

The million dollar question: how do we instil good character?

Indisputable is the fact that to produce young adults ready to handle the demands of a global workplace schools need to focus on developing good character. Earlier this week, government grants for promoting character development were again reported, bringing in top rugby coaches and ex-soldiers to teach students grit and resilience. A school in Warrington has won a top award for embedding character at every level and introducing a programme of fencing for all. And a Harvard Study reveals that students who exhibit grit are more likely to cultivate healthy emotional regulation skills.

Closer to home, Year 7 are currently overcoming mental and physical barriers at Kingwood Residential Activity Centre in Kent, and the Twitter feed is full of pictures of students demonstrating courage and motivation in a range of terrifying and exhausting activities. In just a few weeks, a large group of Year 8 students is completing a commemorative trip to the Battlefields, where they will remember the courage of those who fought to defend our liberties. This week, Year 10 are showing innovation in their Enterprise Days preparing them for an exciting future, whilst Year 9 are at Duxford Air Museum witnessing some of the most inspirational air and sea crafts the human character has given rise to. Of course, we don't forget our valiant exam students who are daily demonstrating all of these characteristics in the Examination Hall.

But character education runs deeper than this. At AGS we are aware that character is also something that is caught not taught. It is embedded in the ethos that we all share: respect and aspire. It is staff and students standing up to be counted, embracing failure and taking small steps towards success. It should be embedded in every task the students complete, in the words of every teacher in every class.

It is definitely embedded in the best comment made to me this week by a parent of a former student: "I don't know how you all do it at AGS, but you make it cool to do well."

Please do get in touch with me with your ideas about building character. Share your stories of the moments that changed the way you or your sons understood your potential, or the ways you would like to see character being encouraged. And if you have an answer to the million dollar question at the start, email me (vbeckley@ags.bucks.sch.uk) or Gurdeep Singh (gsingh@ags.bucks.sch.uk).

Vanessa Beckley, Lead Practitioner