

Male Interviewer: So, first of all, we just really want to know what Narnian Virtues was like for you. Who'd like to start?

Female Respondent 1: I think it was a bit of a journey because obviously we started it when the current Year 9 were in Year 7 and we started off by having the two discrete sections. So, we'd have three lessons a week that were Curriculum and then two lessons a week that were Virtues and what happened was that the kids weren't really translating across, so we were given the most wonderful vocabulary like "fortitude" and the like but they then weren't using it in their actual work and so, when they went in to Year 8, it was almost a bit of a halfway house. It was nice with the different text, there was some more challenge and then this year what [FR2] has done with the way that she organised the scheme I thought was really good, because they read *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* for their summer homework and we then hung lots of different texts on *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* but we'd still built it around the different virtues. So, we looked at Cicero and all sorts of stuff that I had never taught before but then did it based around the idea of the Virtues that had been learned through the Narnia Curriculum and so I thought that was actually quite nice and then they started to make those translations and now teaching *Animal Farm* and some of my students are still, are using the language that they learned with doing the Narnian Virtues project to talk about things like Old Major and his, the passion that he has for his cause and the like. So, now since [FR2] volunteered me, [FR2] should talk!

Female respondent 2: Yeah, I like, like you said [FR1], I like the challenging text that came alongside it within the Scheme of Work. I think the issue that I found with my classes, especially when I did it when I had 8 Set 1 is that the text itself wasn't very challenging for our students and I think sometimes when we're trying to do language analysis paragraphs and things like that, they were struggling to get anything because it is so simplistic in the way that it's written. Do you agree...?

FR1: I'd agree.

FR2: But, I did like the challenging texts that were brought in to it and it was nice being able to study things like *The Lord of the Flies* and like Mel said, with the Cicero and stuff, and it was nice to be able to talk about virtues but I think sometimes it was just a case of feature spotting rather than actually getting the real life application which I know your project was aiming towards.

Int: Thank you. Anybody else that taught on it at any point want to throw in?

Female respondent 3: I think one of the issues that I found, I taught it to the current Year 9 when they were in Year 7 was that they'd already studied the book at primary school so you didn't have the element of



surprise and intrigue that you might have had with a text that they didn't know and they were almost just able to tell me what happened before we even delved in to the chapters, so that was one of the issues that I found.

MI: Do you know whether they did Narnian Virtues at primary school? Because I know in the pilot year, before I was involved in the project, it went to primaries as well or was it just the book?

FR3: I don't think they... yeah, they'd not covered the virtues, that in itself was quite new and that first year that we did teach it, it was lovely to get the parent engagement, parents writing to you saying, "Suddenly my daughter has started doing a bit of housework and recording it and saying, "I'm showing this virtue"" but we spent so long on a text that they already knew really, really well and you didn't have that element of they couldn't wait to read the next bit because they already knew the text.

FR1: It feels like it might work better in primary and that was a comment that a few of the parents had made when I was still the link with the project was that there were parents who said, "I get what you're doing and I see why but actually they need it, secondary school is too late, they need it younger or it might work really well as, in form time, as part of tutor reflections".

MI: So, that's in terms of the character virtue element might be better placed elsewhere. Anyone else want to...?

Female respondent 4: They liked the Turkish Delight task, they really enjoyed that, "What was your Turkish Delight?" and they came up with some really nice stuff and I think some of the homework tasks are really nice because with the families who obviously want to help, it was nice for them to have those conversations and a couple of parents did say it was nice to sit around the dinner table and actually have a conversation but then there were some parents who didn't want to engage and I think you got a parent didn't you, who said he wasn't going to take part in it? So, it was a bit of a mixed bag with parents.

FR1: I got hung up on; for the first and only time in my 14 year teaching career, I got hung up on by a parent.

Female Interviewer: What was the reason given?

FR1: It was, we had a teacher student who left at the end of last year but she was training and I was her mentor which is why I rang, but the parent wrote in saying, "We don't do this religious claptrap in our household" so I was, "But, it's not religious, it's just..." so I rang and said, "Virtue doesn't have anything to do with religion particularly, if you look at the Muslim faith, if you look at Jedi, you're going to find the same sorts of virtues" and he just wouldn't have it. He was, "I googled it and everything that came up was a Christian site" and it was [child names] dad, if anybody knows, or uncle rather but yeah, and so just went on, and he just went on this



massive rant and I was, “Oh yeah, well I think you’ll find...” and then he just hung up on me. And, I’ve had a couple of angry letters from parents saying that it’s not appropriate and it’s blurring the line between home and school and how dare we stick our nose in to their business and that sort of thing and when I was overseeing the project I had a couple of those passed to me, so it’s obviously touched a nerve. And, building on what you’d said before as well, I feel like the parents and the families who will do these tasks and everything are possibly not the ones who need it as much as the ones who’ll look at it and go, “Well I’m not doing that” and I had quite a few saying, “You know I work all the time, I don’t have time to sit down and have this conversation” which I find really sad because...

MI: Yeah, so what was your impression of what Narnian Virtues was trying to achieve? What do you think the point of it was from, well I was going to say from our perspective, but not, from any perspective?

FR2: Well, to broaden the students’ views of themselves I think through the text. I think it got them to think more deeply about themselves and what’s important to them. I’ve only taught it for this last year but that’s to benefit the kids, self-reflection and I like that part of it.

FR4: Yeah, to give them a better... I think this school is really, pinpoints character education and we have the core values so I think it was just about developing good character. I think it was a bit confusing at times because we have core values and then we were talking about Narnia Values and they’re not the same thing and I think maybe if they were tied in a little bit more, obviously it’s a separate project, it would have been better and it would have meant more to them I guess.

FI: So, what’s your core values?

FR1: Determination, honourable purpose, courage...

FR3: Accountability.

MI: There’s quite a lot, isn’t there?

FR3: So, they do link in, but I think because we were talking about Narnian Virtues and then they’d go to an assembly and they’d talk about the core values, it was just...

MI: One of the schools that was part of the project had 20 virtues, it was called the T20 and yeah, it was split in to two groups of 10; 10 were more performance and 10 were more moral virtues, but yeah, it’s a lot to remember. Okay, so yeah, so we’ve heard a bit about increasing their reflection, more about the virtues, anything else about what we were attempting to achieve through this Curriculum?



Male respondent 1: I thought this current Year 8 unit was really good because it was more like literature's greatest hits and you had, like [FR1] was saying, Cicero and other writers and I feel that brought a lot of value, particularly in this area where they don't frequently read Greek or Roman things from 2,500 years ago so it was really useful, so gluing things together. So, one week, one virtue, "Here's the example from Prince Caspian, here's an ancient text" and then exploring it that way but yeah, like others, I found it really challenging with a mid-ability Year 8 group to get people actually engaged with homework. Frequently, it was just a way of avoiding a detention, you could tell they were just doing it and going through the motions. Yeah, so struggled in this area but I think if it was in a different socio-economic context then it would have been different but...

FR1: But, that was the point of the project wasn't it, was looking at this sort of socio-economic context. I think we might have then... I think what might have been another challenge for us as well is that there is, because it is a Christian ethos school but it's also the only school in the area, so there are a lot of, so it's not that all the students that go here are Christian and there is tension between the school and the community and then a lot of the community seem to think that, "Oh the school is trying to shove them religion" and so I think there has been a bit of a tension between school and home that maybe might not necessarily occur at, if it were a secular school or if it were a school in the city where the students who are going there are being sent there because it is a Christian school and so I think that might, it's one of those odd things because I see what you guys are doing is getting students to think about deep moral questions and consider their own actions in making those closer links between the literature that they're studying and their own lives. [Interruption 0:10:50] Yeah, so I think that's one of the reasons that it's been tricky here. Would you guys agree with me?

FR2: But, I think that would be better tackled at primary schools as well; I think a primary setting would deal with some of that conflict.

FR1: And also, I think with primary school, because the parents are still doing a lot of homework with the kids in primary, they do the reading together and that seems to work quite nicely and it helps to... it would help to instil those sorts of virtues and those values at a younger age maybe. But, it sounded really, I feel like I just said loads of negative stuff and I really enjoyed it and I think it's a great idea!

MI: No, it's great, we've got a real balance of... [interruption 0:11:41].

MR1: I think when it links the virtues to a transactional piece of writing, that was really valuable, because for us, trying to prep them in to Year 9 and Year 10 and forward in to GCSE, if we could get a formal letter to C. S Lewis and then they develop their own, so those sequences I found really valuable because then you're teaching transactional writing through the



unit. So, in terms of the pragmatic function, it was really good in that regard.

MI: Thank you. We should stop there if you're being called away.

