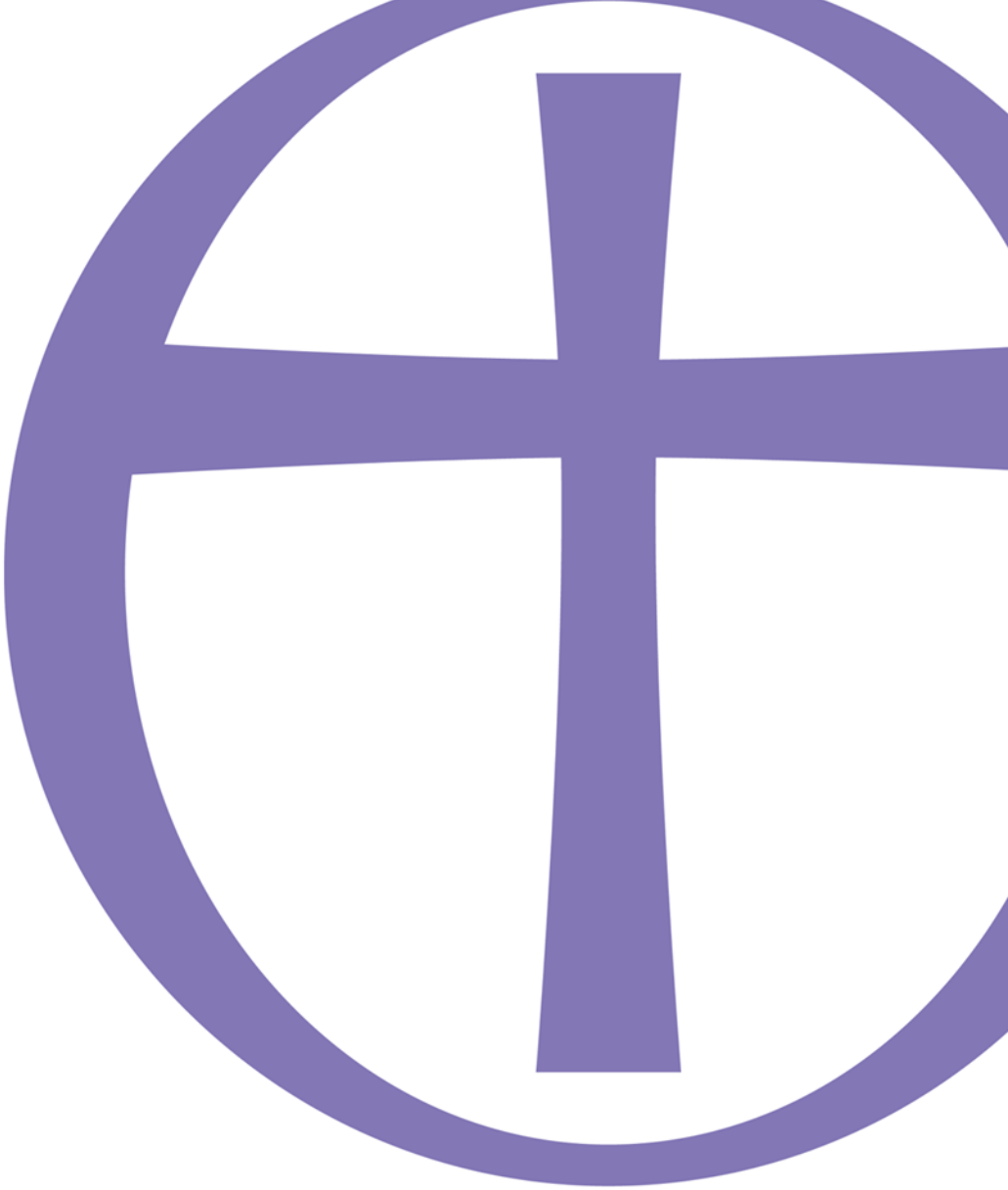

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

# What if Learning Character Development Project

## Final Report (Initial Phase)

April 2016

Funded by

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# 1. Introduction

We are grateful to the Department for Education for funding the initial phase of this project through the Character Education Grant, and to the Jerusalem Trust for enabling an extension of the project based on the initial positive outcomes.

This report summarises the outcomes of the initial phase, which occurred between September 2015 and January 2016. A further report will be completed in September 2016, once data has been collected from schools extending the intervention to July 2016. The September report will include a number of case studies, and be presented in a format designed to be helpful for schools.

This report consists of three elements. The project outline offers an overview of the intervention and how it was implemented. Sections 3 to 6 include the Principal Investigators' remarks (Professor Trevor Cooling), and the findings and recommendations of the researcher who designed the questionnaires and worked on data analysis (Dr Sabina Hulbert), and the researchers who undertook school visits and have worked on deriving qualitative case study data from the visits as well as school portfolios (Miss Caroline Thomas and Dr Peter Gregory). Finally, we include a summary of the evaluation report.

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# 2. Project Outline

The *What If Learning* Character Development Project, funded by the Department of Education, aimed to enable participating schools to use the pedagogical approach known as 'What If Learning' (www.whatiflearning.co.uk) with the intention of promoting Christian character development through teaching and learning across the curriculum.

The project revolved around the introduction of a pedagogical intervention by classroom teachers, the impact of which was assessed by a research team from Canterbury Christ Church University. The evaluation of this project conducted by the team from the University of St. Mark and St. John and concluded in the Evaluation report, provided a judgment of process and progress of the project, as well as indicating areas for improvement in future dissemination.

There were six partners involved in the project:

- The Department for Education who funded the project.
- The Church of England Education Office who led the project and were accountable to the DfE for its conduct.
- The four dioceses of Chester, Derby, Exeter and Peterborough, represented in each case by an adviser.
- The twenty participating schools, five from each diocese.
- Canterbury Christ Church University whose researchers judged the impact of the work in the schools.
- The University of St Mark and St John who wrote the evaluation report for the project.

During the period of the intervention, Diocesan advisers in each of the Dioceses have led training sessions at the beginning and events to introduce the schools to the "What if Learning" pedagogy, especially those which were previously unfamiliar with it, and also offered continuous support in the form of visits. The Education office has also led a 24-hour training event at the start of the intervention with the four advisers, the principal investigator and the implementation consultant. During this event, the final version of the Intervention document was agreed, which offered the schools guidance on running the project.

To test the impact of the intervention, a quantitative survey was created by the research team. The survey was conducted before the start of the intervention in September 2015 and at the end of it in December 2015. Qualitative data was also collected by in-person visits to schools by the research team. All data was shared with the evaluation team and forms the basis of the evaluation report. The evaluation team has also conducted in-person interviews and focus groups with Diocesan advisers, the implementation consultant and the research team.

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# 3. Principal Investigator's Remarks

The project was designed to test the efficacy of an intervention undertaken by four dioceses in twenty church schools using the *What If Learning* pedagogy. The focus of the intervention was on promoting the development of the Christian virtue of hospitality in pupils. Hospitality is an interpretation of the Department's listed values of respect, tolerance, community spirit and neighbourliness that is designed to be relevant for church schools. In this project it has a particular focus on developing the ability to respond positively to those people we perceive as different from ourselves.

This report includes the quantitative and qualitative research undertaken by researchers at Canterbury Christ Church University before and after the intervention. The two teams worked independently so as to ensure that they did not influence each other's judgments. They were only introduced to each other's work once the data had been analysed and conclusions developed. None of the three field researchers had previous involvement with the development or dissemination of the *What If Learning* pedagogy.

The quantitative and qualitative research reports that follow indicate that the intervention has had a positive outcome for the schools, teachers and pupils that participated in the project. In particular we have credible, statistically significant evidence that:

1. Pupils make less negative judgments about those they perceive to be different following the intervention.
2. Pupils responded positively to the challenge of being hospitable during the intervention.
3. Teachers' confidence in and ability to teach the virtue of hospitality increased during the project.
4. The more the teachers engaged with the project, the greater was their understanding of and ability to teach character education.

This is very encouraging given the very short length of the intervention (between two and three months).

The research also revealed challenges that were experienced by the teachers and these are summarised in the qualitative research report.

As Principal Investigator, I have worked alongside all three researchers. From my conversations with them and my reading of their various written reports during the project, I make the following observations about character education:

1. Teachers found it empowering to be challenged to develop their own bespoke approaches to character development. This was a professionally positive experience and contributed to their development as a teacher.
2. Reflection on language, concept and resulting action in using an idea like hospitality was an educative experience for both teachers and pupils. We might call this the promotion of virtue literacy.
3. A collaborative approach where teachers work together is more effective than one where teachers are isolated with their own classroom responsibilities.

Professor Trevor Cooling

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# 4. Quantitative research report

## 4.1 Methodology

The quantitative element of the research was designed to investigate two questions:

1. Whether the intervention promoted any change in pupils in terms of their own character with regards to the development of the virtue of hospitality as defined by the project, namely as the disposition to respond in a more open and positive way to those that they might perceive as different from themselves.
2. Whether the intervention promoted any changes in teachers in terms of their confidence and ability to engage in character education using the *What If Learning* pedagogy as part of the mission of a church school.

The overall aim was to provide some measurable evidence of the impact on both pupils and teachers of a two/three month intervention using the *What If Learning* approach to character education in 20 Church of England schools from the four participating dioceses.

There were two data collection points. A baseline questionnaire was administered before the project intervention began between 28th August 2015 and 16th October 2015 and a final questionnaire was administered after the intervention finished between 4th December 2015 and 15th January 2016. Each school made its own decision when to complete the questionnaire depending on the project schedule they had agreed with their diocesan adviser. Some of the schools will continue with the intervention through to July when a third administration of the questionnaires will happen to ascertain the impact of a more extended engagement with the *What If Learning* approach. The questionnaires were all completed online and the data were interrogated using standard statistical methods. The pupils were either from year 5 in the primary schools or from year 8 in the two secondary schools that participated.

## 4.2 Key Findings for Pupils

The questionnaires were designed drawing on two theoretical tools, namely social identity complexity and ambiguous situation responses. The former tests children's perceptions of their group memberships in relation to each other's and the latter tests how they respond to others when making judgments about ethically ambiguous situations. The pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were the same and designed to identify any change in disposition following the intervention.

We gathered data that tested responses in relation to ethnicity, gender and Church of England affiliation. 474 pupils completed a valid baseline questionnaire of whom 375 completed the final questionnaire. Of the cohort of 375 pupils that completed both pre- and post-intervention questionnaires:

- 48.2% were female, 50.4% male and 1.4% were not sure;
- 89.3% were white, 3.6% were black, 5.7% were Asian and 1.4% were Indian; and
- 57.4% said they belonged to the Church of England whereas 42.6% said they did not.

We measured different aspects of the construct of hospitality in a direct way (what we considered our explicit measure), that is, by asking children "how good are the children in your class at…?" followed by a list of seven

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behaviours: making others feel at home, being good listeners, telling people what they think without upsetting them, behaving in a way that is not selfish, understanding someone else's point of view, understanding someone else's feelings and at accepting someone who disagrees with them.

Our second sets of measures were indirect. The first asked children to rate the level of overlap (that is the extent to which being part of a group also implies membership in the second group) between all possible combinations of three social groups we assumed they belonged to, namely their gender, British nationality and Church of England. The second, the ambiguous situation, consisted of a series of four pictures depicting two children of different ethnicity in an ambiguous situation. Each drawing was accompanied by four short sentences describing the picture either as a factual statement of a neutral nature focussing on what was happening (e.g. Liz is looking at Zoe) or interpreting the facts (e.g. Liz has pushed Zoe off the swing) or offering an interpretation of one of the children's motivations (Liz doesn't like Zoe) or even offering a judgement of the "perpetrator's" character (Liz is mean).The children were asked first to choose which of the four descriptions they thought would be most appropriate to describe the situation (we explained to them that although they could have thought of alternative interpretations we were interested in their choice between the four options offered). Additionally children were asked other questions, including a rating of how bad or good they considered the behaviour pictured in the drawings to be. The instrument tests the nature of the judgments children make on those they perceive to be different from them in the ambiguous situation.

Following analysis of the results the key findings that were statistically significant are:

1. Children who identify as Church of England have lower levels of social complexity.
2. Unexpectedly, we found no association between measures of social complexity and measures derived from the ambiguous situations which can be used as indirect measures of in-group bias and prejudice.
3. Children generally rated their class as good at displaying the seven virtues identified as associated with hospitality in the project (mean scores ranging from 55.53 to 70.96 on a scale of 0-100), although there was no significant change following the intervention in 6 of the 7 virtues. The one where there was statistically significant change for the better was in "being able to tell people what they think without upsetting them". In relation to another five of the virtues, there was a positive trend towards improvement in the assessments made but none were statistically significant. The only one where there was not an improvement was "understanding someone else's feelings". Everything considered, we can say that the intervention showed promising potentials and the trend of the observed change was in all but one case in the desired direction, i.e. an improvement post-intervention.
4. In the four ambiguous situations test, following the intervention the proportion of children switching from a negative to a positive judgment on the actions of others in an ambiguous situation is greater than those switching from a positive to a negative outlook.
5. Overall the results show a statistically significant, albeit small, change toward explicit development of the seven virtues identified as associated with hospitality in the project. No gender differences were found in any of the previous results.

## 4.3 Key Findings for Teachers

We collected data from 198 teachers with the pre-intervention questionnaire, but only 92 of them went on to provide data post-intervention. We used explicit, that is direct, measures where teachers were asked to rate the impact of the intervention on the pupils and the quality of their own experience of the intervention. A number of additional questions were asked only post-intervention because they focused on the intervention

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itself and would have been meaningless in advance of the intervention. We used these questions to evaluate the quality of the intervention itself and the support received.

Following analysis of the results, the key findings are:

1. Teachers overall express very positive evaluation of the intervention and its efficacy on several aspects of their pupils' behaviour.
2. Teachers are significantly more familiar with the teaching approach after the intervention.
3. Teachers report that their lessons are focussing significantly more on character teaching after the intervention
4. Teachers rate their children significantly better after the intervention in each of these 11 behaviours/virtues:
    - Humility
    - Being good listeners
    - Being able to explain why certain things are important to other people
    - Being good welcomers
    - Offering friendship to those they perceive somehow different from themselves
    - Expressing their own views with respectful conviction
    - Being able to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances in appropriate ways
    - Desiring and being able to promote common good
    - Empathy (walking in others' shoes)
    - Welcoming the stranger
    - Generosity and spirit of action

Moreover, we were able to test if and to what extent those teachers using the intervention in a higher number of sessions also reported a higher level of satisfaction or positive effect of the intervention. Data show very clearly that having used the intervention in 7 to 10 sessions as opposed to 4 to 6 or 1 to 3 sessions generates:

- greater changes in the focus of lessons
- greater influence of the intervention on the way in which they teach other classes
- greater influence of the intervention on their ability to incorporate the development of hospitality
- greater effectiveness of the training
- higher satisfaction with the support received
- greater effectiveness of the training in providing confidence
- a greater feeling that the intervention improved the pupils' academic performance
- a greater feeling that the intervention improved the pupils' learning behaviour in class and their opportunity to flourish.

Overall we can report that:

1. Teachers were very satisfied with the quality of the training and the support received.
2. The ratings for questions were on average very high demonstrating high satisfaction with the intervention and the training and support received.
3. Those teachers who managed to use the intervention the most and to practice it in more classes report higher ratings on all of the questions.
4. The teachers reported a very positive impact of the teaching approach and the support received.

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5. On all the questions we asked, teachers showed a large improvement towards a positive rating post-intervention.

Dr Sabina Hulbert

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# 5. Qualitative Research Report

## 5.1 Methodology

The qualitative element of the research was designed to investigate two questions:

1. Whether the intervention led to the participating teachers reporting increased confidence and ability to engage in character education.
2. Whether the intervention led to the participating teachers reporting positive outcomes for the pupils and schools in relation to character education, wider learning and school ethos.

The findings are primarily based on 42 individual interviews undertaken by the two researchers with a sample of teaching staff, project leads and, in some instances, head teachers from twelve schools nominated by the four Dioceses, after two to three months of engagement with the *What If Learning* approach. All interviews took place in participants' own schools. Some interviewees supported their interviews with examples of planning, pupil learning outcomes, photographs and project action plans. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Schools were also asked to select and submit a portfolio of evidence to illustrate both work where the goals of the project had been achieved and work where the goals had not been achieved as hoped. These portfolios were available for the researchers to consult before the interviews.

The Diocesan Advisors were responsible for the manner in which the intervention was introduced to the schools. Schools then, in turn, determined the implementation and the professional preparation of their staff. Schools presented a variety of models in responding to the project. These included embracing the virtue of hospitality in single subjects, cross-curricular learning and out-of-class experiences, including collective worship. Forms of engagement differed and included whole school, key stage, year-group and individual class responses. The training and implementation was therefore bespoke for each school and locally designed.

To ensure a rigorous and robust approach to analysis of the interview transcripts, the following procedures were followed based on a grounded theory approach to data analysis. After examining the data, the two researchers collaboratively co-constructed and defined 15 coding categories, which were applied systematically to all transcripts using the electronic software package NVivo 10. In addition use was made of rating scale questions to determine teachers' perceptions of the extent to which project engagement changed their practice, affected their confidence in undertaking character education and the extent to which children developed hospitable character traits.

## 5.2 Key Findings

Teachers perceived there were many more benefits to engagement in the project than there were challenges. Benefits included those to pupils, teachers, the school and the wider community. The three forms of challenges identified included challenges around teacher engagement in the process, with embracing different curriculum subjects and issues related to the language of hospitality.

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## 5.3 Benefits

### 5.3.1 Key Benefits to the Teacher

- Overwhelmingly teachers perceived that the project promoted deep personal reflection on their professional practice, the conditions for learning and the increasing impact on children's character development.
- All teachers interviewed identified an increase in their confidence in undertaking character education as a result of engaging in the project. When asked to rate the extent of this growth on a scale of 0 -10, (with 10 representing the highest level), the vast majority of teachers rated this growth in excess of 5. Almost half of the teachers rated this 8-10.
- *What if Learning*, was described as providing a 'mind-set change' in ultimately altering traditional lesson content and the mode of delivery.
- All teachers interviewed reported changes in their own practice. When asked to rate the extent to which their practice had changed using the same scale, about three-quarters rated the change between 5 and 10.
- Teachers' interpretation of and engagement with the concept of hospitality was crucial in the development of directed learning experiences. Teachers thought the focus on hospitality enabled them to reflect on the nature of their classrooms, schools and relationship with the community and they thought it enhanced quality of provision and experiences.
- Project participation legitimised teachers' perceptions of their professional investment in purposeful development of their learners. They relished opportunities to engage in joint reflection with pupils over world affairs and important issues.

### 5.3.2 Key Benefits to Pupils

- The vast majority of teachers felt that as a result of their engagement in the project, pupils moved beyond learning about the concept of hospitality to adoption and exemplification of hospitable character traits.
- Almost all teachers interviewed identified that pupils demonstrated more hospitable character traits over time. These were evident in pupils' interactions within their class, across the school community and beyond. Teacher perceptions of the extent to which these behaviours could be purely attributed to the project differed.
- Incorporating *What if* approaches into lessons challenged pupils to practice learning behaviours or habits required for successful learning in a variety of contexts.
- Pupils encountered a variety of important concepts, topical issues and events, which were used to explore aspects of hospitality in a much deeper manner than schools would otherwise have considered.
- Teachers reported that all pupils considered ways of extending hospitality within their immediate learning environment, most looked beyond to their local community and the global community.
- Teachers felt explicit recognition of pupil acts of hospitality encouraged pupil use the language of hospitality in describing their own and the behaviours of others.
- Many teachers felt the focus on hospitality strengthened the classroom ethos. Teachers and pupils worked collaboratively to build trusting relationships and establish a classroom climate conducive for learning. Pupils developed communication and analytical skills, perseverance, empathy, respect for diversity, the welcoming of visitors and new children.

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### 5.3.3 Key Benefits to Schools

- Overwhelmingly, teachers perceived that participation in the project enabled the school community to focus on strengthening and embedding its Christian ethos. Demonstrating and valuing acts of hospitality were recognised as being important for schools with a Church of England foundation.
- Aspects of hospitality introduced in collective worship were expanded upon in lessons, providing a relevant and strengthened bond between collective worship and the taught curriculum.
- The project provided an opportunity to develop the spirituality of the community through the shared reflections and actions around a common theme.
- The experience of engaging in the project provided school communities with the opportunity to 'refresh' or focus on their Christian values. The framework for the identification of hospitable character traits provided by the project stimulated reflection on ways of recognising such traits and reflection on ways of noting developments in pupils' characters.
- Through staff working on a shared project agenda schools were empowered to develop as professional learning communities.

### 5.3.4 Key Benefits to the Wider Community

- The project inspired members of the school community to review the extent to which they perceived their school exhibited hospitality towards visitors, new pupils and the community.
- The project provided a means of strengthening inclusive practices and relationships between members of the school community and the wider community.
- Through reflection on world affairs that occurred during the course of the project, pupils could begin to look at the notion of hospitality on a global scale, the issues affecting people and include compassionate thoughts in their prayers.

## 5.4 Challenges

Although the majority of comments were very positive and focused on the benefits of involvement in the project, there were a few challenges articulated by participating teachers. These broadly fell into three categories:

### 5.4.1 Teacher Engagement with the Process

- Many teachers felt two/three months of engagement in the project was too short to fully capture the shift in individual pupils' thinking (although by contrast many staff reflected on the movement in their own over the same period).
- Some teachers felt tensions in their use of time where they needed to balance the project with other external demands. These included an acute awareness of the requirement for increasing pupil attainment and also the adjustments needed for teaching National Curriculum revisions.
- Participation and comprehension of initial staff development appeared central in facilitating engagement. In order to start, anxieties about project implementation could be addressed and teacher's comprehension of ways of planning *What If Learning* approaches into lessons enhanced. Of all the challenges relating to teacher engagement, this one appeared to have the greatest potential for limiting the growth and development of the *What If Learning* approach.

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### 5.4.2 Embracing Curriculum Subjects

Across all phases, teachers demonstrated ways in which the project could be adapted, incorporated or used across a variety of subjects. Certain primary teachers felt there were particular challenges in the process of incorporating the project in some subjects, most commonly in mathematics (specifically arithmetic).

### 5.4.3 The Language of Hospitality

Teachers needed to resolve their comprehension of the nature of hospitality before planning or teaching. The project materials provided were appreciated by many in helping them to think through the definition and application of the term but some information in 'child-friendly' language would aid explanation to, and usage with, young pupils.



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# 6. Recommendations from the Research Team

## 6.1 For Project Sponsors

1. This project should be continued to explore the ways in which the *What If Learning* pedagogical approach could be used in all schools (with or without a Christian Foundation).
2. To publish and disseminate the project experiences to date and additional case study material to inform the development of character education.
3. To further stimulate dialogue about character education in a Christian context in and between schools. This could be led by Diocesan Advisors and other networks with schools having a Christian Foundation in order to foster collaborative approaches and the sharing of effective practice.
4. The development of descriptors linked to other values and virtues (besides hospitality) is needed to facilitate recognition of such traits and enable teacher and pupil reflection on their own character development. This is the promotion of virtue literacy.

## 6.2 For Schools

1. In order for the school community to embrace character education within its culture, school leaders and governors need to tailor the approach appropriately to the mission, aims and unique characteristics of the school. Decisions are required about the extent to which this is incorporated into different subjects, collective worship and other aspects of school-life and who is best placed to lead, inform and celebrate the initiative throughout the school.
2. In aiming for quality, schools may wish to start with small but manageable initiatives. It is important to enable teachers to see early rewards in their endeavours in order to grow confidence and to develop creative responses.
3. Staff training in *What If Learning* is essential at the start of the programme to provide adults with the confidence to integrate this approach into their professional practice. Also required are provision of ongoing supported opportunities for reflective review and the sharing of experiences. Character education needs to be as a school-wide initiative, requiring the support and engagement of all staff as all members of the community as they act as influential role models and co-learners in the process.
4. Strategies for encouraging and supporting professional initiative and creativity in the context of collaborative work are needed.
5. Continuing engagement with the *What If Learning* pedagogy is more effective than treating it as a time-limited intervention. It is best viewed as a professional mind-set rather than a short-term project with specific targets or performance indicators.
6. Opportunities should be given for children to reflect and act on their beliefs, life choices and character development throughout their school experience - as part of the taught and 'hidden' curriculum.

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# 7. Evaluation

## 7.1 Evaluation Report Authorship

The independent evaluation of the project was carried out by Dr Julie Evans, Dr Sue Warman and MarkAndrew Dearden, of the University of St Mark and St John.

## 7.2 Evaluation Summary

The engagement by schools was varied but in each case allowed teachers to consider and reflect on the process of "*What If Learning*" in their classroom/school. Plans, evaluations and pupils' work demonstrates at varying levels a deepening understanding of the virtue of Hospitality.

When considering the success of the portfolios, they show schools being creative in their teaching and learning and embedding "Christian Values" in the school context and can be seen as a celebration of the work being undertaken.

The interviews clearly identified that teachers perceived that deep personal reflection on their practice had occurred and teachers reporting increased impact on children's character development. All teachers interviewed identified increased confidence in delivering character education (significant change is noted here with almost half of the teachers rating this change between 8 and 10 out of 10); this was a key question for the study.

Although initial conversations reflected upon including the pupil voice directly subsequent changes meant this could not be developed. Having an element of direct pupil voice in the study would have augmented the validity of the findings and demonstrated more impact. Perhaps a point for reflection is that there a need to be mindful that a teacher (or an adult) can give an account of a child's experience but the only *valid* account of the child's experience is from the child themselves (Mahon et. al., 1996), thus pupil voice would have added greater depth to the analysis and therefore impact.

Overall, given the evaluation data that has been gathered and the timescale which the research team operated within; the conclusion is that the findings are legitimate.

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# 8. Appendix 1: Qualitative key findings in narrative form

## 8.1 Key benefits to the teacher

Overwhelmingly teachers perceived that the project promoted deep personal reflection on teaching and learning, conditions for learning and the increasing impact on children's character development. Teachers could make and explore connections between their own values and those of the school. Teachers frequently used the phrase 'making the values more explicit'.

All teachers interviewed identified an increase in their confidence in undertaking character education as a result of engaging in the project. When asked to rate the extent of this growth on a scale of 0 -10, (with 10 representing the highest level), the vast majority of teachers rated this growth highly in excess of 5. Almost half of the teachers rated this 8-10.

Teachers were able to utilise the school's Christian values as both a platform and scaffolding to plan additional meaningful learning experiences.

Some teachers emphasised *What If Learning*, others hospitality and others embraced both *What If Learning* and hospitality within thinking and planning. *What If Learning* was described as providing a 'mind-set change' in ultimately altering traditional lesson content and the mode of delivery. The *Seeing Anew* step was perceived as a particularly powerful device for reframing everything, including teacher's own character development and enabling authentic modelling of hospitable character traits.

All teachers interviewed reported changes in their own practice. When asked to rate the extent to which their practice had changed using the same scale, about three-quarters rated the change 5-10.

Teachers welcome the freedoms the project provided them with in developing curriculum planning and delivery. They perceived it legitimised their professional investment in purposeful development of their learners. Teachers appreciated the chance to choose to engage in joint reflection with pupils over world affairs and important issues. Some enjoyed the opportunity to shift perceptions of power and to share learning with their pupils. Collaborative learning amongst teachers within and across schools was considered a strength of the project.

## 8.2 Key benefits to pupils

Teachers perceived that through the project, pupils became more reflective in many ways. For example, in analysing characters of others and those encountered in texts, the impact of the styles of communication and body language used on people's feelings. Role-play was a powerful medium for children to use their understanding of hospitality, deepen empathy and explore appropriate responses. Teachers felt that such rich experiences promoted children's all-round development. Rather than children becoming 'robotic', the project facilitated acquisition of character traits required for responsible citizenship.

Teachers incorporating *What if* approaches into lessons perceived such approaches challenged children to practice learning behaviours or habits required for successful learning in a variety of contexts. These included

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analysis of events or issues, effective communication skills, working with diligence and adoption and evaluation of collaborative working practices. Opportunities for deep reflection provided opportunities to facilitate pupil metacognition.

Pupils encountered a variety of important concepts, topical issues and events, which were used to explore aspects of hospitality in a much deeper manner than the schools would otherwise have considered. All pupils considered ways of extending hospitality within their immediate learning environment, most looked beyond to their local community and the global community. A striking feature was that the youngest of children were engaging in consideration of the needs of others in challenging (and sometime tragic) circumstances.

The vast majority of teachers felt that as a result of their engagement in the project, pupils moved beyond learning about the concept of hospitality to adoption and exemplification of hospitable character traits. Teachers noted changes in pupils valuing diversity, their respect for the views of peers, ability to reconcile differences, their desire to welcome new pupils and visitors and changes in their emotional intelligence. Some witnessed unprompted acts of generosity, thoughtfulness and kindness. Teacher perceptions of the extent to which these behaviours could be purely attributed to the project differed. Other contributory factors included the existing strength of the school's Christian ethos, supportive relationships established between pupils and the influence of families on pupils.

Teachers felt explicit recognition of pupil acts of hospitality encouraged pupils to use the language of hospitality in describing their own and the behaviours of others. In some instances primary schools implemented or modified existing reward systems to emphasise the value placed on pupils displaying hospitable behaviours. Some schools provided pupils with planned opportunities to make hospitable behaviour choices through their interactions with others. Examples included planning welcoming events and engagement in peer assessment. Pupils feeding back to peers were noted to undertake this with growing sensitively and appreciation of the suggestions for improvement.

Primary teachers commented that exploration of hospitality and use of what if at the start of the school year was particularly worthwhile in helping pupils to settle quickly. With hospitality as a key focus, teachers and pupils worked collaboratively to build trusting relationships and establish a classroom climate conducive for learning. Some teachers embraced hospitality within negotiated classroom codes of conduct. Teachers, who invested time, in enabling children to engage in self-reflective collaborative work noted positive changes in pupil collaboration.

## 8.3 Key benefits to the schools

Overwhelmingly, teachers perceived that participation in the project enabled the school community to focus on strengthening and embedding its Christian ethos. Demonstrating and valuing acts of hospitality were recognised as being important for schools with a Church of England foundation. One school noted that engagement in the project strengthened its newly acquired Church of England status. The project provided an opportunity to develop the spirituality of the community through the shared reflections and actions around a common theme. As a result of the project, many teachers commented that children began to think more deeply about others than themselves, their needs, what is important to them and in their written work there was evidence of them putting others first.

Head teachers perceived that what happened in collective worship became more visible in school life and lessons. In some instances, hospitality was introduced in collective worship, enabling teachers to expand upon the theme in lessons, providing a relevant and strengthened bond between these two aspects. This process of planning

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provided a way into school communities considering how their school's Christian values could be integrated more fully into different subjects within the taught curriculum. Schools often explored the nature of hospitality through the use of Biblical texts and primary schools noted a more explicit focus on the theme of hospitality at Christmas. Children could reflect on the Christian act of giving and how a variety of gifts can alter the lives of others.

The experience of engaging in the project provided school communities with the opportunity to 'refresh' or focus on their Christian values. The framework for the identification of hospitable character traits provided by the project stimulated reflection on ways of recognising such traits and ways of recording developments in pupil characters. In some instances school communities progressed into identifying demonstrable behaviours and attributes associated with adopted Christian values.

The experience of planning for hospitality or inclusion of *What If* approaches into lessons resulted in some communities altering lesson planning formats so that their focus on integrating hospitality, school Christian values or *What If* approaches into lessons was at the forefront of teacher's planning, became embedded or more easily recognisable.

Working on a shared project agenda was welcomed by teachers, enabled schools to develop as professional learning communities. Teacher collaboration between colleagues was perceived to provide 'a sense of togetherness'. They worked 'together for the good of pupils'. In some instances, pupil groups were either established or school council groups engaged for pupils to aid the planning of hospitality into school life, collective worship, or to co-ordinate fund-raising initiatives. Newly appointed Head teachers were keen to maximise the opportunities *What If* learning and hospitality provided as a platform for further strengthening the Christian ethos of the schools as a means of strengthening high quality teaching.

## 8.4 Key benefits to the wider community

The project inspired members of the school community to review the extent to which they perceived their school exhibited hospitality towards visitors, new pupils and the community. Head teachers perceived inclusive practices and school relationships with community members and organisations were strengthened as a result of such reviews. Examples were provided of pupils planning special occasions to welcome visitors into their schools and pupil ambassadors being appointed to welcome visitors to sessions.

The project provided a means of strengthening relationships between members of the school community and the wider community. Project leads and Head teachers, through meeting with other Church of England schools and their Diocesan advisors valued the sharing of experiences and opportunities to learn from each other. Pupils undertook educational visits to places of worship, aiding respect for people from other religions. Young pupils considered how they could make hospitable choices of behaviour at home. Through reflection on world affairs, such as the Paris bombings and refugee crisis, which occurred during the course of the project, pupils could begin to look at the notion of hospitality on a global scale, the issues affecting people and include compassionate thoughts in their prayers.

## 8.5 Challenges

Although the majority of issues raised were very positive and focused on the benefits, as indicated above, there were a few challenges, which were articulated by the participating teachers. These broadly fell into three categories:

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## 8.6 Teacher engagement with the process

Most comments related to the limitations of the period of the timescale of the project itself. Many teachers felt four months of engagement in the project was too short to fully capture the shift in individual pupils' thinking (although by contrast many staff reflected on the movement in their own over the same period). Some teachers felt the pressure of time from other external demands – driven primarily by an awareness of the drive for higher attainment and adjustments needed for teaching the revisions of the National Curriculum. In all cases, the same individual teachers strongly justified involvement in the project as it allowed an additional focus on the human and spiritual dimensions of pupils' development. A small minority of project leads perceived that the capacity of individual teachers to embrace the demands of the project varied depending on individual circumstances and their comprehension of the nature of the initiative. Participation and comprehension of initial staff development appeared central in facilitating engagement and teacher's understanding of ways of planning *What If* approaches into lessons a particular member of staff in their school who seemed to either lack the ability to engage in deeper reflective teaching or need longer to appreciate how this could be utilised. (Of all the challenges relating to teacher engagement, it was this one which appeared to have the greatest potential for limiting the growth and development of the *What If* approach.) A few teachers indicated their own challenge in deciding how to start the process. Most, but not all, were able to refer to other participating schools in their Diocese. Some indicated a lack of reference examples to illustrate hospitality and the presentation of the project materials as better suited for older pupils as limiting factors. Clearer presentation of materials for teachers of young children would have been welcomed.

## 8.7 Embracing curriculum subjects

Across all phase settings, teachers demonstrated ways in which the project could be adapted, incorporated or used across a variety of subjects. Some teachers found it easier to concentrate on integration into individual subjects, such as history, English and mathematics whilst others integrated it several. In some instances, incorporation into the foundation subjects provided for more creative and reflective responses from pupils. Certain primary teachers felt there were particular challenges in the process of incorporating the project – most commonly identified in mathematics (specifically in some topics in arithmetic). Secondary teachers spoke positively about their own subject domains and the ways they found of using the enthusiasm of other departments (or individual teachers) to aid their thinking and planning. The project seemed to provide additional opportunities for teachers who had not previously collaborated in the planning of teaching.

## 8.8 The language of hospitality

The language of hospitality was mentioned by a number of teachers as it had posed issues for them to resolve before they could begin planning or teaching. The project materials provided were appreciated by many in helping them to think through the definition and application of the term. Once the concept became clear most teachers found little difficulty in incorporating it (and/or the principles of *What if*) into their lessons. Once teachers had invested time piloting such approaches these were embraced more intuitively and also when occasions arose from the questions asked by their pupils. The teachers of the younger pupils reported they had some misgivings about the abstract concept as well as the use of the term itself – but reported positive acceptance and confident use by pupils in the classroom over time. Generally, these teachers would welcome examples of tackling such language in a child-friendly manner.

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