

## What is a 'virtue'

Virtue is not a word that we tend to use every day, we do hear parents, teachers and children talk about being loving, respectful, honest, thankful, and so on. A virtue is a quality of good character, a person's character is shaped by living out these virtues: one honest act does not make us honest, but a determination to be honest every day and making honest acts throughout our life makes us an honest person: we are what we repeatedly do!

The Virtues that we share as part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust are; respect, responsibility, resilience, self belief, compassion, confidence, justice and honesty. We teach these virtues at St Teresa's so that they become a habit, in the same way that we teach our school rules, they become a second nature to our children. These virtues are common across all of the schools in our Trust and simply become 'the way we behave'. By being very clear to our children about the reasons that we act out these virtues we hope to build a community based on our common virtues that are all firmly grounded in our Catholic faith. Virtues build ethos, our ethos is what makes our school unique to us.

Why virtue not value? The word value is used much more frequently in the world of education: Gospel values, British values, family values, my values, your values etc. However, values are subjective - they cannot be applied to everyone - and they need to be personally lived out. To the extent that some values are lived out they become virtues. Virtues are more holistic than values. Virtues constitute the person in two ways: they unite 'who I am' (identity) with 'how I am' (how I try to live).

Virtue Literacy is made up of three parts:

Virtue Perception, this means that we notice when a situation requires us to practise one of our virtues.

Virtue Knowledge and Understanding, meaning that we begin to understand the virtue by becoming familiar with it and using the language of a virtue frequently.

Virtue Reasoning is perhaps the most complex, this requires us to make a personal decision as to how we respond to different situations and to identify which virtue would be the most suitable to use in our response. We also need to take time to reflect afterwards on the suitability of the virtue chosen.

It is the role of St Teresa's school family to ensure that we give children opportunities to practise our virtues because virtues can only exist if they are lived out. Virtues make a person both who they are and how they are. We are tasked by our very faith to educate the whole child. As a Catholic Trust we are called to teach our children to serve the world, there is no better way to do this than ensuring the children go forward from St Teresa's with their characters being developed with our Trust virtues at the very heart. We want our children to be able to flourish, to flourish as a human is the translation of the Greek word, Eudaimonia, which means that the goal of human life is to flourish. By teaching our children virtues we are giving them the skills to reach for the stars and live their own lives to the full.

