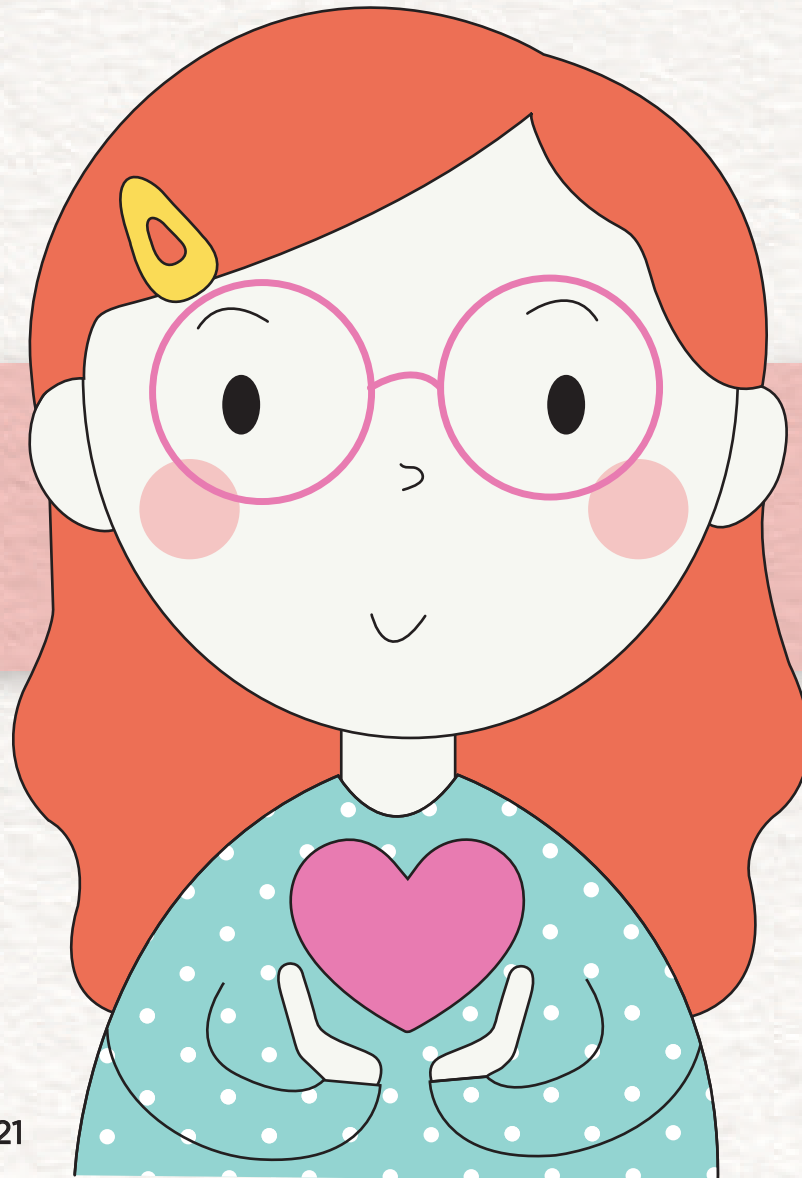
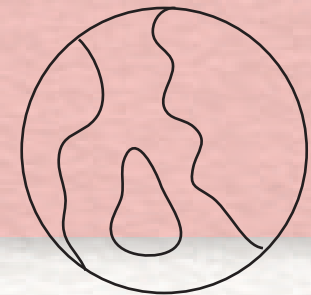
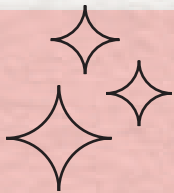


CYBER CHARACTER



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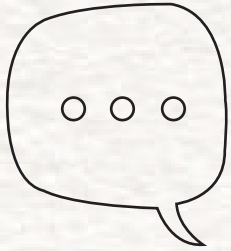
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Cyber Character

Character' means doing the right thing when no one is looking. J.C Watts

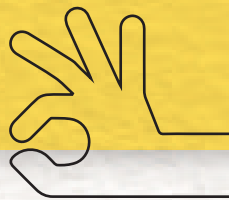


A series of workshops to promote the character values required to foster intrinsic self-control when offered the anonymity of the World Wide Web.



Putting to test:

Resilience – Empathy – **Self-awareness** –
Positivity – **Excellence** – Communication –
Teamwork



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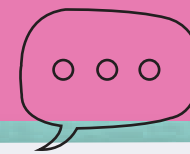
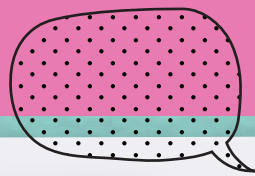
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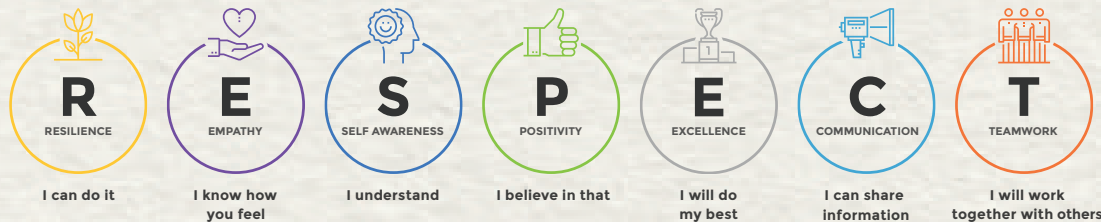
Introduction to Wise Owl Trust

Wise Owl is a Trust that is dedicated to the teaching of positive character traits to support our pupils for life beyond the school gates. The demonstrable impact of this approach within our schools has meant that we want to share our programmes beyond Wise Owl.

As technology now plays such a huge part in the lives of our children, it is important that we provide them with the necessary tools to independently navigate the world of cyber successfully. This includes teaching them what to do when things go wrong, and when no one is looking.

We recognise that the freedoms offered by the internet and technology have made the need for intrinsic motivation to 'do the right thing' even more important. The fast-paced developments of technology, ultimately means that we need to prepare our children for a future world that is unknown.

Each workshop can be taught as a stand-alone lesson, extended into a project or block of lessons, and focuses on one of the following Character traits:



Time at the end of each lesson should be given to allow the children an opportunity to self-reflect and make judgments about their own personal strengths and growth points. There are times when it is only ourselves that can self-regulate our own actions!



Our workshop ground rules:

- **RESPECT** the viewpoints of others
- **RESPECT** confidentiality
- **RESPECT** yourself



Statutory guidance:

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (Published 2019)

National Curriculum for Computing (Published 2013)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020)

Our Values

Wise Owl Trust

Cyber Character

Resilience



Self-control

The ability to control oneself for a positive outcome, in particular one's emotions and desires, especially in difficult situations.

Empathy

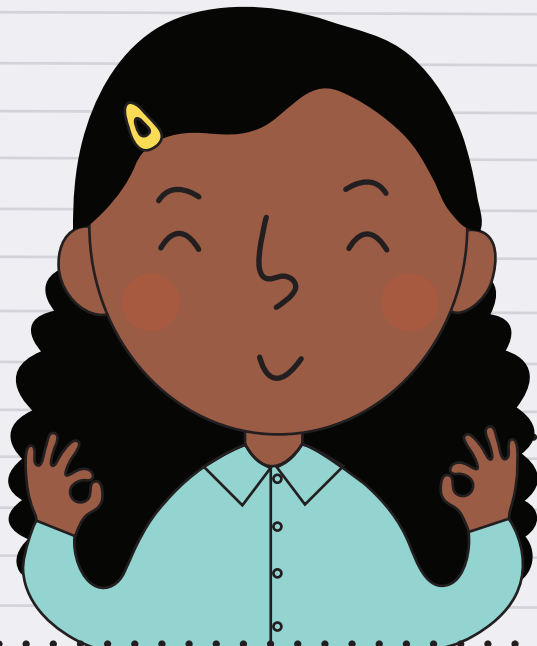
Compassion

To have compassion means to empathise with someone who is suffering and to feel compelled to help and reduce the suffering.

Self-Awareness

Honesty

To speak and act truthfully in a range of social situations.



Self-Regulation

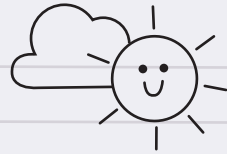


Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning. It is how we deal with stressors and as such, lays the foundation for all other activity.

Willpower

The ability to control your own actions: strong determination that allows you to do something difficult for a positive outcome.

Positivity



Positive Attitude

This is a state of mind that envisions and expects favourable results and outcomes in a range of situations. A person with a positive outlook is always able to see the good in people and their actions.

Confidence

This is the feeling or belief that one can have faith in or rely on themselves, someone or something.

Excellence



Virtuous

Virtuous behaviour shows high moral standards and is built on a belief system based on knowledge.

Knowledgeable

To be intelligent and well informed and using this to inform decisions and actions.

Communication

Reflective

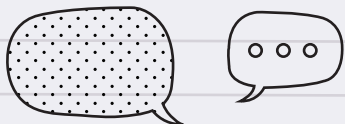
Reflective is an adjective that can describe a person who thinks things through



Teamwork

Responsible

To be answerable, or accountable, for our own actions.



Decision making

The action or process of making important decisions and these may affect others.

Preface for teachers



Character Education in a world of unknowns

When offered the anonymity and freedoms of the World Wide Web, do our children have the necessary character virtues to make wise choices in such an increasingly complex context; a fast-paced world, who's future is unknown to us, and with little policing of the violation of already limited regulations. Prior to the global pandemic, the world wide web was at risk of controlling many of our lives; with the ability to turn lights off, close curtains, switch on the washing machine and attend meetings, all from our hand-held device. But what does that mean for our children? Their physical whereabouts may now be known to us, but where are they in the world of cyberspace that affords our children the ability to be 'connected' worldwide? And more importantly, how are they conducting themselves and keeping themselves safe?

During lockdown, children have been encouraged **from a far younger age to access the internet and digital devices in order to complete their online learning**. In turn, this has resulted in the pandemic serving as an accelerant to the issues our children would undoubtedly have faced in the future, now challenging them from a far younger age. Post lockdown issues previously seen within the teenage year groups have been brought into the primary classrooms. We may well have considered the Gen Z generation to be already attuned to the digital world, almost from birth, due to their vast experience and ability to navigate a device with speed and precision from such a young age.

Today our children do not remember a time before the internet and have been brought up with digital technology as the norm within their daily life. As long ago as 2016, a study by price comparison website uSwitch.com reported the age of children surfing the internet unsupervised as falling fast, with the average age a child starting to use the internet as young as four and a half¹. It is concerning the increased number of children that this will apply to today.

One thing we can be sure of, is that the influence of the internet has and will continue to dominate our worlds, becoming more readily available in the hands of so many, at all times; day and night. Thus, making it a world whose associated dangers are also affecting every corner of the nation and in the vast majority of households. A complex world that could become inescapable for our children if not taught how to manage both themselves and the technology to good effect.

The need for cyber character



From 'childhood we adopt standards of right and wrong that serve as guides and deterrents for our conduct'². But are these at play when exploring the, at times, seemingly boundary free world of cyber? Do our children have the ability to activate their own internal self-regulation mechanisms in order to make the right choices and act with ethical intentions? Furthermore, how can we foster a sense of satisfaction and self-worth, encouraging behaviour that refrains from such violation of internal standards?

All too often we come across the actions of an individual online that we would not recognise as having the same internal standards and character traits as the physical person stood before us. Users now have the ability to create multiple accounts, curating different material on their profiles to develop new personae. These new digital identities can align with, be a complement to, or conflict with users' real personalities³. **Today we witness more harmful behaviour online, with individuals seemingly able to live at peace with themselves.** If Bandura's explanation of an individual's self-control is diminished by dehumanising those they mistreat, then we must pose the question whether the internet offers this dehumanisation in abundance. John Suler (2016)⁴, Professor of Psychology describes the internet as offering the chance to be anonymous and therefore forgo accountability, naming this as 'Online Disinhibition Effect', whereby users don't own their behaviours as they don't have an integrated online and offline identity.



However, one thing is certain, technology is here to stay and so it is imperative that we teach our children how to use it wisely.

This is described by Dr Tom Harrison as 'cyber-wisdom: doing the right thing for the right reasons when online.'⁵ A blend of understanding the dangers whilst exploring the Internet will allow our children to take control of their own online behaviours and build their own internal standards. It is these ethics that need to be explored by our pupils in order to make "wise moral decisions; decisions that minimise online risks and maximise online opportunities"⁵. And if ethics is a character quality that can be taught, as suggested by the Centre for Curriculum Redesign then we must not only teach the knowledge but allow the exploration to action those ethics.

As philosophers since Aristotle have observed, the bedrock of character is self-discipline; the virtuous life, based on self-control. It is this keystone of character that we must support our children to develop, enabling them to motivate and guide oneself in life and online. They must be able to manage their own emotions in order to avoid acting in haste, whilst showing tolerance and understanding of another person's perspective in order to avoid online disputes. Thomas Lickona (2004) writes, 'we need to be in control of ourselves - our appetites, our passions - to do right by others.'⁶

Goleman describes empathy as leading to "caring, altruism and compassion. Seeing things from a different perspective breaks down stereotypes, and so breeds tolerance and acceptance of differences. These capacities are ever more called in in our increasingly pluralistic society."⁷ It is this self-awareness coupled with empathy of others and honesty that are the virtues upon which our workshops focus. Furthermore, our **learning goes beyond simple character education**, to share the dangers and sophistication of the world wide web, putting into action the thoughts of philosopher John Dewey who saw that a **moral education is most 'potent when lessons are taught to children in the course of real events'**⁸, not just as abstract lessons.



moral education is most 'potent when lessons are taught to children in the course of real events', not just as abstract lessons.



Are we battling an unbeatable force?

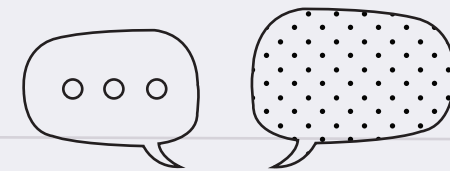
Working as an unbeatable force is that of ingenious algorithms that infiltrate our use of the world wide web, with the risk of posing as affirmation to previous self-doubt in the minds of our children by displaying adverts and information in relation to earlier searches. Such unrelenting influence has been described as changing us from 'users' of the internet to a 'product;' whereby our mind is manipulated with information determined by artificial intelligence. Furthermore, this has been described as 'changing' the behaviours of the users. Harris, a former Google insider, has described such technology as 'rewiring of the human brain, leading to behaviour that's tearing apart our social fabric'. He goes on to say that the 'very unfortunate side-effect: "attention capitalism" is making us nastier, stupider and much less likely to find common ground with our fellow humans.'



Coupling these dangers with the addictive nature of social media and the need **for our children to have a strong sense of positive self-regard in order to avoid making wrong or harmful decisions** is ever more crucial. Successful social interactions create the release of dopamine, a chemical produced in the brain, which is released when your brain is expecting a reward, associated with a feel good factor. With over 90% of young people using social media both day and night (Duggan and Smith, 2014)⁹ our young people are now getting their dopamine fixes through positive attention on social media rather than face to face interactions. Mere anticipation of a reward (a "like") may be enough to raise dopamine levels in the brain, encouraging our youngsters to 'chase the likes'. We know that our world of communication was already dominated by instant messaging, social media platforms and video chatting. And whilst we are unaware of any research to affirm the increase during the pandemic, no official numbers are required in order to recognise the vast increase in use amongst society. The Good Childhood Report, 2020, suggest that with the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic, the ability to stay connected and maintain friendships through digital technology has been viewed as a positive by young people. Kardefelt-Winther (2017)¹⁰ gives evidence to suggest that social relationships of children can be stimulated by digital technology and that online communication has a positive relationship between friendship quality. On the other hand, Chamath Palihapitiya, former Vice President of User Growth at Facebook, talks about "short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works." It is this simultaneous benefit and harming of mental health through the development of social media habits that is so difficult to balance. But it is this balance that we as adults struggle to find, so how can our children?



Teaching our children to make the right choices



A world that is growing constantly in size, strength and complexity is a world that should not be ignored or feared. A combination of understanding the dangers of the cyber world is required whilst supporting our children to develop the character virtues to enable the self-sanctions needed to surf the web safely and with moral/ethical intention.

By explicitly teaching Character and offering the children the safety of a classroom in which to explore their ability to self-regulate, we aim to provide the necessary insights for children to activate their own mechanism of self-control. Sherman (1989)¹¹ identifies four areas of practical wisdom which we have used to give a framework to our children to support them when making decisions online:

Sherman (1989)

Perception, the ability to pick out the salient moral features of a situation

Deliberation, deliberation that precedes choice making

Collaborative thinking, hands- on collaboration, take the perspective of another, collaboration for mutual benefit, preservation of our friendships etc.

Habituation; rewards and sanctions, developed as a child through good modelling

Wise Owl Trust



STOP regroup yourself in the moment, & activate own mechanism of self-control



THINK about the impact on yourself and others



ACTION take considered action



REFLECT assess action taken & evaluate against internal standards



Respect - always show respect to both yourself and others


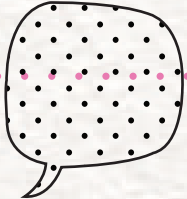


WISE OWL TRUST:

In a study about the amount of screen time children have in a week across 30 countries, British children are ranked the second highest.

The estimated weekly hours spent gaming increase with age, ranging from 6 hours 12 minutes for 3-4s who play games to 13 hours 48 minutes for 12-15s. Children's brains are more malleable than those of adults in response to experience.

Higher levels of screen use in children and adolescents is associated with reduced physical activity, increased risk of depression, and lower wellbeing.

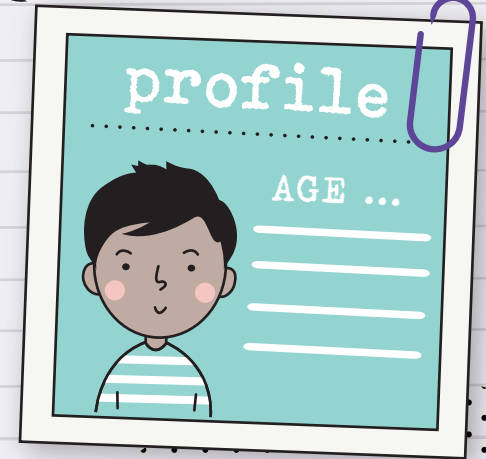
Children who spent more than four hours chatting online had significantly lower mean scores for happiness with friends compared to children who spent less than one hour online.

	Data taken from The Ofcom Media Use Report (2019)	Wise Owl Trust
The percentage of children with access to the internet and their average weekly use	Age 3-4: 52% 9hrs per week Age 5-7: 82% 9.5hrs per week Age 8-11: 93% 13.5hrs per week Age 12-15: 99% 20.5hrs per week	Year 6: 97% 21hrs+ per week 
The percentage of children with their own hand held device (iPad/tablet)	Age 3-4: 19% Age 5-7: 42% Age 8-11: 47% Age 12-15: 50%	Year 6: 75% 
The percentage of children with their own mobile phone	Age 3-4: 1% Age 5-7: 5% Age 8-11: 47% Age 12-15: 83%	Year 6: 89% 
The percentage of children accessing social media	Age 8-11: 18% Age 12-15: 69%	Year 6: 83% 

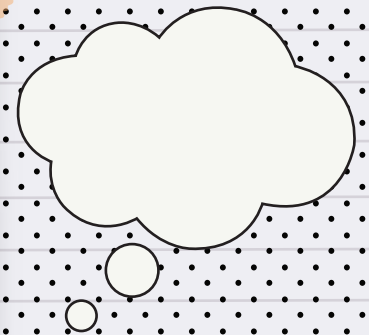
The figures across Wise Owl Trust are higher than the Ofcom report in all areas. There are several potential reasons as to why this is the case;

- the contexts of our schools,
- the natural progression of society since the report was published

- the exacerbated reliance on technology for both entertainment and social interactions brought about by the Covid-19 lockdowns.



Regardless of these potential reasons, what became transparent to the staff team across the trust was the necessity to enhance our cyber teaching further. Despite social media companies placing age restrictions on their platforms, children are not adhering to them. They are still accessing them and so need to be educated about how to use the different platforms safely and how to become a responsible digital citizen and develop their cyber character all the while reminding them of the relevant age restrictions.



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