



Character Strengths Policy

Rationale

Research has shown that using your character strengths can help to protect against the onset of mental health issues, manage and overcome problems, improve relationships and enhance health, and wellbeing. There is a significant evidence base from the field of Positive Psychology that tells us when children are taught how to use their strengths they develop wellbeing, and resilience as well as skills for learning and achievement. All of these are essential for promoting positive mental health and preventing mental health problems developing.

Guidelines

Marmion Primary School works to develop and embed strengths-based interventions based on research and practical know-how that involve approaches such as:

- Students identifying their own strengths
- Students identifying lesser strengths
- Staff spotting and feeding back strengths to students
- Pupils giving strengths-based feedback to each other
- Using the strengths to help learning, achievement and wellbeing
- Learn to recognise strengths in others
- Identifying strengths of the group, class or whole school community
- Plan and envision their strengths use in future.
- Strengths-based reflection
- Strengths-based goal setting

Character Strengths

Character Strengths are identified within six key virtues: **Empathy, Wisdom, Community, Courage, Optimism, Self-control**

Optimism

Gratitude

Use manners. Greetings

Acknowledging positive aspects of the day

Acknowledging peers who offer assistance

Awe

Appreciates and acknowledges peers' strengths

Inspired to create music, art, writing by what they have seen or hear

Enjoys nature

Humour

Can see the lighter side of a situation

Can laugh at themselves

Knows the appropriate time to make light-hearted comments

Hope

Displays positive thinking

Uses YET

Accepting obstacles or challenges with positive attitude

Sets goals and uses strategies to work towards achieving them

Courage**Bravery**

Having a go when they find something challenging

Standing up for what they believe in

Admitting when they are wrong

Stepping out of their comfort zone

Not giving in to peer pressure

Zest

Completing all tasks with enthusiasm

Motivating others to complete tasks

Asking questions

Responding to feedback

Honesty

Taking responsibility for their actions

Speaking the truth respectfully

Encouraging honesty in others

Perseverance

Always trying their personal best

Willing to overcome obstacles

Seeking and responding to feedback

Wisdom**Creativity**

Engage in play and initiate activities when needed

Expressing new and original ways to do things

Take risks. Explore new ideas

Not frightened to be different

Invent, change, innovate, reuse existing ideas and tools

Curiosity

Wants to learn more

Constantly asking questions

Demonstrates an interest in new topics

Takes learning beyond the classroom

Perspective

Thinks outside the box

Reflects and understands two sides to a problem/argument

Listens/acknowledges ideas of others

Thinks before they act

Love of Learning

Positive about school experiences

Brings things in from home

Eager to engage in activities

Loves challenges

Eager to share knowledge and ideas

Open Mindedness

Welcome others' ideas and opinions

Don't judge others or situations

Happy to try new things and take risks

All ideas matter

Empathy**Friendship**

Supporting other students

Noticing students who are isolated and initiating play
Being happy and celebrating other people
Recognising strengths in others
Being strong for others
Taking turns, being tolerant and empathetic

Kindness

Displaying random acts of kindness
Sharing equipment and materials
Engaging with peers
Doing something that helps another student
Being sensitive to the feelings of others

Tolerance

Willing to work with all classmates
Displays patience with all peers varied needs
Accepting differences
Respects peers, opinions, beliefs and ideas
Thoughtful when speaking to peers

Community

Teamwork

Sharing
Taking turns
Listening to everyone
Using encouraging words
Accepting roles and responsibility
Goal orientated
Accepts challenges

Leadership

Strong model to others
Uses initiative
Is encouraging and empathetic
Makes the right decision not the easy one
Not a bystander

Fairness

Follows the rules
Takes turn
Puts the needs of the group before their own
Uses manners
Active listener

Self Control

Forgiveness

Accepting a genuine apology
Giving others a second chance
Moves on from grudges and past issues

Humility

Demonstrating confidence without putting others down
Accepting positive feedback with grace
Acknowledging others efforts and success
Acknowledging others that enabled them to succeed

Self-Regulation

Shows restraint
Managing own issues
Name and acknowledge own feelings
Identify strategies to self-regulate

Implementation

A focus on Character Strengths helps students to better understand themselves, those around them and why they do well in some areas of their life and not others. All areas of a student's success can be linked to their character strengths. For example.

- Why did a student do well in completing a project (**perseverance**)?
- How can the student do better? (**Courage**) They may need to engage with something they find difficult and step outside of their comfort zone
- A student who struggles to work with others may need to focus on **teamwork** or **kindness**

Character Strengths also provides more informative feedback for students. Instead of teachers saying, "This is great work!" teachers at Marmion add "This is great work because you used **perseverance**." or "You did well because you displayed **fairness** during group work." Ideally, we want students saying, "When I show **courage** I do better." "If I focus on my **self-regulation** I can contribute more during class and others want to work with me.

Other students also do not see the student who is doing well just as "smart". They begin to recognise that this student may or may not be smart, but he/she has strong **character strengths** that enable him/her to maximise their potential

A focus on character strengths also assists students to set goals - "My writing is not improving. Therefore, I need to focus more on **creativity** and really brainstorm my ideas. As teachers we may start to look at students a little differently. For example, Simon is a quiet, nice student, but he has never been acknowledged for **courage** or for **gratitude**. I could then work with Simon to set goals in these areas

This process is not just about the individual. Students can monitor each other within their group. They can clearly label or articulate when a member of the group is or is not exhibiting a key strength.

At Marmion the goal is to develop a common understanding of the strengths and to use the same language, when working with students, colleagues, and parents.

Identifying students who have achieved an identified character strength is an important element of the process as it establishes the role models in each class and throughout the school. So, if a student has a particular strength, they need to focus on they can look to a role as a clear example of the behaviours necessary to achieve that strength.

Although we identify the students who have developed a particular character strength with a certificate, it is important to understand that students are pursuing their character strengths not solely as a means to be rewarded or to please the teacher, but because they see personal and community benefits in doing so.

Procedures

Character Strengths given out at class run assemblies. Teacher nomination of students must be sent to the office one week prior to the assembly. Nominated student names are sent to all staff. Any staff member can veto a nomination based on how the student conduct themselves when they are teaching. This is to ensure that the student demonstrates the character strengths in all learning areas and in all situations. In other words, the character strength has become an ingrained habit of action. Parents and carers are notified of the nomination prior to the assembly.