would be consistent with Merrell et al.’s (2008) interpretation of their findings from a meta-analysis of school-bullying intervention programmes.
- 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.

# Thank You

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