



Plymouth Diocese

VIRTUES HANDBOOK

for Primary Schools

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GLOSSARY

Life in all its fullness

‘I come that you may have life and have it to the full.’ (John 10:10) This is what Jesus desires for us. He wants us to have a fulfilled life, to be really happy, blessed. This is at the heart of our schools, and what we want each child, parent, carer, or staff member to know and experience. The Church seeks not just to enlighten our young people with knowledge, but to guide them along the road towards true and lasting happiness.

I warmly welcome this new Virtues Handbook for Primary Schools. I am sure it will be a resourceful guide for all who work in our schools, or who are associated with them. As you read and ponder what is written here you will see that the virtues act as essential signposts along the difficult path from infancy to adolescence, empowering our young people to live lives of fulfilment and significance. Through the virtues, our children discover their innermost hearts and they seek and strive after truth and goodness in all its forms.

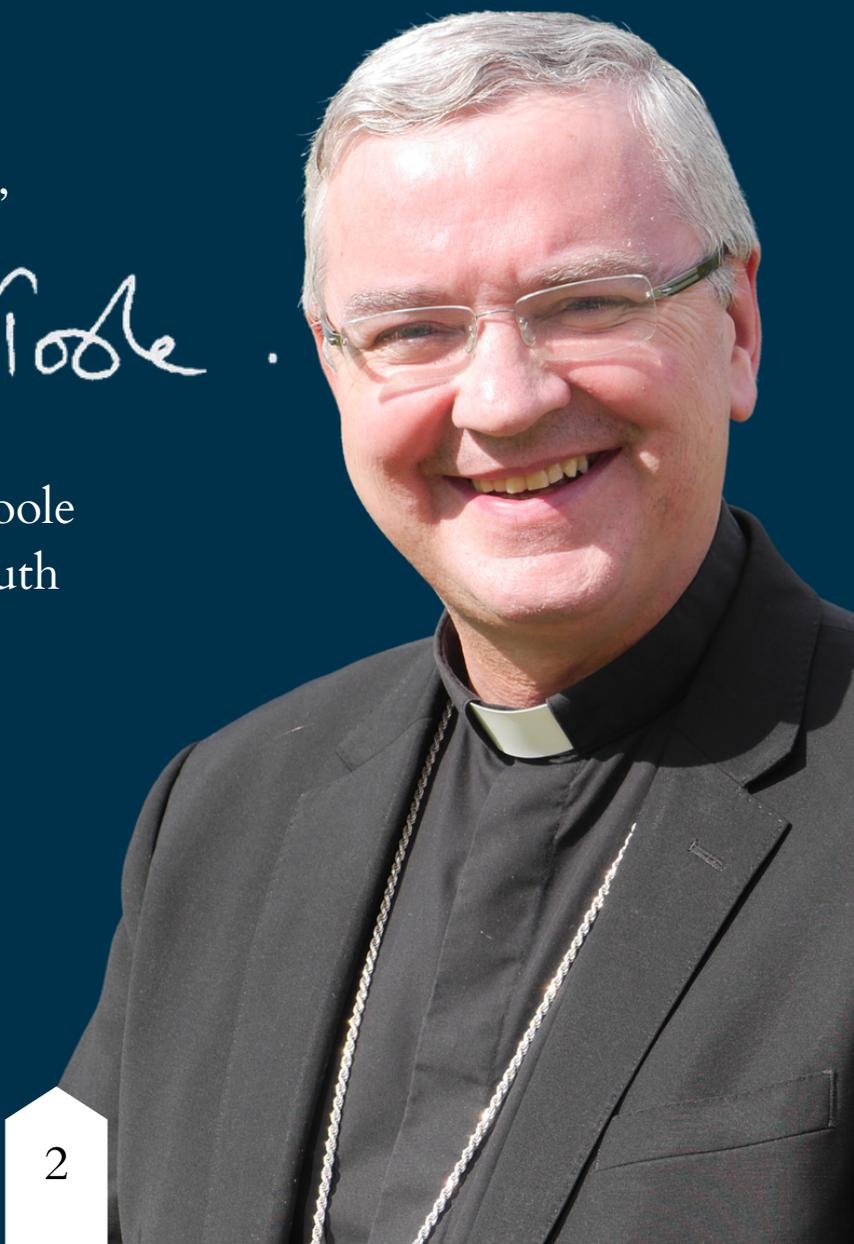
The virtues draw upon the rich treasury of the Church’s Tradition, developed and practiced over many centuries, not only in schools, but in so many communities, and by so many people. This Handbook is, therefore, especially offered to teachers in their important vocation to accompany our children on the road to fulfilment, to living life to the full, which is the life of virtue.

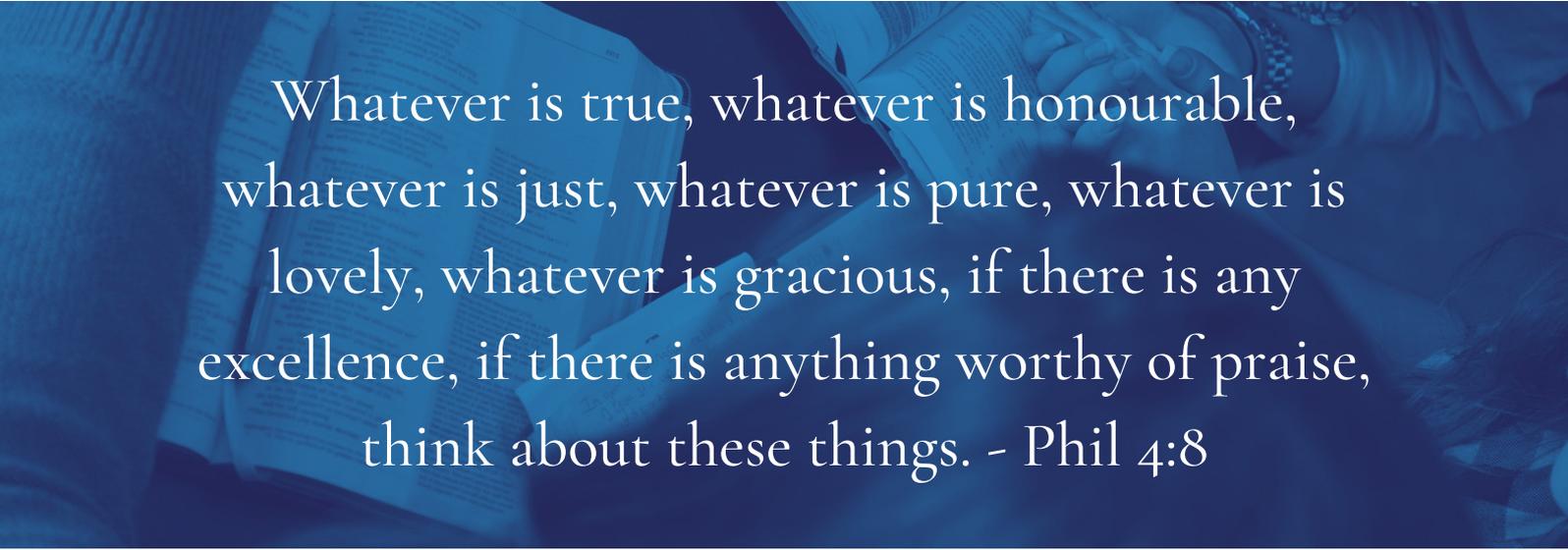
May you deepen your personal and professional life through this Handbook, and as you do so, remember the one who journeys with you along the road towards happiness, Jesus Christ. He is the fulfilment of all our desires, all our longing, all our search for truth and goodness. Jesus walks with us, speaking to our inmost hearts as we seek to walk the path of a virtuous life. Know that as teachers, you have a special place in Jesus' mission to the world, to bring others to life in all its fullness. May the Lord richly bless you as you carry out this task. May the fruits of your labour, be manifest in our young people as they discover what it is to lead a life of virtue, which brings happiness. May this in turn be a blessing on our school communities and all who encounter them.

God bless you.
Yours devotedly,

+ Mark O'Toole .

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth





Whatever is true, whatever is honourable,
whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is
lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any
excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things. - Phil 4:8

Introduction

Virtues train us to seek true happiness in life, to find our fulfilment, to seek the good and the true, and to reject evil. Virtue is the path to develop maturity, purpose, and personal responsibility in young people of every age, empowering them to live life to the full and to rehumanise the world. In these ways the virtues are at the heart of the Church's mission in Catholic education and, with this handbook, will become the driving force behind the ethos of our schools across the Diocese of Plymouth.

This approach to teaching, and the shape of the virtues below, reflects a basic reality: each of us has always known that teaching goes well beyond the lesson plan, that we are giving our children more than just facts. We are trying to help them to live good and fulfilling lives. It is with this mindset that we reintroduce the Catholic Virtues explicitly as a vision and framework which forms the ethos of our schools.

Put simply, this handbook is designed to equip you to school each child in your care in the virtuous life.

The handbook has three main parts: the basics of the virtues, virtues designed for each school year, and a guide for how to lead children in the virtues. At the end of this document is a glossary which focusses on unfamiliar or unique terms. In the coming months and years, listening to feedback and experience from our teachers across the Diocese, the handbook will include an FAQ as part of an ongoing support process.

Accompanying this handbook is an Appendix which is a colour-coded overview of all the virtues, including their structure and connections. This overview will help view the virtues from the top down, as opposed to the year-by-year presented in this handbook. We strongly encourage Headteachers, their Deputies, and the RE Lead of each school to become familiar with this overview in order to better support class teachers. Just like this handbook, the Appendix will include an FAQ based on your input over the coming months and years.

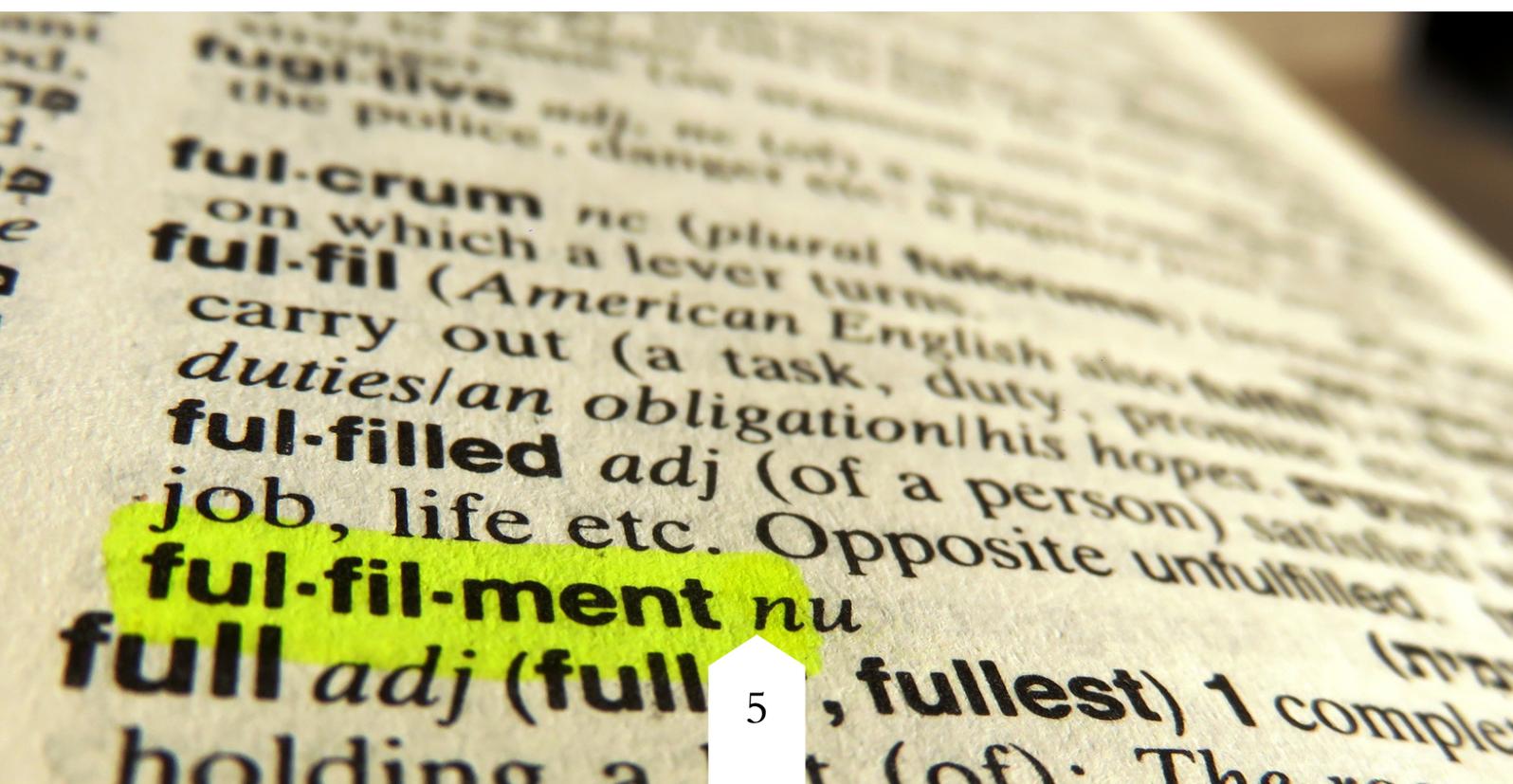
Now that you can see where we are coming from, it is time to start with the basics about the virtues.

What are the virtues?

The catechism defines the human virtues as 'firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.'

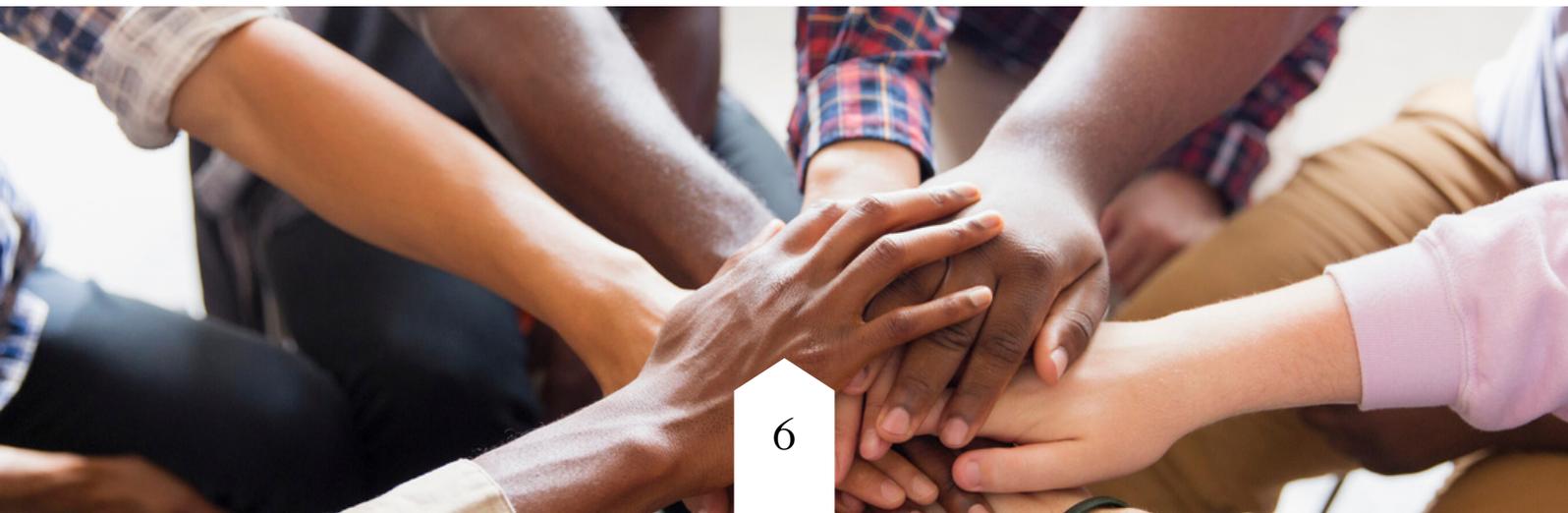
The formal definition is broken down below, but this summary from the Catechism of the Catholic Church indicates to us what the virtues are: attitudes, dispositions, and habits which perfect (read: fulfil) our intellect and will, and which order our emotions according to reason and faith - **in other words the virtues make us more like who we are.**



Virtues are named from different sides to our life, different parts of our human nature. We are talking about attitudes, dispositions, and habits, and there are only two sources for these things in our lives: ourselves, and God. These give us the names for the two main kinds of virtue: human virtues, and theological virtues - virtues which are acquired by our own effort, and virtues which are poured into us by God's grace.

Although the human virtues and theological virtues are different kinds of virtue, and they would appear to be separate because they come from different sources, they are intimately connected: human virtue is a preparation for theological virtue, and in turn theological virtue perfects, completes, and fulfils human virtue.

This interconnectedness gives the Church an explicit mission to help all people to find their fulfilment in the virtuous life, to empower everyone to seek the truth with all their heart, and to build a culture founded on love of God and neighbour. This mission of rehumanisation is the foundation of the Catholic approach to education, and its intimate connection with virtue is the purpose of incorporating the virtues into every part of our Catholic schools.

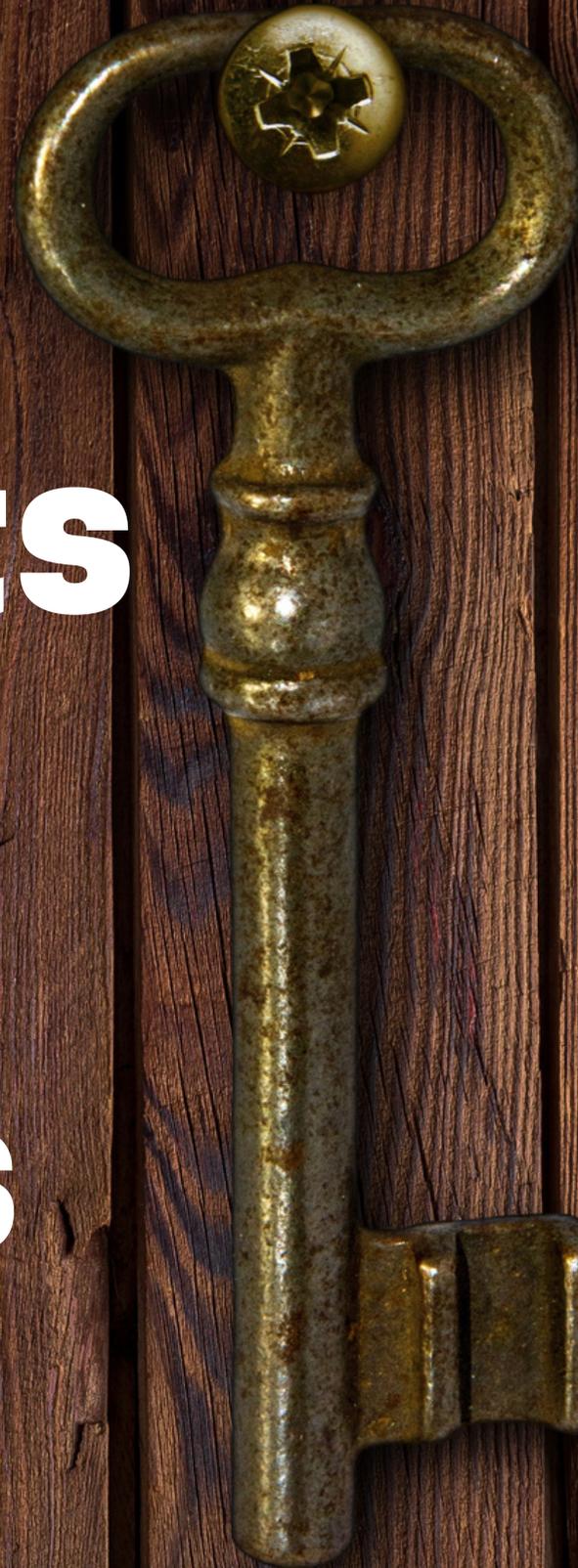


Perhaps that seems abstract, but the virtues reach all the way down even to our simplest activities – after all, they are named from different sides to our humanity. As teachers in Catholic schools, it is our task to help our children along the road of virtue, to empower them to make good choices, and to make those choices because they are good. In many cases this means putting a name to what we are already doing to develop the children in our care. In other cases the virtues will challenge us, both on a personal and professional level, as we seek to develop maturity in particular areas and model that maturity ourselves.

However, the virtues are areas of growth and development, rather than impossibly high moral standards. We can always find a new way forward in the virtues, and children can surprise us with their capacity for growth.



Key Concepts of the Virtues



I come that you may have life, and
have it to the full. - John 10:10

Happiness

The pursuit of happiness is the driving force for every choice we make, and happiness is the goal of the virtues, too. In the Catholic tradition, happiness is not about satisfying our needs, but about being fulfilled truly and deeply.

The role of the virtues in our search for happiness comes from the belief that we find our fulfilment when we seek what we know to be good and true to the maximum of our ability. If happiness and fulfilment is our goal, then living virtuously is how we get there.

A Rich Tradition

The virtues named in this handbook are drawn from the rich tradition of the Catholic Church. Their philosophical foundations and theological grounding have been argued, discussed, and deepened over the long centuries before and since Jesus Christ.

Thinkers like Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Alphonsus Liguori among many others have carried this tradition to today. Likewise, people like St. John Calasanz, the founder of the first free school in Europe, and St. John Bosco, founder of the Salesian teaching order, incorporated the tradition of the virtues into their approach to schooling, and developed the powerful reputation Catholic schools enjoy even today.

As you step out to deepen your professional and personal knowledge through the virtues, you can be confident that we are drawing from the very source of what makes Catholic education special.



Definition & Characteristics

Virtue has a formal definition: **virtue is a good habit of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us.**

Below are highlighted key points within this definition to aid our understanding.

- Virtues are habits, and just like habits, we acquire them by repetitive and deliberate action.
- Virtues are good, meaning they make us more human and therefore make us more like ourselves.
- Virtues are habits of the mind, meaning reasoning rightly has a key role, and that virtues perfect our reason.
- Virtues help us to live righteously, meaning they help us to do good acts and they make those acts easier to choose.
- Virtues make us good and to act well, so virtues cannot be misused.
- God is the cause of theological virtue and those virtues are gifts which are not earned but given freely to us.
- Vice is opposite to virtue and has the opposite characteristics.



Virtues & Categories

The Virtues are understood and discussed in a structure. This structure can be seen in the Appendix overview and through the colour-coding used in that overview and in the year-by-year approach below. Therefore, some virtues are also categories of other virtues.

The structure of the human virtues, which this handbook focusses on, is arranged as the four Cardinal Virtues and their daughter virtues.

The following are the four Cardinal Virtues: **Prudence**, **Justice**, **Fortitude**, and **Temperance**.

As the virtues for each class are broken down, keep in mind their position in the overall structure as a guide for your understanding. The colour-coding will guide you as to which virtue is a daughter of which Cardinal Virtue.

For example: **Justice** is a Cardinal Virtue. Under Justice there are kinds of justice such as Commutative Justice and Distributive Justice. Within those kinds of justice there are the daughter virtues of friendliness, thankfulness, and equity.

In general **Prudence** is more about our search for truth. **Justice** is more about seeking the good. **Fortitude** is about our response to hardship. **Temperance** is about our common emotions.

Growth, Development, and SEN

The virtues are not static standards of behaviour, but avenues of development which deepen with a child's ability to reason and choose freely. This means the virtues we target change and deepen over time as the children develop.

Whereas children in younger years will target basic virtues like health and honesty, children in higher years can take daughters of prudence and fortitude in accord with their development.

SEN children are faced with many challenges and the virtues they aim for might look very different from their classmates. Teachers and TA's are encouraged to use their judgement as to what virtues will fit best.



Virtues

Year

by

Year

Having laid out the fundamentals of the virtues generally, this section gives a guide for which virtues to apply year-by-year in each year group. The aim is to provide a framework for which virtues fit best to each year group plus guidance on how that virtue should be applied, as well as suggestions for how that virtue can be practised in each class. This section includes an introduction as to priorities in each year followed by three virtues. The text is for your own understanding, and so should be adapted to each age group when explaining, but the names of the virtues should be used consistently.

The virtues are colour-coded according to the Cardinal Virtues which they are categorised under. This should guide your approach to the named virtues by helping you understand how the virtues for your year follow on from previous years and lead into future years.

The year-by-year is followed by suggestions for the school-wide, outcome-focussed level of the Catholic ethos through use of the Pupil Profile and geared towards use by the Headteacher, their Deputy, and RE Lead. This resource is separate from this handbook and Appendix, but supplied by the Diocese alongside this handbook.

Virtues in EYFS & Year 1

The virtues which apply to our youngest children are very basic. Their ability to reason independently and choose freely is quite limited so our approach to the virtues we apply must account for their stage of development. As their maturity develops the virtues mentioned here can be deepened so they can begin to apprehend what is good for them and what is bad. These virtues coincide with their developmental needs and lay the foundations for greater engagement in later years. Aside from these virtues, children should develop habits of singing as well as confidence in making the Sign of the Cross at the beginning and end of prayers.

Health:

a virtue by which we care for bodily needs – part of **Prudence**

Habits which contribute positively to our health are virtuous. At this stage of development the children have very little control over major things like diet and exercise, however, actions such as hand-washing, teeth-brushing, giving effort in PE, tidying up after themselves, safety in play, and many more such things are all actions which contribute to their health. Over time, as they develop, the approach to health should transition from trying to form healthy habits towards building an appreciation for what is healthy for them. Building awareness of health is especially important for children with health or dietary requirements so that they can begin to understand their own needs.

Honesty:

a virtue by which we tell the truth - a part of **Temperance**

There are many levels to telling the truth which can be developed. As with all virtues, starting with whichever kind of honesty the children find easiest and then progressing towards other kinds of honesty they find more challenging is the best approach. The kinds and levels of honesty to be aware of are many, but here are some primary examples:

- honesty about one's own gifts and talents or another's.
- honesty about one's own role in poor behaviour.
- honesty about how we're feeling.

Bringing out these different kinds of honesty and helping them to habitually tell the truth, even when it doesn't make them look good, will lay good foundations for virtue in the future. Honesty should always be named and rewarded for reinforcement.

Play:

a virtue by which we relax well – a part of **Temperance**

The role of play is often overlooked, but not in the scheme of the virtues. Helping children to play well is complicated as it depends so much on their individual character and mood. However, helping them to develop an understanding of how they like to play, of when they need rest, and how it contributes to their well-being will be useful as they develop. Also, helping them to understand the difference between play and other activities will make it clearer for them what kinds of behaviour are appropriate at different times of the day as the years progress. Differences in disposition between boys and girls should always be considered as their approaches to play can vary widely.

Virtues in Year 2

This year is critical for social and emotional development and the virtues which apply most to children of this age are geared towards this. Generally, as children reach this age the friendliness and confidence that young children naturally have becomes much more deliberately chosen and so must be deliberately cultivated. They also develop their sense of self, realising that not every belief is universal, and they gradually gain the ability to choose how to act on their emotions. The virtues for this year seek to respond to these important developmental thresholds. The importance of friendliness, confidence, and self-knowledge as foundations for their future development cannot be over-emphasised.

Friendliness:

a virtue by which we act becomingly towards others – a part of **Justice**

We hope that all children will be naturally friendly, but it is often the case that, at this age, some develop that friendliness more naturally than others. Acknowledging friendliness as a virtue, and deliberately cultivating friendliness in children, will help all our children to develop this important virtue no matter their disposition.

Friendliness encompasses many ordinary behaviours that we usually call manners, things such as putting hands up, not calling out, proper responses to guests in class, and other such things. But friendliness goes deeper, encompassing issues of respect and dignity, especially towards those we disagree with. By now, many children will have formed some notion of whether or not they believe in God. With friendliness they will listen to others who do with respect and treat RE lessons as learning opportunities even if they believe that it does not apply to them. Stressing the wider relevance of RE input may be especially useful in this year.

Self-Knowledge:

a virtue by which know our feelings and choose whether to act on them or not – a part of **Prudence**

As children progress through this year they are able to understand their own emotions more clearly. Being able to put words to those emotions, to know what has elicited those emotions, and to think about how to act on those emotions, are all key dimensions to the virtue of self-knowledge. As children gain their sense of self-knowledge they also become more responsible for their actions. This means that personal responsibility can become the norm when tackling poor behaviour. Your role in bringing children through this process towards personal responsibility is crucial as self-knowledge is vital for emotional maturity.

Practices of self-reflection are important in self-knowledge, as well as discussing both good and poor choices with individuals. Also, class-wide discussions about particular emotions and feelings might be useful to spark self-reflection and grow emotional intelligence. Discussions which encourage children to speculate on what they might do in a fictional situation would be appropriate for an especially mature class. Any approach to prayer or teaching which includes reflection or an inner search is strongly encouraged.

Confidence:

a virtue by which we hope in ourselves – a part of **Fortitude**

Confidence is the virtue by which we learn to hope in our own actions, especially when faced with challenges or disappointment. During this year the individual character of each child often becomes much more apparent and behaviours from shy or boisterous children become much more distinct. These differences mean the challenges each child faces can vary when it comes to confidence. For example, for some this will mean overcoming discouragement after answering incorrectly, for others it will be simply making a start on a challenging task.

Ultimately, though it may look differently in different children, the goal in training them in confidence is so that nothing holds them back from their potential. Each child should be encouraged to take confidence as a real goal for them, and every opportunity should be taken to cultivate confidence even in children who already seem confident. Also, helping them to identify what holds them back and growing their self-knowledge of that is essential to growth in confidence.

Virtues in Year 3

Being a vital age for development coupled with an acceleration in the curriculum makes Year 3 a difficult one both for children and teachers. Any virtues that we cultivate in our children must account for both the development and the curriculum, recognising that this year represents a new stage in their lives and a new level of maturity and responsibility. These virtues should equip our children to face the coming challenges and take a more proactive approach to their needs.

Perseverance:

a virtue by which we pursue the good despite difficulty or delay - a part of **Fortitude**

This year represents such an increase in difficulty because the knowledge they are seeking to acquire (which is the good they are seeking) now becomes much more difficult to obtain and the skills that we teach them take longer to acquire. Without perseverance they will become discouraged. No longer can our children, at this crucial stage, remain comfortable in easy or short tasks because now the most important foundations for the future are laid. To make the transition, then, into this year and into the future, they must be helped to acquire perseverance.

Helping children to recognise that some tasks will require time and to see that they cannot make something perfect if time is limited are both important features of perseverance. Also, helping children to recognise their weaknesses and to develop a plan to overcome them is also a practice of perseverance. Note that this virtue is closely related to the virtue of patience. There are many strategies available to a teacher to encourage perseverance but there are two main approaches: being honest about the effort required in a particular task, and a relentlessly positive attitude. Activities which help children envision their success, and which restore and maintain a positive class spirit are strongly encouraged. Perseverance should be named and rewarded to encourage others.

Thankfulness:

a virtue by which we give thanks to those who have helped us
- a part of **Justice**

When undertaking challenging tasks we are always in need of one another's help. During this year particularly, our children should discover that they cannot work things out on their own, but need help. Helping them to recognise this need and giving them the courage to ask for help has, hopefully, been the result of confidence last year. This year, the need to be thankful for the help we receive should be highlighted, and guidance for how to be thankful should be made explicit - notes, gifts, words, help, and anything else which can symbolise thankfulness should be encouraged.

This virtue includes recognising who helps us and the appropriate level of thanks that we should give in response. Ultimately, by the end of the year, the children should be able to recognise that they are each bound together by bonds of mutual gratitude. Asking children who they helped or who helped them might be useful in making thankfulness present to them. Also, picking up on the help that children with more challenging behaviour give to others will be useful to help keep those children bound to other children and give them greater chance for good behaviour in the long run.

Meditation:

a virtue by which we think upon what is good and the ways to reach that good, especially God, who is the highest Good – a part of **Justice**

We tend to think of meditation as an activity, however it is named among the virtues as a habit of reflecting on how our individual actions connect with our goals. In everything we do we are always seeking some good. Meditation helps us to recognise what goods we are seeking and how well our actions lead us to that good. Ultimately, the goal of meditation is to develop clarity about how the choices we make lead us to where, and who, we want to be.

This virtue builds on the self-knowledge virtue from last year and develops it further into reflection about their actions and choices. As our children begin to develop deeper levels self-awareness, we must help them in the practices which facilitate that journey. Actual meditation sessions during prayer will be useful, as well as asking children about how their actions connect with their goals. Helping children who struggle with poor behaviour to recognise that their choices often produce the opposite of their aims might be effective to cultivate their virtue of meditation.

The wider experience of Catholic schooling opens the way for a recognition that the ultimate good we are all seeking is God, the highest Good, and that all our individual goods are ordered towards Him. This point can be drawn out in RE lessons or other ways depending on the disposition of the class.

Virtues in Year 4

This year represents a major transition into becoming more responsible and self-sufficient and we have, as our goal, helping the children to become self-starters in preparation for Years 5 & 6. The fruits of previous years should become cemented this year and the foundations laid for the coming challenges. The focus of this year, then, is centred around maturity, responsibility, and ownership to enable our children to begin taking some leadership in their own lives.

It is recommended to take account of the virtues from previous years so that major short-falls can be addressed early and to ease their transition into more serious year groups.

Humility:

a virtue by which discover the truth about ourselves and take action for positive change - a part of **Temperance**

Earlier years have focused on the virtues of honesty, self-knowledge, and meditation so that they develop the habits of self-discovery. Having acquired the skills to know themselves, their strengths and their weaknesses, and how their actions connect with their goals, they require humility, which means to take responsibility for our self-discovery and to act in light of it.

Humility in the classroom will mean facilitating that discovery process, reinforcing/reintroducing the process in children who have struggled to engage in self-discovery, as well as guiding them in ways that they can both address their weaknesses and enhance their strengths.

Reflective activities are strongly encouraged, as in earlier years. Use every opportunity to ask children how they intend to take responsibility for the situations they find themselves in. Opportunities present themselves, for example, when they come with a problem, when they get upset about something. Poor behaviour presents an opportunity to encourage them to consider the choices they need to make and what responsibility they need to take. Humility also includes knowing when you have reached your limit and need help, so helping children to identify when that is is also key.

Magnanimity:

a virtue by which we undertake difficult tasks with courage and confidence – a part of **Fortitude**

This virtue is the application of confidence and perseverance, treated in previous years, to difficult tasks. The level of difficulty the children will experience during this year and in the coming years is far and above the sort of challenges they have faced before. In order to face these new trials we must be magnanimous, facing the road ahead with the confidence that whatever difficulty lies ahead we can overcome it with perseverance, with courage, and with the help of those around us. This will be helped by the process of self-discovery mentioned above, as well as humility, so that they know to ask for help when things become too difficult.

Magnanimity has two sides that must be cultivated. The first is an honesty about the difficulties they are faced with. The second is a courageous and positive response to that challenge. Presenting learning materials with an honesty as to their difficulty level is a major way to address the the first side to magnanimity. Displaying and encouraging a relentless positivity about challenges and difficulties is a way to address the second. It might also be useful to create and promote after-school learning and extracurricular activities to create more avenues for children to overcome their weaknesses.

The goal of cultivating magnanimity in our children is to make them courageous in the face of challenges, instead of sheltering them from difficulty. Ultimately our aim is to make difficulty normal, but the courage and skills to overcome normal as well.

Peace:

a virtue by which we are united with our neighbour – a part of **Charity**

This virtue is once more the fulfilment of previous virtues, namely the virtues of friendliness and thankfulness. Peace is also a virtue whereby we respond with love to those who disagree with us. It is also the virtue by which we seek the best for other people, regardless of their attitude towards us. In practice this virtue includes anything which fosters unity within the class and whatever enables disagreements to be had well and in a friendly manner.

Facilitating discussions around difficult topics when they arise and introducing them to ordered, proper ways to discuss and debate will be key. These kinds of activities respond to the fact that many children at this stage have formed differing opinions, and without good habits of discussion can become disruptive.

Peace is considered a fruit of the Theological Virtue of Charity, and so it comes from God and goes beyond normal human powers. This kind of peace is not merely the absence of conflict, which is the human-level of peace, but goes beyond that as a desire to be truly united with others, and even with our enemies. Acts of worship focussed on peace, whether inner peace, peace with our neighbour, or world peace, are strongly encouraged during this year.

Virtues in Year 5

Year 5 is a vital year for developing personal and academic maturity and these virtues aim to build on those which have come before to develop that maturity. Developing intentional maturity is key as they develop deeper learning through the curriculum, but also for maintaining good behaviour based on personal responsibility. Ultimately this year represents a major development from doing good because they are told to, towards doing what is good because they understand what is good and they freely choose to act in accord with that knowledge. By focussing on Justice we intend for children to take their attitude and approach to others seriously and to engage issues of justice with growing maturity. Also, the focus on Truth as a virtue, we aim to cultivate a proactive love for the truth, which should equip them to become self-starters in their approach to education. Children leaving this year should approach self-discovery and responsible decision-making as an ordinary part of life and should possess the moral maturity to understand how each of their actions affect themselves and others.

Truth:

a virtue by which we seek the truth in all things - a part of
Prudence

The kind of learning which children of this age begin to undertake is different from what has come before; it requires their active engagement beyond what they have previously experienced. We begin encouraging a deeper level of learning which teaches them to look beyond the immediate task or facts, and into the principles behind them. The virtue of truth is the habit of seeking that deeper knowledge and trying to see how all truths fit together. This virtue is therefore two-fold and both sides should be cultivated. The first side, seeking a deeper level of knowledge and engagement, can be easily achieved through the curriculum and you can connect the virtue of truth with the curriculum in your approach. If children are encouraged to look beyond what they are presented with on a regular basis, they will be walking the road towards truth.

The second side to the virtue of truth, of putting all truths together, seems more challenging but children of this age are already trying to do this by synthesising everything they have learned and testing what fits and what does not. Taking the habit of putting all truths in connection with one another as a goal for the year means highlighting connections between different areas of learning and assisting them in making those connections for themselves. Asking the question of how such-and-such fits with another thing they have learned is also a good approach. Any activity which reinforces a habit of deeper searching builds on this virtue.

Justice:

a virtue by which we give what is owed.

Awareness of justice is always a school-wide project but justice takes on newer and deeper meanings at this stage of development as children become increasingly responsible for their own choices and as those choices have greater impact on the world around them. Their maturity makes it possible to discuss issues of justice and to explore different dimensions of justice as a part of their learning. However, developing maturity also means increasing levels of personal responsibility in their behaviour.

There are two main layers to justice, and introducing children to these two will be important to form their understanding and to make more mature choices. The two categories are: commutative justice, and distributive justice.

- **Commutative justice** is about how we, as individuals, behave towards one another - 'how I treat my neighbour.' Virtues like friendliness, thankfulness, peace from previous years are all about this kind of justice. Acts of respect, courtesy, manners, kindness, and so forth are acts of this kind of justice.
- **Distributive justice** is about goods which are, or should be, common to all - 'how my neighbour should be treated.' Acts which address inequality or inequity, the subject of universal rights, the use of programs which address poverty, and care for the environment are all examples of distributive justice.

There are many sides to cultivating justice as a virtue in our children. Ultimately the main avenues or approach are teaching about justice issues and helping them to engage those issues effectively, and personal practice of justice in behaviour.

To help children to engage in matters of justice, role-playing is particularly effective. To put themselves in the shoes of the most vulnerable through role-play or discussions of justice issues will help them to engage with what it means to build a just society and to care for the vulnerable. A point should be also made of giving some leadership or responsibility to these children in the school's justice-focused projects. Lastly, open discussion and debate about issues of justice will be fruitful and we encourage teachers to find effective ways to facilitate that kind of discussion. Issues of justice are so many and so deep they cannot be explored here, however all teachers are encouraged to share and explore issues, guides, or resources that they find. However, care should be taken to remain impartial even in contentious matters.

Lastly, promoting justice as something we practice on a personal level is vital to cultivating justice as a virtue, as something they habitually act on. Ways to do this include focussing the approach to behaviour on personal responsibility and on recognising that we cause real harm and injustice through poor behaviour. Also, explicitly promoting and rewarding just behaviour will serve to help all children to understand their personal approach to justice, rather than just those who struggle with behaviour the most.

Virtues in Year 6

Exams, a burgeoning social awareness, heightened expectations, and much more besides - this year is a complex and challenging one for many of our children. The goal of the virtues in this year is to bring to fruition the resilience which has been cultivated, and to continue deepening a sense of personal responsibility for what each of them is undertaking. Ultimately, this year should not only enable them to reach their utmost academic potential, but also to approach themselves and the challenges they face with a new level of maturity.

Fortitude:

a virtue by which we overcome difficulty to achieve a challenging good.

End-of-year exams loom large on the curriculum as well as on the mental horizon of our children. To overcome this significant challenge they need the virtue of fortitude. Different elements of fortitude include confidence, perseverance, and magnanimity, all of which have already been explored in prior years. Faced with the coming challenge, it is time for them to piece those dimensions together to produce the fruits of fortitude: a positive bias towards action which can overcome any challenge and which can endure any hardship.

Understanding what fortitude looks like for each character in the classroom is key to cultivating all fortitude as a whole. For example, a shy child may not demonstrate much confidence when answering questions in class, however they might show great confidence when faced with a challenging piece of work. Building upon the kind of confidence that this child possesses as a means to build confidence in other areas of their life will be a way forward.

Strategies for cultivating this virtue include honesty about difficulty level, asking the children what they are going to do about an academic challenge they are facing, picking up on subtle ways that different children demonstrate confidence, perseverance, and magnanimity. Having a relentless positivity and a can-do attitude as a teacher is vital in communicating those same attributes to our children.

Health:

a virtue by which we exercise prudence with regards to our bodily needs - a part of **Prudence**

The stresses and strains of exams, difficult learning, a growing social awareness, and the various anxieties that come from being a child in this difficult age, and in this cultural climate, must be taken seriously. In the same way that they have been encouraged to take responsibility for their choices in previous years, we now aim to help them to take deliberate care for their own physical and mental well-being.

Cognisant of the stresses through the year, as well as major events in class which shape their overall morale, we must give our children the tools to look after themselves. Much of your approach to this virtue comes from your own experience and instinct as a teacher and as a human being, as well as your personal knowledge of the children's welfare. By using skills of personal reflection, self-knowledge, meditation, and honesty, we can facilitate a growing emotional intelligence and equip them to address both positive and negative developments in their emotional lives.

This focus on health as a virtue should inform our approach to RSE. Gory details are one thing, and the questions which emerge should be answered as fruitfully as possible, but equipping them with an appreciation for their emotional health is a core component which children often overlook. Also, assisting girls to develop a positive approach to issues of feminine health which can become present even at this age is essential.

Studiosness:

a virtue by which we apply our minds – a part of **Temperance**

As our children approach the greatest academic challenge they have yet encountered they must develop the virtue of studiosness. Of course, this virtue includes skills which will equip them to study and revise for exams, much of which is fleshed out in your approach to the curriculum. The virtue, however, goes beyond study skills. The virtue of studiosness includes understanding what needs to be learned, as well as the process that it will take to learn it.

A studios student is more than a child who studies a lot, but is someone who knows what needs to be learned, the means by which they will learn it, and who takes personal responsibility for that process of learning.

Building up and drawing upon skills of self-knowledge and truth as explored in previous years will be helpful and effective. Anything which encourages children to plan their studies and revision themselves, especially for more advanced children, is strongly encouraged. Your experience as a teacher is vital to inform your approach to this virtue.

While approaches to learning will vary according to ability level, cultivating the attitude of learning and encouraging active engagement with the materials they are presented with is the main focus of studiosness and applies to every child. Indeed, even if a child's academic ability does not skyrocket, if they become an engaged, habitual learner, we have succeeded in our mission as teachers and cultivated the virtue of studiosness.

Virtues Across the School

Through the application of specific virtues to each class, rather than generic virtues being applied across all age groups, you know that each child is being guided in the virtuous life in a way which is properly catered to their stage of development. This class-by-class approach frees schools to conduct school-wide projects or activities which are more focused without fear of leaving important components of the Catholic ethos by the wayside.

We suggest using the framework of the virtues to inform the goal or target of specific projects and to use the names of virtues in assemblies and acts of worship to continually build upon what children experience in the classroom.

The main source of inspiration and guidance for the whole-school dimension to the Catholic ethos is found in the Pupil Profile. This excellent resource presents goals and outcomes based on the virtues and on the Catholic approach to education which apply best to school-wide projects and activities, including acts of worship and assemblies.

The Pupil Profile resources also provide guidance to both Headteachers and teachers in reflecting on the Catholic character of our schools. Please use the Profile to form the school-wide termly focus which will help bind the whole school, children and teachers, around a common purpose.

Leadership in the virtues

- Teaching & Witnessing

Implementing the virtues approach to the Catholic ethos is two-fold: teaching and witnessing. This section provides guidance on how these two dimensions work together and what they might look like in the classroom and in the school more broadly.

Teaching the Virtues

Explaining and exploring the virtues becomes increasingly important as children develop through Primary School. Handing on knowledge of the virtues is crucial if children are to take real ownership and responsibility over their approach to life's challenges and to grow in virtue as they become more mature. The knowledge of the virtues which we seek to hand on, just as with any subject, must be high-definition and clear enough for them to put the virtues into practice in their own way. There are three key ways to hand on knowledge of the virtues:

- consistent use of precise language
- naming the virtues
- picturing the virtues.

Consistently Using Precise Language

It is crucial to name and explain the virtues for each class and to take those virtues as the goal for the whole year. This will require an initial explanation and an unfolding exploration of those virtues throughout the year to help children build an ever-clearer understanding of the virtues. At its best, this exploration will include the naming of different virtues as they appear in the RE curriculum.

How we explain things to children varies wildly according to their age, maturity, and ability. Our approach to teaching the virtues must, of course, take these things into consideration. However, no matter how we explain the contents or the meaning of the different virtues, the names of the virtues must remain the same. Being consistent in our use of language when it comes to the virtues themselves, especially their names, limits the opportunities for confusion as the children develop through the years.

The explanations of the virtues as given above should form the foundation of your own understanding as a teacher, but, of course, how you approach handing on that understanding is up to your own discretion. For example, a more mature Year 5 class might appreciate discussing and debating issues of justice as a way to explore that virtue during the year, but perhaps a less mature Year 5 class might respond better to a focus on a different part at different stages of the year. We have confidence that, over time, teachers will develop various, highly effective approaches that give children profound insight into virtuous living.

Naming the Virtues

The importance of consistently using the right names for the virtues was stressed above. A key part of that consistency and a key part of developing a personal awareness of virtue in each child is naming the virtues when you see them. Praising children for virtuous behaviour and naming the virtue of their actions will help children to develop a personal awareness of what virtue looks like in their own lives, as well as help develop a clearer picture of virtuous living across the school. This will require of us, as teachers, some awareness of the virtues in other year groups so that we can build a positive vision for virtuous behaviour by building that vision year-on-year.

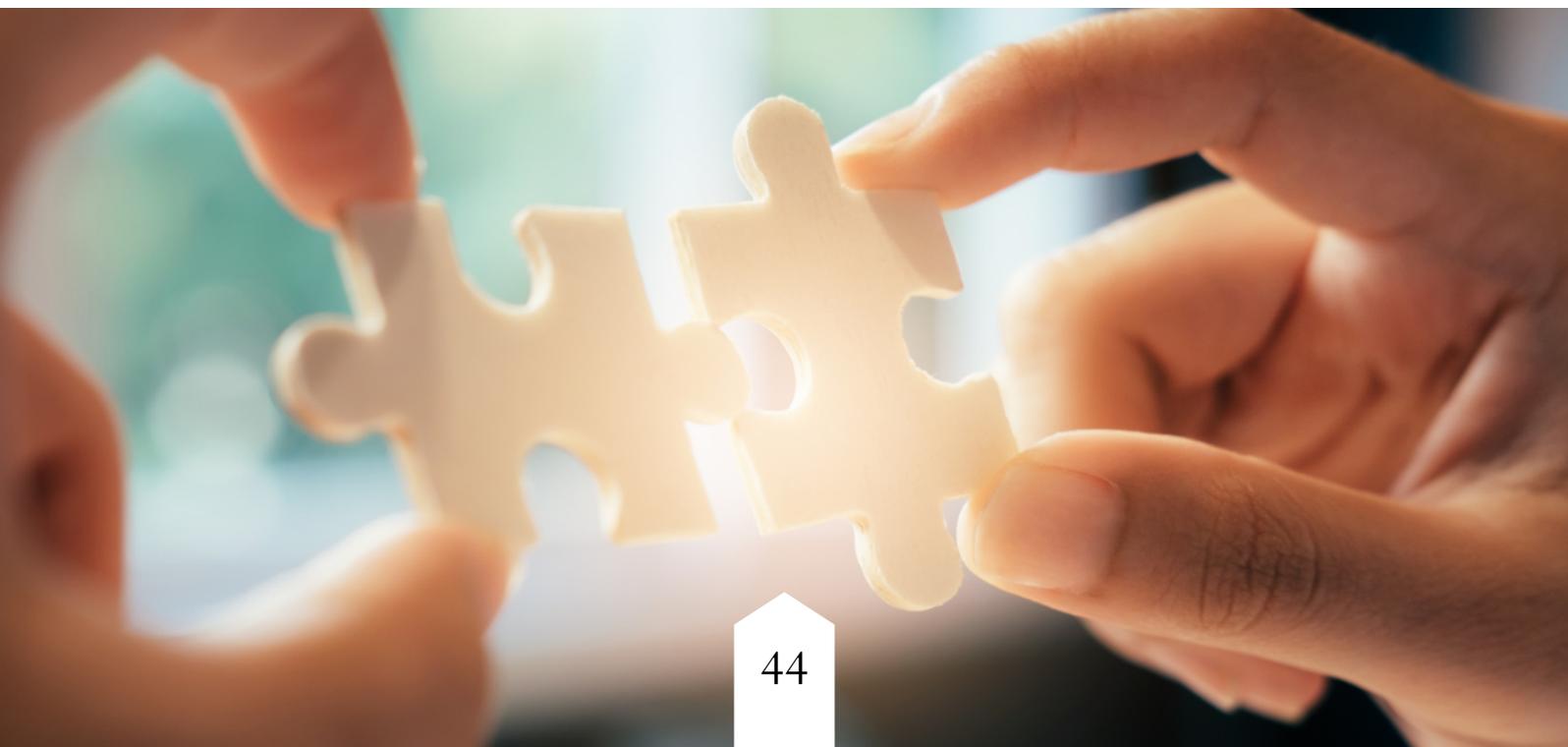
Using positive praise and rewarding virtuous behaviour is one side of the coin, the other side is the proper use of the behavioural system. Although behavioural systems vary from school to school across the Diocese, they are all founded on the principles of justice. How we respond to poor behaviour should be based on justice and grounded in the idea that we seek the best for each pupil. Using the language of virtue and calling children to live those virtues, especially when their emotions are getting the better of them, will ensure that even the behavioural system is seen as an expression of the Catholic ethos with the goal of virtuous living in mind.

Each school should develop or redevelop their behavioural system with the virtues as their goal. Collaboration among schools as to how that consistent language is incorporated into behaviour is strongly encouraged.

Picturing the Virtues

The most effective way to communicate the breadth and depth of the different virtues into a child's understanding is through their imaginations. Helping the children to envision what the practice of their year's virtues look like will be supremely beneficial. Making something complex understandable to children is part of the natural ingenuity of each teacher, and so each teacher is strongly encouraged to use their own gifts and talents to help children picture what their virtues look like.

As children progress through the years, it will become increasingly important to draw on the wider curriculum by naming virtues when they are seen. For example, you might draw upon the characters in books, people from history and historical events, the practice of virtue in other cultures, how Jesus and the disciples practiced the virtues, and really anything which includes human beings acting in a particular way. Drawing on these ready examples will help children to form connections about the virtues and about themselves.



Witnessing to the Virtues

Ultimately, the strength of Catholic education, the virtues, and the Catholic approach to character education lies in the witness and example of each teacher. The Church views each teacher as precious, because you do not only impart information but give witness to the children about how to live through the witness of your own life.

The virtues that have been described in this handbook and in the overview are a school for each of us as to how to live a fruitful and happy life. As such, these virtues apply as much to you as a person, not just a teacher, as it does to the children. We hope you will see the virtuous life as something worthy to pursue yourself, and that you will see the benefit these virtues have in your own life.

We also hope that through the incorporation of virtues into your own life, the virtues will shine out in you, not just in your approach to teaching, but in your very being. This powerful witness is the most effective way of communicating the virtues to our children, and we strongly encourage schools and individual teachers to explore these virtues on a personal level and to commit some time to having workshops to facilitate that exploration.

Glossary

Catechism: A compendium of the Church's teaching. It comes in different forms: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Compendium to the Catechism, Youcat (Youth Catechism), Youcat for Kids.

Good: anything which completes or fulfils or moves us towards our purpose. All things (objects and people) are good in themselves, but how we use things might be good or bad. Actions can be either good or bad depending on how well they are in accord with our humanity. Virtue tends us to act well and in accord with our humanity, vice tends us to act poorly and obscures our humanity.

Habit: a firm disposition acquired by repetitive action.

Intellect: the main power of the soul which apprehends the information as true or false, and as good or bad.

Order: all parts of our life are connected and are 'ordered towards' one another, meaning those connections flow into one another. For example, our minds are ordered towards learning the truth. This concept is key in understanding how all good things are ordered towards God who is the Highest Good, the Good towards which all others are ordered.

Passions: our emotions, and powers of the soul as we react to things which are good, which are bad, and which are difficult. Love - Hatred, Desire - Aversion, Delight - Sadness; Hope - Despair, Courage - Fear, Anger. What we love and how we love determines everything else in our emotional life.

Perfect (verb): synonymous with completion or fulfilment. The virtues seek to fulfil our humanity by fulfilling it, by bringing it to perfection. Not to be confused with the impossible task of doing everything perfectly.

Theological: theological as opposed to human, meaning it comes from God or is about God, rather than comes from us or is about us.

Virtue: good habit of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us.

Will: the main power of the soul which moves us to follow what is good and which moves our whole being towards whatever we apprehend as good.