

# News story: Education Secretary: “Character and resilience are key to social mobility”

Having a go at new activities and learning from failure will boost children’s character and resilience, the Education Secretary has said today.

A new advisory group of experts in character education has been set up to look at how best to support schools to run more activities, which will help build character and resilience.

Alongside this Mr Hinds has called on young people, parents, teachers and community groups to give their views on what they think are the best non-academic activities to offer young people and how to make the most of them, as well as the traits and skills they need to get on in life.

Finding the right balance between academic study and other activities is crucial to helping young people achieve their goals, overcome challenges and develop their readiness for adulthood, aiming to help the most disadvantaged to compete more equally with their advantaged peers in the labour market.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It’s a good time of year to remind pupils that in in 10 years’ time their exam results might be a distant memory – but the life skills they acquire will stay with them forever.

Of course, I want every child to excel at school and do well in their exams – but this is just one part of how education prepares them for the future. Through school and college, young people gain the skills and qualifications they need to get a well-paid job, but to truly prepare for adult life we also need to make sure our young people build character and resilience.

Life lessons are learned by having a go. With all of us – but particularly young people – spending more and more time online, we should all put our phones down, look up and get involved in activities that stretch and challenge us.

The reason character and resilience matter so much to me is that they are key to social mobility. Social mobility starts with giving young people the unstoppable confidence that they can achieve amazing things, teaching them to cope with the challenges life brings and recognise their achievements – because they each have their own, unique potential to fulfil.

Research published by the Department for Education suggests that activities

pupils are most interested in include sports, fitness and outdoor pursuits. In a survey of more than 2,500 pupils aged 11 to 16 and their parents or carers, sports and fitness was the most popular kind of activity, chosen by 50 per cent of school pupils and 43 per cent of college students. This was followed by 'outdoor pursuits in both age groups (27 per cent), with creative activities coming in third (22 per cent and 23 per cent).

It comes as families mark the May Bank Holiday, and follows the launch of the Department for Education's activity 'passport', a list of encouraged activities for different age groups to try new life experiences endorsed by the National trust, Scouts and Girlguiding UK.

The call for evidence will help shape the recommendations the group makes later this year on character education, to reflect the voices and experiences of teachers, young people, educational professionals and the organisations that offer the kind of activities the Education Secretary has identified in his 5 foundations for building character.

The 5 foundations for building character encompass an extensive list of activities, which help young people build character. They are:

- Sport – which includes competitive sport and other activities, such as running, martial arts, swimming and purposeful recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, orienteering, gym programmes, yoga or learning to ride a bike.
- Creativity – this involves all creative activities from coding, arts and crafts, writing, graphic design, film making and music composition.
- Performing – activities could include dance, theatre and drama, musical performance, choir, debating or public speaking.
- Volunteering & Membership – brings together teams, practical action in the service of others or groups, such as volunteering, getting involved in the #iwill campaign, litter-picking, fundraising, any structured youth programmes or uniformed groups like Beavers, Brownies, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh.
- World of work – practical experience of the world of work, work experience or entrepreneurship. For primary age children, this may involve opportunities to meet role models from different jobs.

The advisory group is chaired by Ian Bauckham CBE of the Tenax School Trust and includes James Arthur OBE, Director of Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and Dame Julia Cleverdon, Co-founder of Step up to Serve.

This builds on the approach schools already take on character education. It

seeks to provide a framework to help schools consider how delivering these 5 foundations can best build character, alongside the ethos set by the school, its curriculum and wider offer it makes to its pupils.