

Collaboration

The aspect of Intellectual Character that school will focus more closely on during this half term is 'collaboration'.

Collaboration can be thought of as the capacity to work productively with other people, to pool talents and build collective solutions. Being collaborative involves an understanding of when to seek help from, and when to support other people, and to judge effectively when to speak up and when to compromise.

'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' African Proverb

Collaborating isn't necessarily easy. It can involve skills such as compromise and patience that don't always come easy to adolescents. However, the best teams don't always include the best players (think of Leicester City or the recent 4 x 100m Men's World Champions from Team GB). Being part of a productive team allows for individuals to perform above the level that they might otherwise achieve alone.

What can children do to develop 'collaboration'?

1. Question. Asking a question is not just about receiving a clear answer, but also knowing what to ask and how to ask it. Helping children communicate sensitively and with empathy will improve their ability to work together.

2. Debate. Disagreement will happen as part of the normal way of people working together. When children work in groups, differences will inevitably arise. Understanding that this needn't lead to conflict and that listening, understanding and mediating are important tools of debate. Guidance might be needed to allow pupils to understand that disagreements needn't be personal, reactions needn't be defensive, and resolutions can be productive.

3. Problem solve in a group. Group work activities are not possible with just one person! Working together in order to accomplish a goal will involve authentic collaboration.

4. Observe. Adults should never expect children to do something that they are unable to do themselves. Examples of collaboration occur frequently with family life and school. Parents can involve their children in planning activities and organisation; discussing possibilities, debating pros and cons and coming to an agreed solution.

5. Reflect. After having been involved in an activity involving collaboration, children can spend some time reflecting on how well everyone worked together. Discussing good and bad examples of collaboration, whilst always being sensitive to a child's feelings!

Opportunities for Collaboration

It is part of the ethos of the school to give pupils lots of opportunities to collaborate as part of a team through Extra Curricular Activities.

- Sport
- Music
- Drama
- House Activities
- Outdoor Education
- Other Team Activities

It is important that pupils get involved and take part in our supportive environment, even if this means taking them out of their comfort zone.

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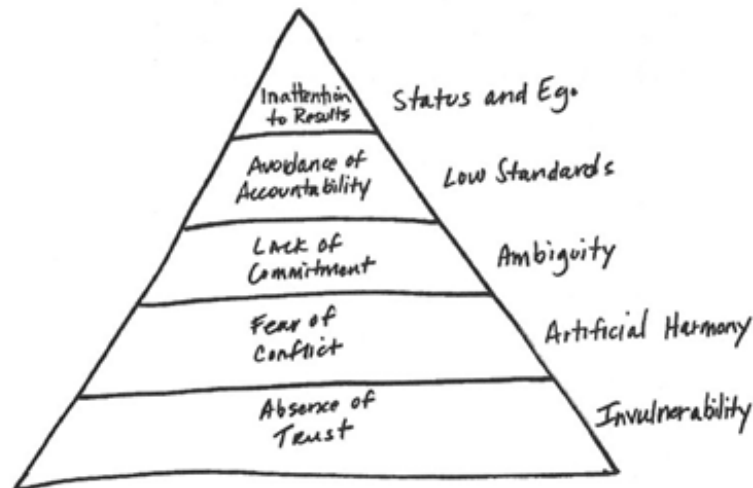
Learn Together

Pupils should be encouraged to learn together and help each other.

Examples include:

- *Explaining things to each other when they get 'stuck' on some work.*
- *Practice speaking a foreign language to each other.*
- *Helping each other with projects.*
- *Testing each other on subject knowledge.*
- *Setting questions for each other*

Avoid the '5 Dysfunctions of a Team'



(i) Invulnerability. Without showing some vulnerability, a person can't be a high-functioning team member. 'Absence of trust' is a weak foundation for a team.

(ii) Artificial Harmony. "Fear of Conflict" is the layer of dysfunction that will breed disrespect. Learn to debate the differences

(iii) Ambiguity. "Lack of Commitment" is an issue that people and teams of all types encounter. Children should think big, and learn not to fear failure. Break down large tasks into smaller ones!

(iv) Low Standards. "Avoidance of Accountability" might also be described as the art of 'pointing fingers' or 'passing the buck'. Collaborative individuals take responsibility for their bit in the collaboration and aim high!

(v) Status and Ego. Don't put your personal success before that of the group. This can be a major factor with children. When groups set out together on a project, they will always have individual goals, as they should. But it's important that they have a set of shared goals and pay attention to the group results as well.

The Good News

Like any other type of learning, collaboration skills improve with repeated practice. Research shows that over time, children working in groups learn to appreciate each other's differences, including gender, racial, cultural, and physical or mental ability differences. Pre-empting project based learning with a guided experience of collaborative teamwork can greatly contribute to its successful implementation.

Jason Slack
Headmaster

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." Henry Ford

