Character and Resilience Education: A Policy Review

Gemma Heathcote

Session Aims

- Current concerns from government around children's wellbeing

- Understand the rise of 'character education' in policy

- Look at how schools can adopt whole school approaches to character and resilience education

Concerns:

- Pupil and student wellbeing
- Widening of the attainment gap between children with FSM and wealthier class mates
- Regional inequality
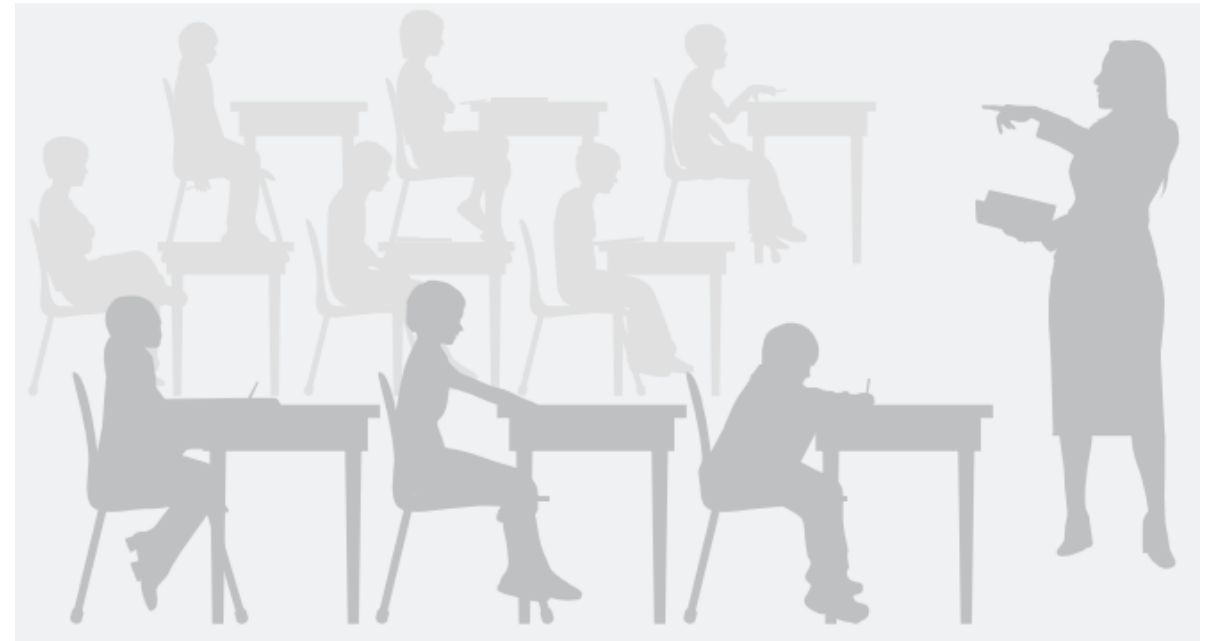- Curriculum narrowing
- Teachers

Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment

A briefing for head teachers, governors and staff in education settings

"promoting physical and mental health in schools creates a virtuous circle reinforcing children's attainment and achievement that in turn improves their wellbeing, enabling children to thrive and achieve their full potential" (P.5)

Risk and protective factors for CYP's mental health

RISK FACTORS

✗ Genetic influences ✗ Low IQ and learning disabilities ✗ Specific development delay ✗ Communication difficulties ✗ Difficult temperament ✗ Physical illness ✗ Academic failure ✗ Low self-esteem	✗ Family disharmony, or break up ✗ Inconsistent discipline style ✗ Parent/s with mental illness or substance abuse ✗ Physical, sexual, neglect or emotional abuse ✗ Parental criminality or alcoholism ✗ Death and loss	✗ Bullying ✗ Discrimination ✗ Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships ✗ Deviant peer influences ✗ Peer pressure ✗ Poor pupil to teacher relationships	✗ Socio-economic disadvantage ✗ Homelessness ✗ Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events ✗ Discrimination ✗ Other significant life events ✗ Lack of access to support services

Child	Family	School	Community

|			
✔ Secure attachment experience ✔ Good communication skills ✔ Having a belief in control ✔ A positive attitude ✔ Experiences of success and achievement ✔ Capacity to reflect	✔ Family harmony and stability ✔ Supportive parenting ✔ Strong family values ✔ Affection ✔ Clear, consistent discipline ✔ Support for education	✔ Positive school climate that enhances belonging and connectedness ✔ Clear policies on behaviour and bullying ✔ 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems ✔ A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health	✔ Wider supportive network ✔ Good housing ✔ High standard of living ✔ Opportunities for valued social roles ✔ Range of sport/leisure activities

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

(taken from PHE, 2016, p.5)

Character Education
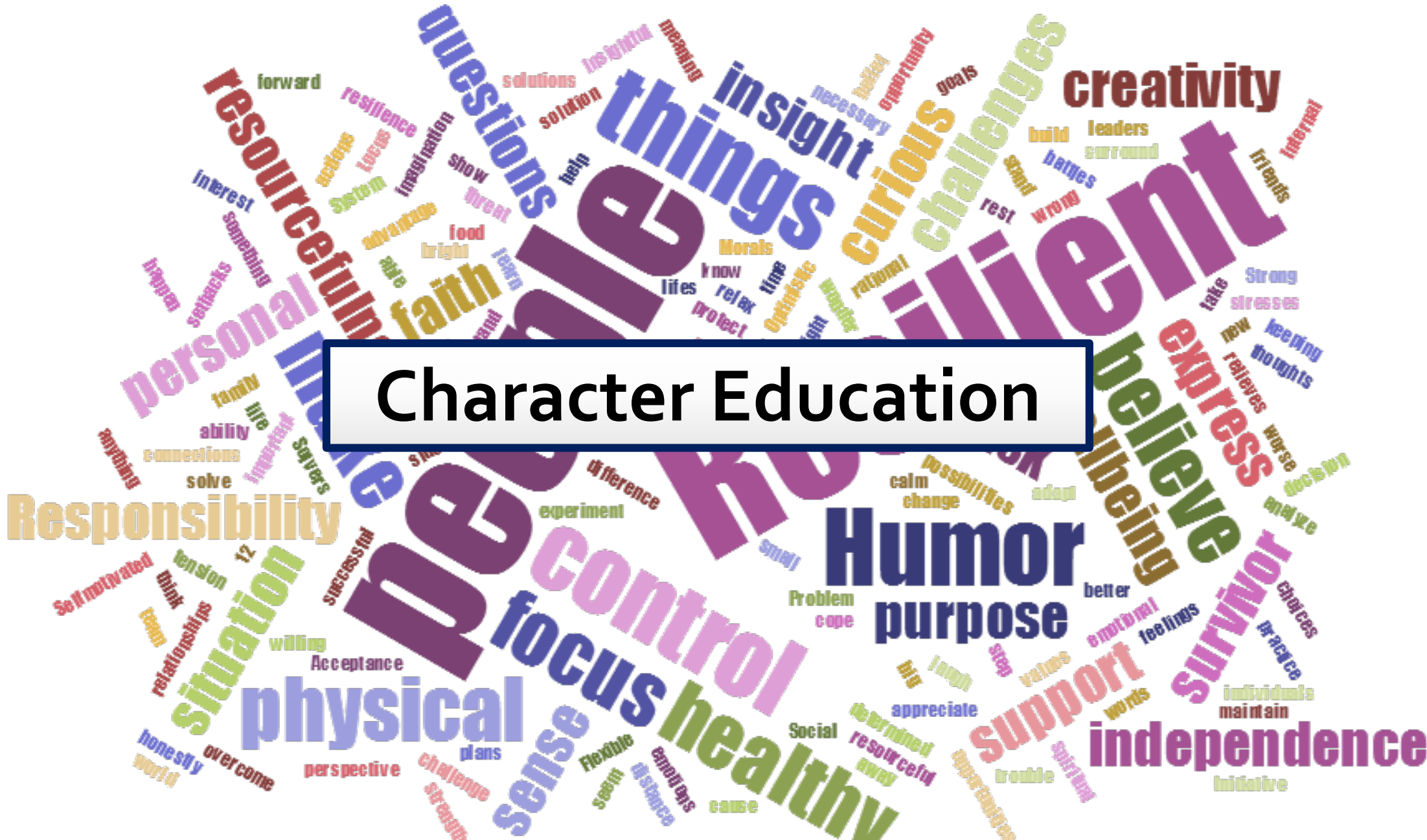
Character and Resilience Manifesto

The all-party parliamentary group on Social Mobility

With CENTREFORUM and CHARACTER COUNTS

(2014)

- **Character and Resilience** – "...these are the attributes that enable individuals to make the most of opportunities that present themselves , to stick with things when the going gets tough, to bounce back from adversity and to forge and maintain meaningful relationships" (p.11).

- **Links between character and resilience and social mobility** – "This evidence suggests that concerted endeavours to enhance Character and Resilience could provide particularly fruitful ground for policy makers grappling with the stubborn blight of social immobility in Britain" (p.15).

- **Learning character and resilience** - "...[evidence] indicates that – just as with cognitive skills - Character and Resilience can be positively developed throughout the life course" (p.14-15).

Policy recommendations for:
- **Early Years**
- **Schools**
- **Transition to adulthood and employment**

Department for Education

Mental health and behaviour in schools

November 2018

- Sets out schools' roles and responsibilities in relation to mental health and behaviour, within their existing duties
- Outlines how schools can identify whether a child or young person's behaviour –disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise – may be related to a mental health problem, and how to support them in these circumstances
- Provides advice and guidance on working with other professionals and external agencies where appropriate; and
- Provides links to additional support available to schools, including frameworks, audit tools, evidence and resources

"The reason character and resilience matter so much to me is that they are key to social mobility. Social mobility starts with giving young people the unstoppable confidence that they can achieve amazing things, teaching them to cope with the challenges life brings and recognise their achievements – because they each have their own, unique potential to fulfil" (Hinds, 2019, p.1).

Five Foundations for Building Character as defined by Damian Hinds, 2019…

- Sport
- Creativity
- Performing
- Volunteering and Membership
- World of Work

Personal development

- the curriculum extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational. It provides for learners' broader development, enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents

- the curriculum and the provider's wider work support learners to develop their character – including their resilience, confidence and independence – and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy

- at each stage of education, the provider prepares learners for future success in their next steps

- the provider prepares learners for life in modern Britain by:

  - equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society

  - developing their understanding of fundamental British values

  - developing their understanding and appreciation of diversity

  - celebrating what we have in common and promoting respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law.

Behaviour and attitudes

- the provider has high expectations for learners' behaviour and conduct and applies these expectations consistently and fairly. This is reflected in learners' behaviour and conduct

- learners' attitudes to their education or training are positive. They are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively and do so, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements

- learners have high attendance and are punctual

- relationships among learners and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture. Leaders, teachers and learners create an environment where bullying, peer-on-peer abuse or discrimination are not tolerated. If they do occur, staff deal with issues quickly and effectively, and do not allow them to spread.

Concerns from the academic community:

- Idea of Character and Resilience fits in nicely with current conservative politics, which have been widely critiqued by some of the academic community (Traynor, 2018; Joseph, 2013).

- Portrays Character and Resilience as attributes which are developed within the individual – government has a tendency to ignore the wider societal problems and material deprivation which can impact individuals, families and communities (Spohrer and Bailey, 2018; Traynor, 2018; Bottrell, 2013).

- Unfairly situates the responsibility for social mobility with the poorest individuals, families and communities (Spohrer and Bailey, 2018).

What happens if we promote character and resilience without removing the barriers and considering the wider context?

Equality   Equity   Justice

A whole school approach

Eight Principles
The following diagram present eight principles to promote emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

University of Brighton
Centre of Resilience for Social Justice

JOIN THE HEADSTART RESILIENCE REVOLUTION

boing boing

RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

| Basics | Belonging | Learning | Coping | Core self |

Noble truths

Accepting   Conserving   Commitment   Enlisting

https://www.boingboing.org.uk/

University of Brighton
Centre of Resilience for Social Justice

Whole school approach examples…

Things schools have done to adopt a whole school approach:

- Whole school communication
- Communication with parents and carers
- Replacing behaviour policy with a well-being policy
- Play provision
- Different approach to leadership
- Nurture groups/ nurture zones.

Questions

References:

Bottrell, D., (2013). Responsibilised Resilience? Reworking Neoliberal Social Policy Texts. *Media-Culture Journal*, 16 (5), 1-4. Available via: http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/708/0 [Accessed: 21/06/19].

Bull, A. and Allen, K., (2018). Introduction: Sociological Interrogations of the Turn to Character. *Sociological Interrogations of the Turn to Character [online]*, 23 (2), 392-398. Available at: Sociological Research Online [Accessed: 01/07/19].

Burman, E., (2018). (Re)sourcing the Character and Resilience Manifesto: Suppressions and Slippages of (Re)presentation and Selective Affectivities. *Sociological Interrogations of the Turn to Character [online]*, 23 (2), 416-437. Available at: Sociological Research Online [Accessed: 01/07/19].

Burns, J. and Campbell, A., (2017). Social mobility: The worst places to grow up poor. BBC News Family and Education [online], 28th November 2019. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-42112436

Great Britain. Department for Education (DfE), (2017). *Unlocking Talent and Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education*. London: DfE. (Cm. 9541).

Great Britain. DfE, (2017). *Developing character skills in schools Summary Report August 2017*. London: DfE.

Great Britain. DfE, (2015). *Strategy Overview 2015-2020*. London: DfE.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Carl Baker, (2018). Briefing Paper Mental health statistics for England: prevalence, services and funding. London: House of Commons Library. (no. 6988).

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Elizabeth Parkin, (2018). *Mental Health Policy in England [online]*. London: House of Commons Library. (CBP 07547).

Great Britain. Parliament. The all party group on Social Mobility, (2014). *Character and Resilience Manifesto [online]*. London: The all part group on Social Mobility. Available at: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2014-appg-social-mobility.pdf [Accessed: 01/07/19].

Great Britain. Public Heath England (PHE), (2016). *The mental health of children and young people in England [online]*. London: PHE. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575632/Mental_health_of_children_in_England.pdf [Accessed: 01/07/19].

Great Britain. PHE, (2015). *Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school approach*. London: PHE.

Great Britain. PHE, (2014). *The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment: A briefing for head teachers, governors and staff in education settings*. London: PHE.

Great Britain. PHE, (2014). *Local action on health inequalities: Building children and young people's resilience in schools*. London: PHE.

Great Britain. Social Mobility Commission (SMC), (2017). *Helping Parents to Parent 20 February 2017*. London: SMC.

Great Britain. SMC, (2017). *Time for Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017*. London: SMC

Harrison, T., Morris, I. and Ryan, J., (2016). *Teaching character in the primary classroom*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE.

Hart, A., Gagnon, E., Eryigit-Madzwamuse, S., Cameron, J., Aranda, K., Rathbone, A. and Heaver, B., (2016). Uniting Resilience Research and Practice With an Inequalities Approach. SAGE Open, 6 (1), 1-13. Available via: SAGE online [Accessed: 21/06/19].

References continued:

Joseph, J., (2013). Resilience as embedded neo-liberalism: a governmentality approach. *Resilience*, 1 (1), 38-52. Available via: Taylor and Francis online [Accessed: 21/06/19].

Maitland, J., (2019). *Whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing*. [online webinar from University of Brighton]. 08/07/19.

Ofsted, (2019). *The education inspection framework [online]*. Manchester: Ofsted. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework [Accessed: 01/07/19].

Reay, D., (2017). *Miseducation: Inequality, education and the working class. Bristol and Chicago*: Policy Press.

Spohrer, K., and Bailey, P., (2018). Character and resilience in English education policy: social mobility, self-governance and biopolitics. *Critical Studies in Education [online]*, 1 (1), p 1-16. Available at: Taylor and Francis Online [Accessed: 01/07/2019].

Traynor, M., (2018). Guest editorial: What's wrong with resilience? *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 23 (1), 5-8. Available via: SAGE online [Accessed: 21/06/19].