

Education with Character – Stockport Academy - #EducationWithCharacter

At Stockport Academy, our ambition is to ensure that students are academically successful; students need higher attainment grades in order to compete in a competitive and uncertain future workplace. However, as we explain to our students, qualifications are the foot in the door that will get them sitting in a chair at interview. What will secure them the job is **powerful knowledge**, a **personal skill set**, firm understanding of their **place in society** and evidence of **character**. We want to help students create memories and the skills to form positive relationships. We want them to be ambitious and develop interests and hobbies to enrich their lives. We want them to feel they are making a valuable contribution to society and have the skills to influence change for their futures. And we want them to remember school as a time of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves and the world around them. For this we need to deliver an Education with Character.

The senior leadership team facilitates the delivery of all co-curricular activity by actively encouraging and celebrating student success and by investing financially in quality resources. The Academy has challenges; highest quintile nationally for SEN and disadvantaged and sitting within the bottom 46% IDACI, so we recognise that creating such opportunity will benefit these students hugely. These experiences help develop positive relationships with staff and other students and invariably present opportunities that our students would not be exposed to in their family lives. In many ways, that which we have worked to create is quantitatively immeasurable. However, attendance to school has significantly improved, PA has significantly reduced and progress remains positive. These are all good measures of engagement.

Whilst we outsource some co-curricular clubs, the majority of staff in the Academy team up to offer an activity resulting in an offer of over 50 activities covering a wide spectrum of interests; from tank building to origami. In September there is an annual co-curricular fair to market these opportunities; creating excitement, interest and engagement at the start of the year. All Year 7 and 8 students must take part in co-curricular activity at least twice per week including a physical sport which PE staff use as a homework activity and which supports promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Whilst this may seem prescriptive, tearing students away from their Xboxes to partake in new experiences sometimes requires a level of challenge and we are fully supported by parents in this demand. Year 9 are expected to take part at least once. Students in Year 10 and 11 continue to attend co-curricular events out of habit and because they are inspired by their experiences in Key Stage Three, compounding interests and hobbies for life.

Attendance of co-curricular clubs is monitored by our co-curricular co-ordinator in partnership with our Assistant Principal for Education with Character; there is a rewards system based on multiple attendance to encourage competition and acknowledge effort; equally we are able to identify students who may have access barriers and who need support. This data informs discussions with parents regarding aspiration and the benefits of personal development opportunities; we believe all parents and ultimately employers want children to be team players, confident, knowledgeable, articulate and to evidence commitment and a level of social interaction that will allow them to be successful in their chosen careers.

Co-curricular themes also thread through curriculum delivery, augmenting learning by adding opportunities to deepen knowledge and application and assisting with recall. The Academy makes good use of free support from GM Higher, free trips have been sourced to support learning, increase engagement and broaden experience. As an example, students visited an art gallery, met artists and poets and then were tasked with creating their own piece of writing describing their experience.

The Academy holds the Inspiring IAG Gold award, recognising the strength of support and guidance offered to students in their transition to tertiary education. We cross reference co-curricular experiences to the Gatsby framework and career aspirations; for example we have plans for our aspiring media students to visit local BBC filming studio tours, we have had aspiring politicians visit the Town Hall, the Mayor or Houses of Parliament and students complete taster block courses at our local colleges in Year 10 for vocational courses. The Academy has

strong business links with four large local businesses and we are able to draw upon the experience of colleagues in many different areas of work in providing 1-2-1 work-based experiences for our Year 11 students.

Student leadership is a strength at the Academy and we have a wide programme of skill development linked to different roles across all years; Student Council (democratically appointed), Business Enterprise, Charity Reps, Literacy Mentors, Numeracy Mentors, Business leaders, Form/Vice Captains, Library leaders, Performing Arts Leaders, Sports Leaders Prefects, Senior Gold Tie, Prefects, and Peer Mentors. As with leadership roles in the wider world, student leaders receive support and training as part of their role, they also apply in writing and must complete an interview or audition. In some cases it may be that students are not successful in their candidacy but, as in the workplace, there is valuable learning in the understanding that success comes from failure. Learning how to take feedback, to reflect, to be resilient, to learn from failure and to work towards the position at a later date or to apply this learning to another application provides a valuable lesson in the development of a growth mindset, skills that many employers say are lacking in young employees.

There is a culture of reward and celebrating success; at Stockport Academy we work hard to recognise and praise effort, humility or charity alongside achievement. We write letters home to parents when students have represented the school or secured a leadership role outlining the life skills that we hope students will develop as a result of their involvement. Rewards do not need to be expensive to be effective, they can be as basic as raffle tickets, merits, postcards, badges or phone calls home. We hold an annual prizegiving; the message of this public event is of course in relation to academic achievement, however there are prizes for resilience, charity, improvement and effort; this is therefore fully inclusive and accessible to all.

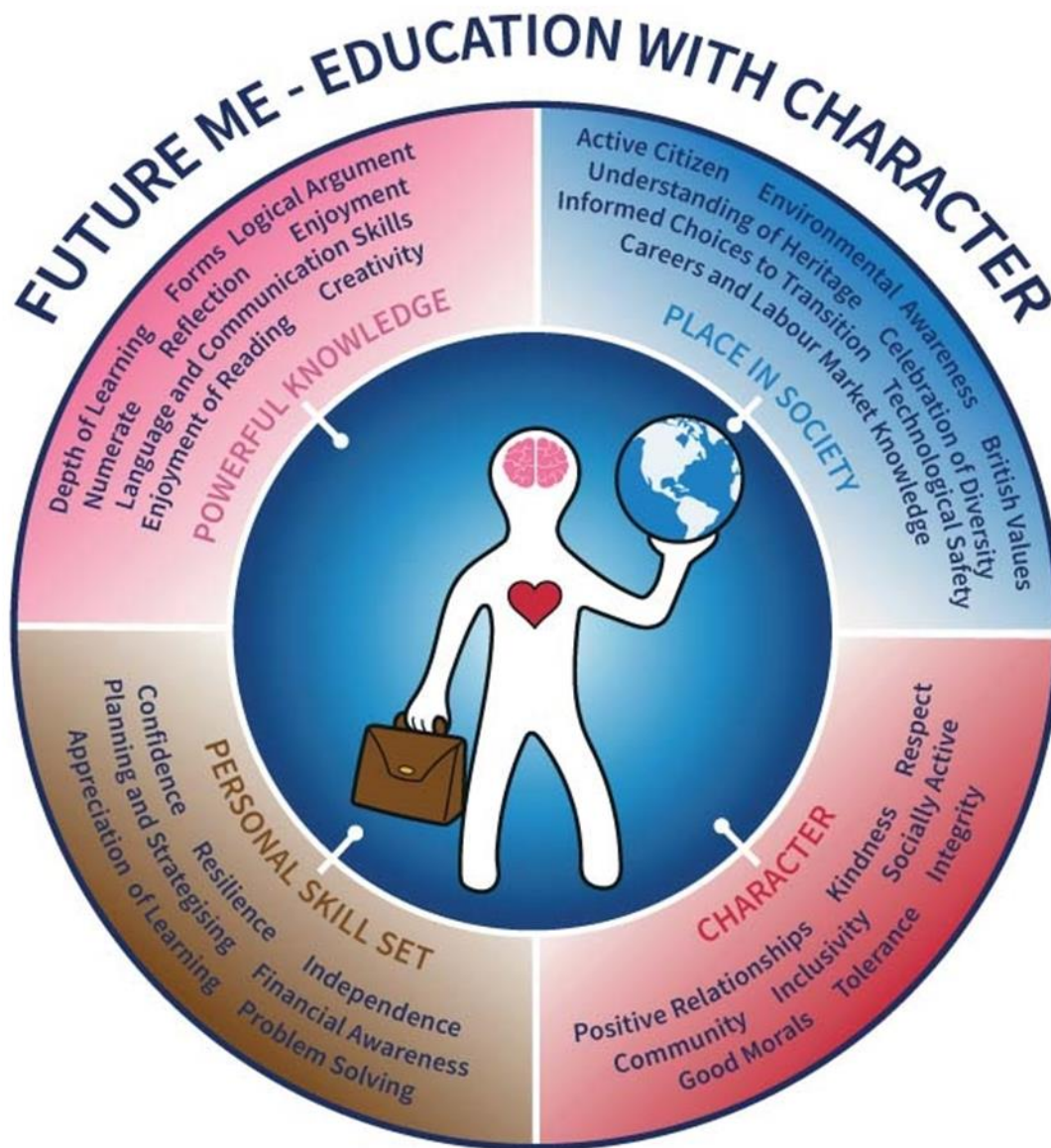
With over half of our students living in disadvantage we recognise the importance of raising aspiration and removing barriers to success. We have found that another effective way of delivering the message that all students have the opportunity to be successful through hard work and commitment is by inviting in inspirational role models. Our students have been inspired by; Sir David Carter, Labour Party Deputy Leader Angela Rayner, Chris Lubbe (bodyguard to Nelson Mandela), Olympians and Paralympians including Megan Giglia, Elizabeth Wright and Jason Gardner, alumni, holocaust survivors, world war veterans and a wealth of other influential adults.

We promote British Values and encourage tolerance and acceptance both inside and outside the classroom. We take any opportunity to promote this through our taught curriculum; for example Red card against racism competition in Art or specified texts in English. This is complemented and reinforced with co-curricular activity on offer; our anti-bullying peer mentors promote inclusion by organising assemblies or events to raise awareness of the issue. An example of such an event has been our annual colour run to raise LGBTQ awareness and promote inclusivity. The event was organised by students (with some support) for the rest of the school. Similarly, our sports leaders in partnership with peer mentors organised our Time to Talk walk to raise awareness and funds for mental health. Our art club and dance students were instrumental in organising our remembrance event to commemorate the Manchester Arena Bombing; the service was for the whole school and examples of this were viewed over 10,000 times online as the school created a giant bee.

The Academy has successfully gained a number of local and national awards in recognition of excellence in character development including; National Wellbeing Award, Young Carers Gold Award, BIG anti-bullying Award, Democracy Award, Leeds University Mental Health Gold Award, Sainsburys Gold Sports Award, National Happiness Award, Speakers School Council Award, Inspiring IAG Gold Award, a number of Diana Awards and we have been named winners of national Red Card against racism competition three times.

As school budgets tighten we have been creative in developing relationships that provide maximum support at minimum cost. Colleges and universities will provide activities or tasters through their marketing teams at no cost. We have found Duke of Edinburgh to be exceptionally supportive in relation to subsidising, providing licenses, equipment and training. We have made agreements with local providers such as discounted lettings rates for our astro pitches in exchange for weekly football, lacrosse, and basketball coaching for our students and we have secured valuable sponsorship from our local business link Lex Autolease who gift us a minibus.

Whilst it is evident from the plethora of activity outlined above that the Academy has a strong focus on personal development outside the Academic, it became apparent to the Senior Leadership team, through discussions with staff, external partners and students that identification and articulation of how skills were being developed from each activity needed development. There was no common language or signposting of development from activities and as a result, students were poor at describing how their experiences had helped prepare them for modern life. Similarly, not all faculties were helping students identify personal development linked to curricular progress. So a need was identified for a common vision of what skills the Academy should be delivering and students should be seeking during their five years in school. A self-assessment framework was created which we call the 'Future Me' and this has been fully launched in September 2020.



Future Me is now on all student planners, in all classrooms and is displayed in all student social areas. Department are linking SOW to keywords that they will deliver in lessons and all assemblies, co-curricular activities and trips will be summarised using this tool.

We may never know the ripple effect and full impact of Education with Character but social media feedback is abundant, positive and continually increasing, our year 7 intake has increased by 172% in the last 5 years and the Academy, is now over-subscribed with a waiting list. We have promoted the use of #EducationWithCharacter and we have made conscious effort to use this language with all stakeholders.

Statistics – September 2019 to March 2020:

Number of Co-curricular clubs running	51
Single attendances to Co-curricular clubs	5045
Trips embedding learning/curriculum linked	43
Single attendance to curriculum linked trips	6039
Opportunities linked to Gatsby framework	48
Single attendance to CEIAG activity	3493