

Initiative

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

Initiative can be thought of as the willingness to be independently minded, to think ahead and work things out for yourself. People who demonstrate initiative are resourceful, able to organise themselves well, and don't rely on others to be told what to do.

'A lot of people never use their initiative because no-one never told them to.' Banksy

Developing initiative is, perhaps, one of the most difficult aspects that a school can advance in its young people, and is the most challenging of our chosen characteristics of Intellectual Character that we are targeting. As soon as you ask a child to 'take the initiative' the opportunity for them to demonstrate real initiative is lost! Having the confidence to show initiative, and taking the necessary risk associated with independence comes from pupils having a security and stability in their environment that allows them to overcome the fear of failure.

Understanding that there is much to learn from the process, regardless of the outcome, can be more important than the outcome itself. Taking initiative is not about looking at the grass on the other side to decide if it is greener, but watering your own grass, confident in the knowledge that it can be the greenest.

What can pupils do to show 'initiative'?

1. Don't procrastinate

Getting started on a task is much more important than being perfect. Whilst having a 'vision' of the overall outcome for a project or task is important, it can get daunting when you're looking into the distance at a far off destination. When you get hesitant, take the next steps, 'one at a time'. Consider what the most logical, and reasonable next step might be and take it! The step after that often becomes apparent once you start moving.

2. Learn to anticipate problems

You will often be able to understand where the biggest challenges might come from. Anticipate these challenges, don't ignore them, and take the initiative to ask those who can help for some support. Be proactive rather than reactive.

3. Have a positive spirit

Pupils who demonstrate initiative often have a 'can do' outlook. They look for parts of challenging tasks that they can overcome and use this to allow them to address more demanding aspects, rather than avoid getting started in the first place.

'The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.' Walt Disney

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An example of initiative

Imagine two teenagers join a new group or activity for the first time and they don't necessarily know anyone within the group. This can be a challenging situation for those that don't find it easy to mix.

The teenager with little initiative might react by saying:

'I'll be back next week and if nobody speaks to me then I'm not coming back again.'

The teenager who has initiative might react by saying:

'I'll be back next week and if nobody speaks to me then I'll make the effort to speak to someone.'

Having initiative will make the difference

Initiative is the difference between;

- optimism and pessimism
- being active and being passive
- being able to direct and being directed

Initiative leads to achievement

A group of well known bosses of big firms have developed a simple system to categorise their employees and have linked this to the chances of success for the employees.

Approach of a Person	Achievement
Someone who does the right thing without being asked.	Huge Success!
Someone who does the right thing after being asked once.	Average Achievement
Someone who does the right thing after being asked several times.	Below Average Achievement
Someone who doesn't do the right thing.	Failure!

In which category would you put yourself?

Jason Slack
Headmaster

Genius is initiative on fire! Holbrook Jackson - English writer

