

Community Engagement: mapping its impact on character development in C Block boys

Dr Iro Konstantinou

Tony Little Centre for Innovation and Research in Education

Eton College

Report advisor: Dr Tom Harrison

University of Birmingham

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Executive summary

Eton College has a well designed social action programme which encourages boys in C Block (Year 12) to participate in a wide range of community placements.

Volunteering more broadly is common practice in schools but its impact on both those giving their time and the recipients has not been studied to the same extent. This exploratory report has sought to research the character virtues boys develop through community engagement placements, what opportunities and challenges they see in this opportunity, and whether such a programme is seen as important to their education.

Using a mixed methods approach, we found that the programme has had a double benefit: both to the boys and the community. The boys talked about the virtues they developed and how the placements have been formative experiences. We provide data from interviews and questionnaires, which answer the research questions we had for this report; namely, character development, opportunities and challenges, and the importance of volunteering within education.

We conclude by giving recommendations which we hope will be of benefit to the school but also to those involved in designing social action and community engagement programmes more widely.

Introduction

In a report by the Institute for Volunteering Research in 2004 (Ellis), it was reported that adolescents do more volunteer work than older people and apart from a minority who do not see the value of giving one's time, there is a positive view of the benefits of volunteering. The benefits of voluntary work are well documented. As Ellis writes: 'Young people volunteer for a range of reasons and get a host of benefits from volunteering. These group broadly into personal feelings, such as satisfaction and a desire to meet new people; personal needs, including gaining a pastime, respect, and interaction with others; altruism expressed in helping others and doing good; experience, skills and career prospects; and personal inducements in the form of certificates, rewards, qualifications and jobs' (2004).

Eton College encourages boys to engage in voluntary work in various forms and there is a well structured volunteering programme. Every year boys in C Block (Year 12) are asked to choose between a community engagement activity (ECCE) and CCF (Combined Cadet Forces). This means that once a week over the Michaelmas (Autumn) and Lent (Spring) terms boys will spend an hour, more or less, at their chosen activity. ECCE activities vary widely, from giving music lessons to younger pupils, to teaching maths in other schools, helping in charity shops, etc. The teachers who took over responsibility for ECCE this year have ensured that the boys have a diverse range of opportunities should they choose to undertake voluntary community work. There is a considerable amount of time and effort given to this programme: finding placements, organising the logistics, including transport and organisation of timings, among other considerations. This means that the school wants to ensure that these placements have a clear benefit for both the community and the boys. As Arthur, Harrison, Taylor-Collins and Moller (2017) suggest there is a 'double benefit' when undertaking service. This means that the more people who undertake service, the more likely it is that individuals and their communities will flourish' (ibid. :7). So far, the impact of this programme has not been studied in terms of how it develops character and how it can contribute towards the wider development of boys, alongside the demonstrable benefits to the wider community.

Broader context

Character education encompasses different frameworks, including positive psychology, non-cognitive skills, what are referred to as 21st century skills etc. At the school, we are borrowing from different frameworks when we discuss character even though for this report there is a distinct emphasis on the work of the Jubilee Centre, which talks about character virtues.

Ofsted, in their most recent framework, published in 2019, outlines that schools will be assessed on how they develop character. In Ofsted's new *Education Inspection Framework*, four areas are outlined as areas of 'Key judgements' for inspections: 'quality of education', 'behaviour and attitudes', 'personal development' and 'leadership and management' (Ofsted, 2019). The part on character development outlines that schools need to demonstrate how they are developing pupils' character, if they want to be described as 'good' or 'outstanding'. Character or personal development is defined:

'as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs their motivation and guides their conduct so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. This gives pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society' (ibid.).

The Jubilee Centre is currently conducting the most comprehensive work on character education in UK schools. Their framework (Jubilee Centre, 2017) draws from Aristotelian ideas of eudemonia or human flourishing. Their suggestion is that to flourish is not only to be happy, but to fulfil one's potential. The role of character education in schools is to teach the acquisition and strengthening of virtues which sustain a well-rounded life and a thriving society. Pupils, through character education, learn to become confident and compassionate students, who are effective contributors to society, successful learners, and responsible citizens. The Jubilee Centre's Framework outlines four building blocks of character; namely: civic, moral, intellectual, and performance virtues (see Appendix 1).

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and this report, describes social action as 'practical action in the service of others to create positive change. Social action is

seen as an important mechanism for young people to develop and express their character while benefiting others' (2015). Social action is considered to be closely linked to service, a virtue which is generally described helping others, and is a civic virtue (Arthur et al., 2017). The habit of helping others is seen as something which is a learned habit and as the report by Arthur et al. (2017) has found those who engage in the habit of helping others can show similar behaviours later in life.

The broader benefits of engaging pupils in social action have been reported increasingly in recent years. The #iwill initiative showed that students developed character traits, such as empathy, cooperation, resilience, problem-solving and sense of community. Surveys conducted by the CBI in 2015 and 2018 showcased that those pupils who have been part of social action initiatives had developed employability skills. Moreover, pupils had improved mental health, better academic attainment, and perhaps most importantly contributed to community cohesion (iwill, 2019). The former Education Secretary, Damian Hinds MP, has identified volunteering as one of the pillars which can build character in schools and promote social mobility through the promotion of different skills and it is an approach which can develop student agency (Breeze, 2019). Demos (2015) has also published a report which suggests that the double benefit of youth social action can be a way to alleviate the most pressing social issues. Ockenden and Stuart (2014) find that volunteer work can contribute towards leadership skills in young people, while a research report by CIPD (2013) identifies tangible employability skills which young people gained through the various programmes they studied. The benefits, therefore, are tangible and long-lasting. Hence, our own interest in researching the programme we run at Eton.

We decided that we wanted to carry out this research project and ask boys how they have engaged with this opportunity and how it has helped them develop a range of character virtues. Using the Jubilee Centre Framework for what constitute the Building Blocks of Character, the Social Action Team decided on 5 virtues which could be developed through ECCE, which draw from civic, moral, and performance virtues; namely, **empathy, gratitude, openness, teamwork, and respect**. It is worth noting that this is not a comprehensive list and perhaps a different set of virtues could have been chosen. However, for this initial research project these were chosen as it was believed that those virtues would be easy for the boys to identify and contextualise in their placements. We wanted to find out whether the boys believed they had developed

these virtues during ECCE and if so, provide examples of that. We also wanted to see what they believed the school should do to further promote these virtues, and if they believed they were needed more broadly.

Research questions

The overarching research questions we had for this project were:

1. To what extent does ECCE promote virtuous character traits; namely respect, openness to experience, teamwork, gratitude and empathy?
2. What challenges and opportunities do the boys see in the programme?
3. To what extent do the boys view the programme as an important element of their wider education?

Methodology

For our data collection we used a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods are recommended for studies relating to character owing to the complexity of the field, (Arthur et al., 2014) and given the fact that measuring character can be a very complex process in itself (Duckworth and Yeager, 2015).

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was sent out to all boys who took part in ECCE over the academic year of 2018-2019. In total, there were 182 boys doing voluntary work. The baseline data was collected in November 2018 and the post-ECCE survey was administered in May 2019, when the boys had finished their placements. The first questionnaire gathered 121 responses and the second 86. The reason for the drop in responses might have been because internal exam revision was looming and nearing the end of

the school year meant that boys were tired and not willing to engage in extra work.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 parts (See appendix 2):

- a. **Qualities.** The boys were given 10 character virtues (including the 5 we were measuring plus 5 which would be considered positive ones) to choose as the 3 most important for them.
- b. **Survey.** 20 statements were given with a Likert scale. The pupils could choose responses ranging from very much like me to not like me at all. The statements were chosen to depict the 5 virtues we measured in this study.
- c. **Ethical dilemmas.** There were 2 scenarios which were drawn from a likely situation to be encountered at the school. The 5 responses the boys could choose from were reflective of ways ranging from doing the 'honest' thing to being dishonest or being unfaithful to your friend. The aim of these dilemmas was to contextualise some of the traits we were measuring and apply them in the everyday life of boys.
- d. **Open question.** There was only one open question where participants could comment on what they were hoping to get via their participation in ECCE and what they believed they gained after the placement.

Interviews

The second method of data collection we used was semi-structured interviews. These were conducted in March 2019. In total we conducted 14 interviews. These lasted between 15 to 20 minutes, due to the limitations of time and the fact that most boys are busy during the day with lessons or other extracurricular activities which makes it difficult to find more than half an hour to interview them. Out of the 182 boys, 30 were contacted and asked if they would like to be interviewed. These were chosen looking at their timetables and checking whether they would be free between 11.45 and 1.15 at the day when both interviewers could be at the school. Those who responded that they had free time were invited to the interview. Both interviewers followed a semi-structured interview schedule and all interviews were recorded and transcribed later.

Focus group

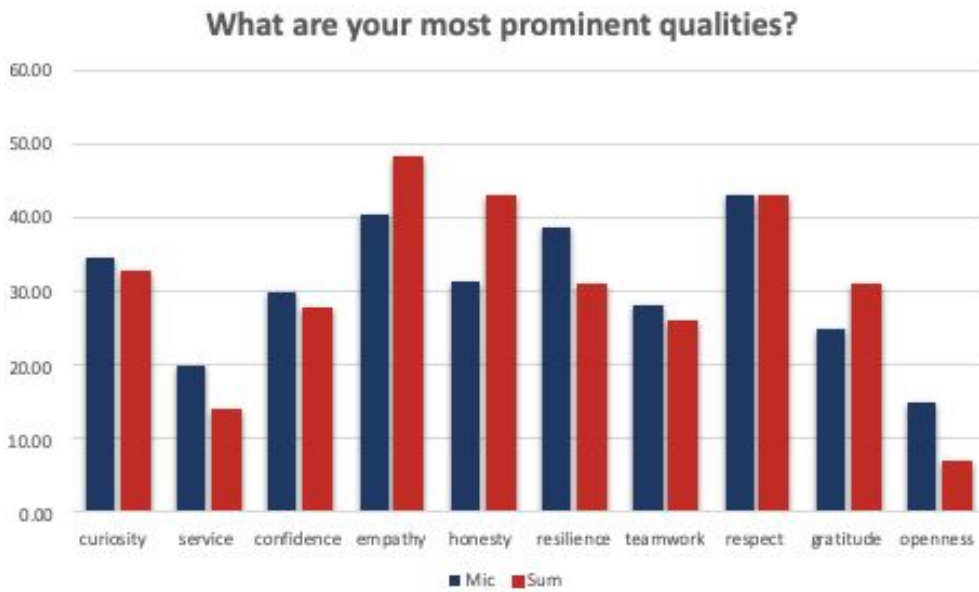
The last method was a focus group with 6 participants. They were invited to an informal lunch, where the discussion followed a similar format to the interview. The boys who replied to the interview invitation to say that they could not make it were asked to come to the focus group, with the 6 boys attending. The focus group lasted for about 45 minutes, time that a usual lunch would normally last. The discussion was recorded and transcribed later.

Ethics

In terms of ethical consent, all the boys were told in the email asking them to attend the interview or the focus group that their participation was voluntary. Those who attended were given a consent form to sign agreeing to take part. Anonymity of all participants has been ensured throughout the report and at no point are they identifiable.

Findings

Below is a summary of the key findings from the questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the results on the question 'Which are your 3 greatest qualities?'. The 10 qualities are contrasted between the 2 terms, i.e. Michaelmas (Mic) (Autumn) and Summer (Sum). The character traits here are drawn from the Jubilee Centre Framework cited above.

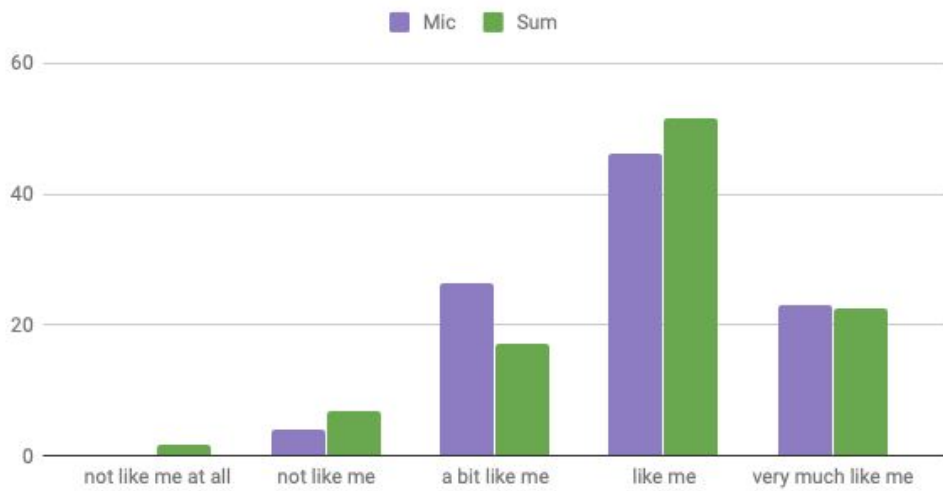


(fig. 1)

	Michaelmas	Summer
Empathy	40.5%	48.3%
Respect	43%	43.1%
Honesty	31.3%	43.1%
Resilience	38.8%	31%
Curiosity	34.7%	32.8%
Service	19.8%	13.8%
Confidence	29.8%	27.6%
Teamwork	28.1%	25.9%
Gratitude	24.8%	31%
Openness	14.9%	6.9%

Figure 2 shows the difference in responses when boys were asked about complementing the achievement of others. Acknowledging others' efforts even when they overshadow your own achievement can denote respect.

I compliment the achievements of others even when they overshadow my own.

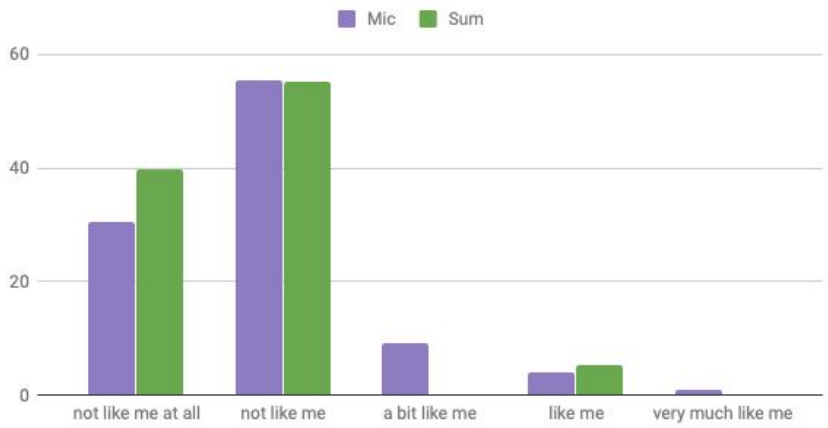


(fig. 2)

	Michaelmas	Summer
Not like me at all	0%	1.7%
Not like me	4.1%	6.9%
A bit like me	26.4%	17.2%
Like me	46.3%	51.7%
Very much like me	23.1%	22.4%

Figure 3 corresponds to a statement which can be associated to empathy and again we can see a positive trend in the responses the boys gave.

When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel much pity for them.

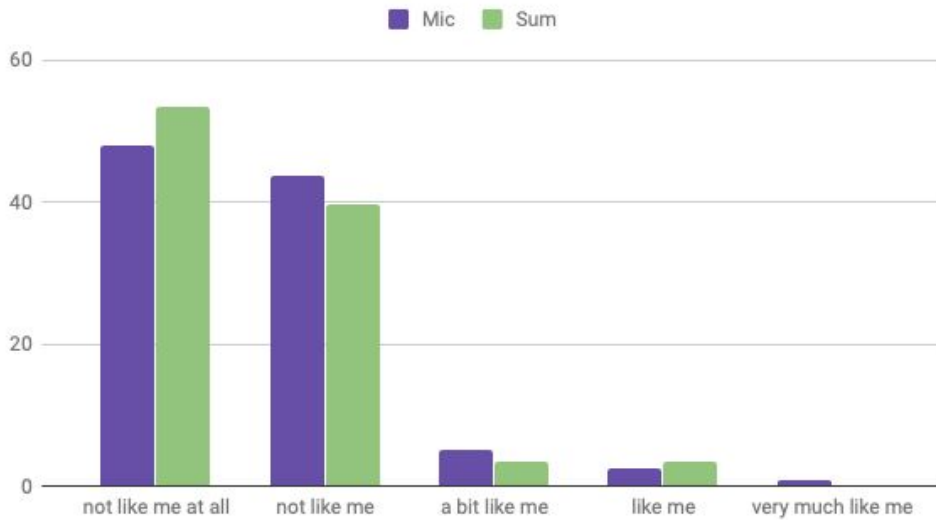


(fig. 3)

	Michaelmas	Summer
Not like me at all	30.6%	39.7%
Not like me	55.4%	55.2%
A bit like me	9.1%	0%
Like me	4.1%	5.2%
Very much like me	0.8%	0%

In figure 4 boys are asked about gratitude with the changes noted below.

When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.

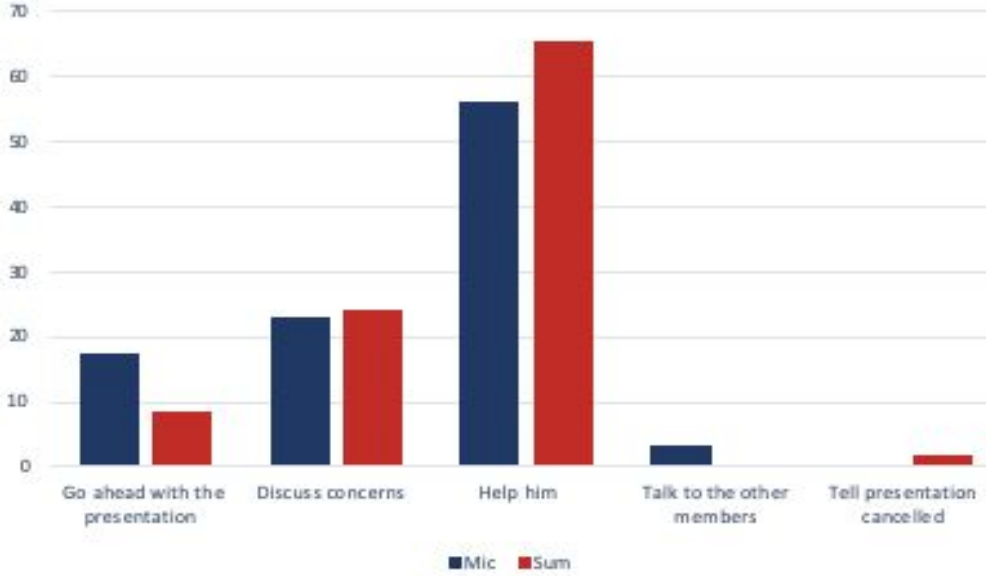


(fig. 4)

	Michaelmas	Summer
Not like me at all	47.9%	53.4%
Not like me	43.8%	39.7%
A bit like me	5%	3.4%
Like me	2.5%	3.4%
Very much like me	0.8%	0%

In one of the ethical dilemmas that were given to the boys the scenario asked them to reflect on a situation which would imply respect for the other person. The scenario goes as follows: 'You and 3 other boys have been working on this project and you have been asked to present your work in front of parents, masters, and other boys. One of the boys in the team has very poor presentation skills and a few of the people in the audience roll their eyes with how little he is able to communicate across. You know you have one more presentation coming up and he is also co-presenting with you. What do

you do?'. Across the two terms we see a clear change in the willingness to help the other person in the scenario given (fig. 5). Even though the situation here does not refer to the volunteering work they did, we thought it more relevant to give them an example which would be reflective of their everyday lives.



(fig. 5)

	Michaelmas	Summer
Go ahead with the presentation	17.4%	8.6%
Discuss concerns	23.1%	24.1%
Help him	56.2%	65.5%
Talk to the other members	3.3%	0%
Tell presentation cancelled	0%	1.7%

The last question we asked the boys was an open question which asked what they would like to gain through their participation in ECCE and then what they think they

have gained at the end of the programme. Below is a sample of their responses across the two times the questionnaire was given to them.

<p>Michaelmas 2018 What are you hoping to gain from participation in ECCE?</p>
<p>Experience</p> <p>A sense of achievement</p> <p>Empathy and work ethic</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>People skills</p> <p>A sense of community and social skills</p> <p>A better understanding of the often very different lifestyles of many of the people who live very nearby.</p> <p>Most possibly I want to gain confidence to go out into the wider world and help other people. It definitely wasn't something I would have done 5 years ago.</p> <p>New experiences which build my character and empathy and also helping those less fortunate than myself because I am in such a privileged position.</p>
<p>Summer 2019 What do you think you have gained from participation in ECCE?</p>
<p>Help others</p> <p>Give back</p> <p>Humbleness</p> <p>Satisfaction at having had a positive impact</p> <p>Understanding a broader range of opinions</p>

Understand community

I, simply, hope to have provided others with opportunities that they may not otherwise encounter. From music, to theater, to academic projects, at the end of the day I want to help others.

Gaining a greater perspective of the world, and being able to look at it from different angles.

Learning to respect others more and being able to communicate better with different people.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings is centered around the 3 research questions (RQs) and draws insights both from the questionnaire and the tables above and the qualitative data gathered from the interviews and the focus group. The discussion looks at the themes of developing respect in relationships in the social action setting and the school community, embracing openness to experience and what benefits derive from that. For the second RQ we look into the challenges and opportunities the boys identified in their ECCE placement, looking at the theme of responsibility and commitment towards the programme. We also discuss skills which the boys believe they developed which can be instrumental later in life. For RQ3 we discuss the importance of the programme as part of the education of the boys and the responsibility Eton has to embed such initiatives into the wider curriculum.

RQ1: To what extent does ECCE promote virtuous character traits; namely respect, openness to experience, teamwork, gratitude and empathy?

Developing respect in relationships with others

The boarding environment of the school encourages respect as pupils and adults live together in one big community. Not showing respect would not be tolerated by others who expect everyone to show equal levels of these character virtues to each other. Previous research we conducted at the school showed that social support, which can correlate with respect, is one of the strongest indicators in pupils' happiness at the school (RSI, 2017). Knowing how the teenage brain works, we are aware that peer relationships are very important and teenagers tend to compare themselves to others; therefore, learning how to acknowledge the achievements of others and show them respect is something which schools could explore further in order to improve relationships.

Despite the fact that the school can be seen as a competitive place - a school which has such high academic standards means that boys want to succeed - it is often not comparison to others but personal failure which might be more negative. Interestingly, in our study despite the fact that some of the participants believed that others in their team might hold them back, as seen in the quantitative data, they still believed that unfairness is very wrong even when others are on the receiving end of it. This shows elements of respect towards others and an ability for fair play, something which is strongly encouraged in physical education lessons and manifested in the several games and sports boys participate in. Similar to the findings of Vidoni and Ward (2009) direct instruction of fair play can reduce harmful behaviours and improve social skills more widely. This can also be seen by actively encouraging pupils to take part in social action programmes.

Moreover, similar to the Evaluating Youth Social Action Report (Birdwell, 2013) which found a significant increase in cooperation and empathy through engagement in social action, we also found that a community spirit which evoked empathy was also evident. This resonates with findings which suggest that often those who volunteer do not have an agenda which aims to improve their selfish reasons as motivators for giving their time, instead they are keen to learn from meeting new people and getting new experiences (Holdsworth, 2010).

In the context of our study, we wanted to see whether respect for others and the local community more broadly increased through the boys' participation in ECCE. For the participants, respect often meant being open and kind, being understanding of the various skill levels of those they were teaching, being patient when others or themselves were tired and working around what the others needed. Respect was also again closely linked to empathy; a pattern we identified with most of these character traits was that the boys saw them as interlinked.

One of the boys described his experience teaching younger pupils music:

The first we sang was 'Any dream will do', a classic choir song. For all of them was probably the first time they were split into harmonies etc. and having to split into teams and respecting their skill levels and understanding what they could all do.

They also talked about respect towards the teachers who have to work every day and plan according to the needs of the individual pupils:

to the teachers who work there every single day, it is quite incredible how much effort they put into it

Lastly, another theme which came up frequently was respect towards their context and the education they were receiving. This was linked to being grateful towards the opportunities they were given, which prompted them to be more respectful towards those who had to deal with less fortunate circumstances.

Eton is a very privileged school, we get a lot of opportunities and I think it is important to be aware that there are people who aren't as fortunate as you to be able to see that right in front of you; this is very good for developing gratitude. It makes you respect others.

This also agrees with the qualitative data which shows that boys feel gratitude about a number of things, a privileged education being one of them. This also agree with another study we have conducted at the school where boys mentioned their gratitude towards the opportunities they get in life (RSI, 2017).

Openness and the benefit of learning from others

One of the main themes that the boys repeated was the fact that being in Eton often meant that they were mainly socialising with people who came from similar backgrounds to them and as such they appreciated the opportunity to get to know people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. As one of them said:

Openness is especially important for a school like this, we are quite closed.

Another boy who worked at a stable where people with physical disabilities would go and try horse-riding talked about the opportunity to develop empathy and be more concerned for people who are not in your social circle.

Empathy for the people who were arriving, see how difficult it is even to keep a straight posture. I see how difficult it is, and patience and empathy, helping others to get accustomed to riding a horse.

The fact that I was engaging with disabled people. It is more difficult to feel empathetic if you never met someone with cerebral palsy and it is nice to get to know [...] helps to get to know them and they become your friends, so you feel more empathetic rather if it is towards someone you don't know.

Another boy reflected on his experience teaching younger pupils music and how this might be the first and last opportunity for some of them to consider learning music as a viable option. But what was most important was to get the perspective of pupils and teachers and see what would be most useful for them. As he mentioned, for these experiences to be impactful they need to be designed in collaboration with one another.

Therefore, getting to know other people and understanding their perspective was one of the most useful elements of the placements. Perspective taking is also very important in building character and contributes to the wider development of adolescents.

One of the main elements of social action programmes is that creates more cohesive communities and can enhance the sense of responsibility towards society and the

benefits volunteering can bring. As the Demos report (2015) highlights young people who took part in social action initiatives were more likely to volunteer in local initiatives and this willingness lasted for up to 3 years after their participation in the programme.

RQ2: What challenges and opportunities do the boys see in the programme?

Challenges and Responsibility

Discussing what they found challenging a lot of boys mentioned the fact that there was a learning curve for them. The fact that some of them had never been involved in a similar activity meant that often they had to learn from scratch some of the skills that were needed for the job; for example, dealing with horses or teaching young kids. This meant that often boys felt some kind of embarrassment, which was quickly forgotten as boys mentioned how they were made to feel very welcome and supported by the adults working in the various placements. The point of ECCE and other similar community engagement activities is that they enhance the sense of community and camaraderie, as also found in the Project Re:Action (2009), where participants mentioned community cohesion as one of their main takeaways.

Another challenge was that many of the boys had to deal with younger kids and needed to quickly develop patience in order to deal with some rowdy behaviour which sometimes comes with younger ages. This, again, was something which was resolved after a couple of weeks as boys learnt to communicate more effectively with younger pupils. As Birdwell, Scott and Koninckx (2015) suggest non-formal learning opportunities are instrumental in developing skills which pupils cannot develop through the curriculum; an idea which resonates with the examples given by the boys.

However, perhaps the most difficult challenge was when boys felt that their placement was not fulfilling and did not make any difference to anyone's life and they felt they were not contributing to the community. They expressed that this was both a waste of time but most importantly, it did not give them the opportunity to engage substantively with a unique experience they could have had. As Arches and Fleming (2006) suggest for volunteering work to be meaningful it needs to involve student initiative and involvement in the design of the projects. This was often resolved when boys went beyond the placement and with the help of the Social Action Team at the school used

initiative and created projects to ensure real change was made.

The boys also mentioned how it can be awkward sometimes with teaching or being involved with pupils of a similar age. They were conscious of the fact that they had a privileged education which perhaps meant that others could feel resentful towards them. Even though they did not mention any experiences which involved any such interaction, several of them referred to the 'bubble' of Eton and how this positioned them perhaps negatively vis-a-vis others. This reflexive view of themselves shows elements of self-reflection which point towards empathy and respect for those from different backgrounds.

Related to the fact that boys view the placement as a way to make a difference, was that in their majority, they felt some responsibility towards those they were helping or mentoring. One boy mentioned that when the Headmistress at the school he was volunteering at told him that he was like an older 'role model' to the kids, he felt that he needed to prove himself.

Developing skills for life

Low, Butt, Ellis Paine, & Davis Smith (2007) found that mostly 16-24 year olds in the UK volunteered to learn new skills. Indeed, as Hill and Stevens (2010) suggest volunteering work benefits not only the recipients but also those who give their time and efforts. The study by Arthur et al. (2017) also found that those who participated in social action found that developing character can also have a positive impact on employability skills.

Through the interviews it was also common for the boys to primarily refer to employability skills they wanted to develop through this programme: confidence, communication skills, and teamwork. At the initial stages of the interviews the boys referred to teamwork as one of the most prominent skills they developed through participating in ECCE. There were also many elements which reflected extrinsic motivational factors for selecting ECCE; the fact it would benefit them and their future prospects. For example, one participant mentioned:

I got experience to go abroad at a school at a gap year [...] I was not particularly confident to begin with and you had to be when you talk to the children and tell them what to do. Also thinking on my feet.

Other comments included the below:

My general communication has improved. My independence.

Doing ECCE made a positive realisation in what I want to in my gap year, go to Africa and help in schools there.

Get experience to go abroad at a school at a gap year.

It will help with working life, even in terms of the CV.

My general communication has improved. My independence.

Interpersonal skills and tailoring your message to your audience.

Teamwork was one of the main elements which ECCE has the potential to promote, something which was also reported in the report by the The National Youth Agency (2009). It provides the context for them to experience teamwork in a way which is positive and shows the true benefits of working with others to achieve a common goal. As one student described it:

Different teamwork, if you play at a team in a sport, you are working together but you find fun regardless. In this case I don't know how much I would enjoy the experience without the team. I can play football with different teams and still find it enjoyable. Working at the stables was very fun just being with people you know.

Another said:

At the start I used to be someone who would try to do everything my way, which was not always efficient, but we had to be in groups and forced to sit down with each and figure out our game plan.

I had to sit back and let others give their opinions and the fact that there were 6 of us who didn't know each other very well, some didn't even like each other.

And me trying to get them to do only one thing really well within our environment really helped me get the best out of other people. So by the end we were so much better than we ever thought we would be.

RQ3: To what extent do the boys view the programme as an important element of their wider education?

Embedding social action in Eton's education

There has been research conducted in the US which supports the idea of placing social action and social-emotional and character development interventions at the heart of schools' strategy, identifying such programmes as the missing link in improving a school (Linsky et al., 2018; Hatchimonji et al., 2017). In the UK, a survey conducted by the Jubilee Centre and Populus has found that 80% of teachers believe that teaching character would improve pupil attainment (Birmingham.ac.uk, 2018).

With this in mind, and wanting to see what the pupils think of programmes which are not seen as strictly academic, the third research question was trying to understand not only the practicalities of continuing with ECCE, such as placements, times, etc. but also whether the programme in itself was seen as valuable by the boys. Such programmes have the ability to be formative in terms of character development but there needs to be a level of 'buying-in' from the participants so as not to be seen as tokenistic. We also wanted to see whether the boys believed the school should be trying to teach these character qualities through programmes such as ECCE. Below are some of the responses.

It is the school's responsibility, it is a boarding school so we live here all the time. How else are these qualities going to develop?

Absolutely. It is easy to forget when you are within the Eton bubble and you are so focused on work and high performance that you don't realise how you are behaving. It is nice to get out of the bubble, you leave the campus and you are in a different environment. You reevaluate your position. At Eton you are a number of things which mean nothing outside Eton. Through this you almost start from the bottom and you develop who you are.

Seeing things first-hand is very powerful so if the school wants students to have this developmental experience a lecture might not be enough. There needs to be something more tangible.

It is not their responsibility but as a leading school they should be trying to find ways of developing them. It is not like they have to do, but it is important to a school that needs to be successful. These skills are more important than say learning some dates in history.

Interestingly, even for the boys who did not believe that teaching character virtues was the responsibility of the school, they still thought that this was something that needed to be done if the school was to be a leading school. Therefore, changing the programme in itself was unnecessary, but giving the boys more responsibility was something they would like.

This was an overall positive experience and one which all of those who were interviewed said they would happily do again. The main change they would like to see was on the logistical nature of the programme; as very often the timings and duration meant they did not have enough time to cover everything they needed and this can feel tokenistic towards those they are helping. Some of the positive comments, however, are shown below:

It feels we are doing something meaningful and productive for other people.

It is fulfilling to see how the kids we teach are getting better or that you build bonds with the people you work with.

It is just nice to see you are making a difference.

Because we are privileged people we might feel a moral obligation to get out and give back; if you are given the opportunity to get out of the school and inspire others you should take it and it is great we are given this opportunity.

It is interesting to have conversations about stuff you don't know much about - like i was talking about football with this boy - so it is enjoyable.

Limitations of the study

There were several limitations with this study and we acknowledge that a lot of the findings might not be transferable to other contexts. For example,

1. The surveys that went out to boys were not based on standardised scales and some of the questions were written with the specific context of the school in mind. Therefore, even though it is likely that the boys interpreted the questions in the right way, this might not be the case in other contexts, i.e. non-boarding, for example.
2. Most of the data rely on self-reporting answers. Even though this is normal in social sciences research, it is also to be expected that some of the responses might be prone to social desirability bias and the willingness of people to give answers which make them sound and look good.
3. Because of the busy nature of the school, there was not much time to gather in-depth responses from a larger sample and some of the interviews needed to be kept short to fit around the schedule of the boys. The data could have been much richer if there was more time for the data collection.
4. Lastly, it is safe to assume that it is mainly the boys who actively engaged with the process which might have come forward to give us their ideas and take part in the interviews and focus groups. There might be other opinions boys might hold which we are not aware of and such as are not included in this report. We also tried to survey the boys who do not do ECCE and have chosen CCF instead by the returned questionnaires were so few that the data was not sufficient to include here.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the involvement of boys in ECCE seemed to be a positive experience. The boys expressed a willingness to be involved in the future if this was offered again and they all seemed to reflect back on it in a positive light. Even though we cannot say that ECCE was the only contributing factor to the character development of boys, the data

we gathered highlight some recommendations which can benefit those who wish to design similar social action programmes.

1. Currently the pupils are encouraged by adults to participate in social action which is framed by formal structures as designed by adults (Arches and Fleming, 2006). However, allowing pupils to be more involved in the design and implementation of these programmes can be much more powerful and a more formative experience for both them and those they engage with. The Project Re:action (Boeck et al, 2009) which was designed by pupils found the experience to be very powerful and contributing to the character development of those involved.
2. Drawing from the Demos report (Birdwell, 2013) and the #iwill campaign, recommendations would be to ensure that any social action engagement is challenging; led by young people themselves; has a positive and measurable impact on society; includes reflection; be progressive towards other opportunities; be embedded across the lifecycle of a young person. This was also highlighted by Arthur et al. (2017) where a key recommendation was to ensure institutions help young people engage in service through transition points. 'This might involve signposting between organisations and greater partnerships between primary and secondary, secondary and college, secondary/college and university/employment, and university and employment' (ibid.: 33).
3. The Campaign for Youth Social Action (2013) suggests that an outcomes framework focusing on particular capabilities can bring positive benefits both to the individual and the community. They suggest the framework in appendix 3. Based on this suggestion, and the data received from the boys it is evident that framing social action programmes under the banner of the 'double benefit' (Arthur et al., 2017) can have a significant impact on the engagement of pupils with such initiatives and can ensure long lasting effects in terms of character development.

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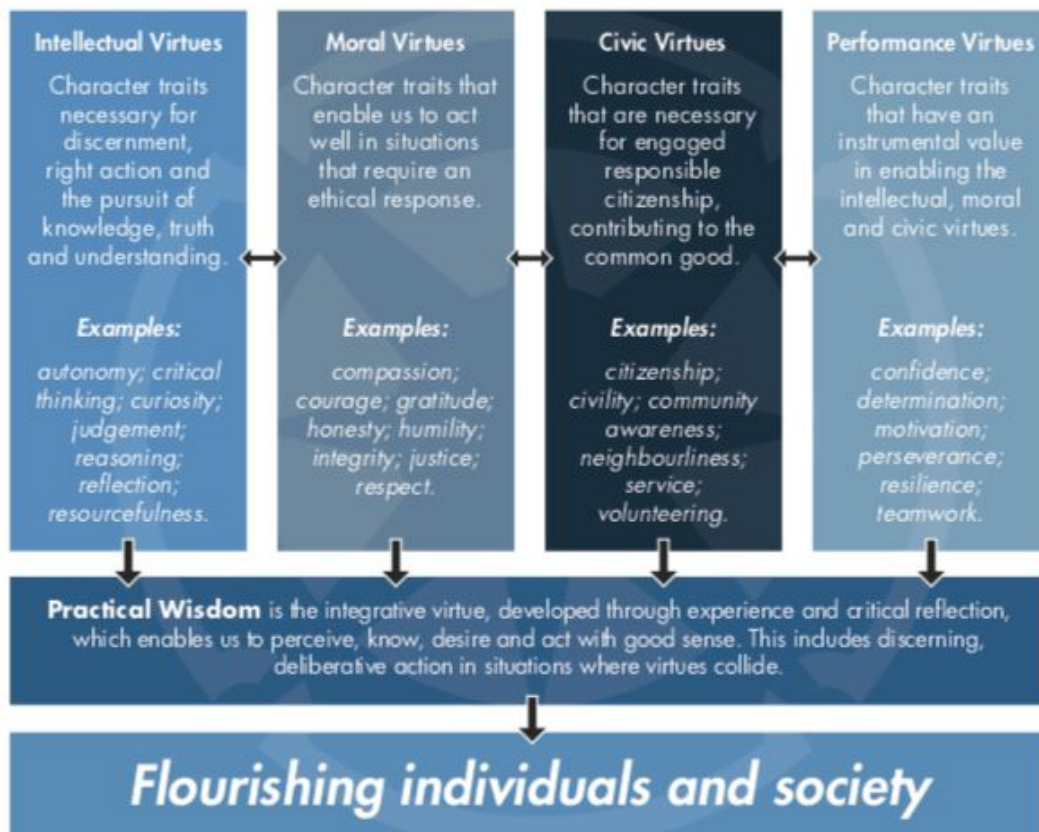
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Building Blocks of Character

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHARACTER



Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Which of these are your most prominent qualities?(choose 3)

curiosity – service – confidence – empathy – honesty – resilience – teamwork – respect – gratitude – openness

1. I have so much to be thankful for. (not like me at, not like me, a bit like me, like me, very much like me)
2. I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset.
3. I compliment the achievements of others even when they overshadow my own.

4. Teamwork can hold you back if other members do not have the same drive as you.
5. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel much pity for them.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.
7. I see myself as someone who likes to reflect on ideas.
8. I prefer working in teams compared to doing individual work.
9. I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.
10. I see myself as someone who is curious about things.
11. I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses or misfortunes.
12. Working in teams can only be efficient if team members share the same ideas as you.
13. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.
14. It upsets me if someone is being treated disrespectfully.
15. I see myself as someone who prefers work which is routine.
16. My own ambitions are more important than other people's needs.
17. I try to practise active listening in all situations.
18. I like working in teams which consist of a diverse body of people.
19. I rarely change my own opinions after listening to others' perspectives.
20. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

What do you hope to gain from participating in social action projects?

Dilemmas

1. At the beginning of the term, you offered to help a friend with a project they are doing. Time has passed without realising and it is now almost deadline time. However, this is almost trials time as well. Even though you would like to help your friend, you realise that there is not enough time between revision and other commitments. What do you do?

Help your friend as you think this is the right thing to do/ Help your friend, slightly reluctantly/ Prioritise your revision as this feels more important/ Say that your

House Master has prevented you from helping because he gave you other things to do/ Avoid your friend for a few days until after his project is due.

2. You and 3 other boys have been working on this project and you have been asked to present your work in front of parents, masters, and other boys. One of the boys in the team has very poor presentation skills and a few of the people in the audience roll their eyes with how little he is able to communicate across. You know you have one more presentation coming up and he is also co-presenting with you. What do you do?

Go ahead with the next presentation as normal/ Discuss your concerns with him/ Help him as much as possible with perfecting his presentation skills/ Talk to the other members of the team but behind his back/ Tell him that the presentation has been cancelled

Appendix 3: Campaign for Youth Social Action framework

Benefits for the individual		Benefits for the community
Optimism	Communication	Can be wide-ranging, from civic participation, health, educational engagement to safer communities, sustainability, voting, resilience and employability.
	Creativity	
Determination	Confidence and Agency	
	Planning and Problem solving	
	Resilience, Grit	
Emotional Intelligence	Leadership	
	Relationships	
	Managing feelings, Self control	