



**Virtues Year by Year –  
A visual guide for teachers**

# Virtues Year by Year Teaching Guide

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| EYFS & YEAR 1 | <b>Health:</b> a virtue by which we care for bodily needs - part of <i>Prudence</i>                                                     | <b>Honesty:</b> a virtue by which we tell the truth - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Play:</b> a virtue by which we relax well - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| YEAR 2        | <b>Friendliness:</b> a virtue by which we act becomingly towards others - a part of <i>Justice</i>                                      | <b>Self-Knowledge:</b> a virtue by which know our feelings and choose whether to act on them or not - a part of <i>Prudence</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Confidence:</b> a virtue by which we hope in ourselves - a part of <i>Fortitude</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| YEAR 3        | <b>Perseverance:</b> a virtue by which we pursue the good despite difficulty or delay - a part of <i>Fortitude</i>                      | <b>Thankfulness:</b> a virtue by which we give thanks to those who have helped us - a part of <i>Justice</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Meditation:</b> a virtue by which we think upon what is good and the ways to reach that good, especially God, who is the highest Good - a part of <i>Justice</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| YEAR 4        | <b>Humility:</b> a virtue by which discover the truth about ourselves and take action for positive change - a part of <i>Temperance</i> | <b>Magnanimity:</b> a virtue by which we undertake difficult tasks with courage and confidence - a part of <i>Fortitude</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Peace:</b> a virtue by which we are united with our neighbour - a part of <i>Charity</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| YEAR 5        | <b>Truth:</b> a virtue by which we seek the truth in all things - a part of <i>Prudence</i>                                             | <p><b>Justice:</b> a virtue by which we give what is owed.</p> <p><b>Commutative justice</b> is about how we, as individuals, behave towards one another - 'how I treat my neighbour.' Virtues like friendliness, thankfulness, peace from previous years are all about this kind of justice. Acts of respect, courtesy, manners, kindness, and so forth are acts of this kind of justice.</p> | <p><b>Justice:</b> a virtue by which we give what is owed.</p> <p><b>Distributive justice</b> is about goods which are, or should be, common to all - 'how my neighbour should be treated.' Acts which address inequality or inequity, the subject of universal rights, the use of programs which address poverty, and care for the environment are all examples of distributive justice.</p> |
| YEAR 6        | <b>Fortitude:</b> a virtue by which we overcome difficulty to achieve a challenging good.                                               | <b>Health:</b> a virtue by which we exercise prudence with regards to our bodily needs - a part of <i>Prudence</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Studiousness:</b> a virtue by which we apply our minds - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

# Virtues in EYFS & Year 1

The virtues which apply to our youngest children are very basic. Their ability to reason independently and choose freely is quite limited so our approach to the virtues we apply must account for their stage of development. As their maturity develops the virtues mentioned here can be deepened so they can begin to apprehend what is good for them and what is bad. These virtues coincide with their developmental needs and lay the foundations for greater engagement in later years. Aside from these virtues, children should develop habits of singing as well as confidence in making the Sign of the Cross at the beginning and end of prayers.

| Health: a virtue by which we care for bodily needs - part of <i>Prudence</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Honesty: a virtue by which we tell the truth - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Play: a virtue by which we relax well - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p>Habits which contribute positively to our health are virtuous. At this stage of development the children have very little control over major things like diet and exercise, however, actions such as hand-washing, teeth-brushing, giving effort in PE, tidying up after themselves, safety in play, and many more such things are all actions which contribute to their health.</p> <p>Over time, as they develop, the approach to health should transition from trying to form healthy habits towards building an appreciation for what is healthy for them. Building awareness of health is especially important for children with health or dietary requirements so that they can begin to understand their own needs.</p> | <p>There are many levels to telling the truth which can be developed. As with all virtues, starting with whichever kind of honesty the children find easiest and then progressing towards other kinds of honesty they find more challenging is the best approach. The kinds and levels of honesty to be aware of are many, but here are some primary examples:</p> <p><i>honesty about one's own gifts and talents or another's;</i><br/><i>honesty about one's own role in poor behaviour;</i><br/><i>honesty about how we're feeling;</i></p> <p>Bringing out these different kinds of honesty and helping them to habitually tell the truth, even when it doesn't make them look good, will lay good foundations for virtue in the future. Honesty should always be named and rewarded for reinforcement.</p> | <p>The role of play is often overlooked, but not in the scheme of the virtues. Helping children to play well is complicated as it depends so much on their individual character and mood.</p> <p>However, helping them to develop an understanding of how they like to play, of when they need rest, and how it contributes to their well-being will be useful as they develop. Also, helping them to understand the difference between play and other activities will make it clearer for them what kinds of behaviour are appropriate at different times of the day as the years progress.</p> <p>Differences in disposition between boys and girls should always be considered as their approaches to play can vary widely.</p> |

## Virtues in Year 2

This year is critical for social and emotional development and the virtues which apply most to children of this age are geared towards this. Generally, as children reach this age the friendliness and confidence that young children naturally have becomes much more deliberately chosen and so must be deliberately cultivated. They also develop their sense of self, realising that not every belief is universal, and they gradually gain the ability to choose how to act on their emotions. The virtues for this year seek to respond to these important developmental thresholds. The importance of friendliness, confidence, and self-knowledge as foundations for their future development cannot be over-emphasised.

**Friendliness:** a virtue by which we act becomingly towards others - a part of *Justice*

We hope that all children will be naturally friendly, but it is often the case that, at this age, some develop that friendliness more naturally than others. Acknowledging friendliness as a virtue, and deliberately cultivating friendliness in children, will help all our children to develop this important virtue no matter their disposition.

Friendliness encompasses many ordinary behaviours that we usually call manners, things such as putting hands up, not calling out, proper responses to guests in class, and other such things. But friendliness goes deeper, encompassing issues of respect and dignity, especially towards those we disagree with. By now, many children will have formed some notion of whether or not they believe in God. With friendliness they will listen to others who do with respect and treat RE lessons as learning opportunities even if they believe that it does not apply to them. Stressing the wider relevance of RE input may be especially useful in this year.

**Self-Knowledge:** a virtue by which know our feelings and choose whether to act on them or not - a part of *Prudence*

As children progress through this year, they are able to understand their own emotions more clearly. Being able to put words to those emotions, to know what has elicited those emotions, and to think about how to act on those emotions, are all key dimensions to the virtue of self-knowledge. As children gain their sense of self-knowledge they also become more responsible for their actions. This means that personal responsibility can become the norm when tackling poor behaviour.

Your role in bringing children through this process towards personal responsibility is crucial as self-knowledge is vital for emotional maturity. Practices of self-reflection are important in self-knowledge, as well as discussing both good and poor choices with individuals. Also, class-wide discussions about particular emotions and feelings might be useful to spark self-reflection and grow emotional intelligence. Discussions which encourage children to speculate on what they might do in a fictional situation would be appropriate for an especially mature class. Any approach to prayer or teaching which includes reflection or an inner search is strongly encouraged.

**Confidence:** a virtue by which we hope in ourselves - a part of *Fortitude*

Confidence is the virtue by which we learn to hope in our own actions, especially when faced with challenges or disappointment. During this year the individual character of each child often becomes much more apparent and behaviours from shy or boisterous children become much more distinct. These differences mean the challenges each child faces can vary when it comes to confidence. For example, for some this will mean overcoming discouragement after answering incorrectly, for others it will be simply making a start on a challenging task.

Ultimately, though it may look differently in different children, the goal in training them in confidence is so that nothing holds them back from their potential. Each child should be encouraged to take confidence as a real goal for them, and every opportunity should be taken to cultivate confidence even in children who already seem confident. Also, helping them to identify what holds them back and growing their self-knowledge of that is essential to growth in confidence.

# Virtues in Year 3

Being a vital age for development coupled with an acceleration in the curriculum makes Year 3 a difficult one both for children and teachers. Any virtues that we cultivate in our children must account for both the development and the curriculum, recognising that this year represents a new stage in their lives and a new level of maturity and responsibility. These virtues should equip our children to face the coming challenges and take a more proactive approach to their needs.

**Perseverance:** a virtue by which we pursue the good despite difficulty or delay - a part of *Fortitude*

This year represents such an increase in difficulty because the knowledge they are seeking to acquire (which is the good they are seeking) now becomes much more difficult to obtain and the skills that we teach them take longer to acquire.

Without perseverance they will become discouraged. No longer can our children, at this crucial stage, remain comfortable in easy or short tasks because now the most important foundations for the future are laid. To make the transition, then, into this year and into the future, they must be helped to acquire perseverance. Helping children to recognise that some tasks will require time and to see that they cannot make something perfect if time is limited are both important features of perseverance.

Also, helping children to recognize their weaknesses and to develop a plan to overcome them is also a practice of perseverance. Note that this virtue is closely related to the virtue of patience. There are many strategies available to a teacher to encourage perseverance but there are two main approaches: being honest about the effort required in a particular task, and a relentlessly positive attitude. Activities which help children envision their success, and which restore and maintain a positive class spirit are strongly encouraged. Perseverance should be named and rewarded to encourage others.

**Thankfulness:** a virtue by which we give thanks to those who have helped us - a part of *Justice*

When undertaking challenging tasks we are always in needs of one another's help. During this year particularly, our children should discover that they cannot work things out on their own, but need help. Helping them to recognise this need and giving them the courage to ask for help has, hopefully, been the result of confidence last year.

This year, the need to be thankful for the help we receive should be highlighted, and guidance for how to be thankful should be made explicit - notes, gifts, words, help, and anything else which can symbolise thankfulness should be encouraged.

This virtue includes recognising who helps us and the appropriate level of thanks that we should give in response. Ultimately, by the end of the year, the children should be able to recognise that they are each bound together by bonds of mutual gratitude. Asking children who they helped or who helped them might be useful in making thankfulness present to them. Also, picking up on the help that children with more challenging behaviour give to others will be useful to help keep those children bound to other children and give them greater chance for good behaviour in the long run.

**Meditation:** a virtue by which we think upon what is good and the ways to reach that good, especially God, who is the highest Good - a part of *Justice*

We tend to think of meditation as an activity, however it is named among the virtues as a habit of reflecting on how our individual actions connect with our goals. In everything we do we are always seeking some good. Meditation helps us to recognise what goods we are seeking and how well our actions lead us to that good.

Ultimately, the goal of meditation is to develop clarity about how the choices we make lead us to where, and who, we want to be. This virtue builds on the self-knowledge virtue from last year and develops it further into reflection about their actions and choices. As our children begin to develop deeper levels self-awareness, we must help them in the practices which facilitate that journey. Actual meditation sessions during prayer will be useful, as well as asking children about how their actions connect with their goals. Helping children who struggle with poor behaviour to recognise that their choices often produce the opposite of their aims might be effective to cultivate their virtue of meditation.

The wider experience of Catholic schooling opens the way for a recognition that the ultimate good we are all seeking is God, the highest Good, and that all our individual goods are ordered towards Him. This point can be drawn out in RE lessons or other ways depending on the disposition of the class.

# Virtues in Year 4

This year represents a major transition into becoming more responsible and self-sufficient and we have, as our goal, helping the children to become self-starters in preparation for Years 5 & 6. The fruits of previous years should become cemented this year and the foundations laid for the coming challenges. The focus of this year, then, is centred around maturity, responsibility, and ownership to enable our children to begin taking some leadership in their own lives. It is recommended to take account of the virtues from previous years so that major short-falls can be addressed early and to ease their transition into more serious year groups.

| <b>Humility:</b> a virtue by which discover the truth about ourselves and take action for positive change - a part of <i>Temperance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Magnanimity:</b> a virtue by which we undertake difficult tasks with courage and confidence - a part of <i>Fortitude</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Peace:</b> a virtue by which we are united with our neighbour - a part of <i>Charity</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p>Earlier years have focused on the virtues of honesty, self knowledge, and meditation so that they develop the habits of self-discovery. Having acquired the skills to know themselves, their strengths and their weaknesses, and how their actions connect with their goals, they require humility, which means to take responsibility for our self-discovery and to act in light of it.</p> <p>Humility in the classroom will mean facilitating that discovery process, reinforcing/reintroducing the process in children who have struggled to engage in self-discovery, as well as guiding them in ways that they can both address their weaknesses and enhance their strengths.</p> <p>Reflective activities are strongly encouraged, as in earlier years. Use every opportunity to ask children how they intend to take responsibility for the situations they find themselves in. Opportunities present themselves, for example, when they come with a problem, when they get upset about something. Poor behaviour presents an opportunity to encourage them to consider the choices they need to make and what responsibility they need to take. Humility also includes knowing when you have reached your limit and need help, so helping children to identify when that is, is also key.</p> | <p>This virtue is the application of confidence and perseverance, treated in previous years, to difficult tasks. The level of difficulty the children will experience during this year and in the coming years is far and above the sort of challenges they have faced before. In order to face these new trials we must be magnanimous, facing the road ahead with the confidence that whatever difficulty lies ahead we can overcome it with perseverance, with courage, and with the help of those around us. This will be helped by the process of self-discovery mentioned above, as well as humility, so that they know to ask for help when things become too difficult.</p> <p>Magnanimity has two sides that must be cultivated. The first is an honesty about the difficulties they are faced with. The second is a courageous and positive response to that challenge. Presenting learning materials with an honesty as to their difficulty level is a major way to address the the first side to magnanimity. Displaying and encouraging a relentless positivity about challenges and difficulties is a way to address the second. It might also be useful to create and promote afterschool learning and extracurricular activities to create more avenues for children to overcome their weaknesses.</p> <p>The goal of cultivating magnanimity in our children is to make them courageous in the face of challenges, instead of sheltering them from difficulty. Ultimately our aim is to make difficulty normal, but the courage and skills to overcome normal as well.</p> | <p>This virtue is once more the fulfilment of previous virtues, namely the virtues of friendliness and thankfulness. Peace is also a virtue whereby we respond with love to those who disagree with us. It is also the virtue by which we seek the best for other people, regardless of their attitude towards us. In practice this virtue includes anything which fosters unity within the class and whatever enables disagreements to be had well and in a friendly manner.</p> <p>Facilitating discussions around difficult topics when they arise and introducing them to ordered, proper ways to discuss and debate will be key. These kinds of activities respond to the fact that many children at this stage have formed differing opinions, and without good habits of discussion can become disruptive.</p> <p>Peace is considered a fruit of the Theological Virtue of Charity, and so it comes from God and goes beyond normal human powers. This kind of peace is not merely the absence of conflict, which is the human-level of peace, but goes beyond that as a desire to be truly united with others, and even with our enemies. Acts of worship focussed on peace, whether inner peace, peace with our neighbour, or world peace, are strongly encouraged during this year.</p> |

# Virtues in Year 5

Year 5 is a vital year for developing personal and academic maturity and these virtues aim to build on those which have come before to develop that maturity. Developing intentional maturity is key as they develop deeper learning through the curriculum, but also for maintaining good behaviour based on personal responsibility. Ultimately this year represents a major development from doing good because they are told to, towards doing what is good because they understand what is good and they freely choose to act in accord with that knowledge. By focussing on Justice we intend for children to take their attitude and approach to others seriously and to engage issues of justice with growing maturity. Also, the focus on Truth as a virtue, we aim to cultivate a proactive love for the truth, which should equip them to become self-starters in their approach to education. Children leaving this year should approach self-discovery and responsible decision-making as an ordinary part of life and should possess the moral maturity to understand how each of their actions affect themselves and others.

## Truth: a virtue by which we seek the truth in all things - a part of *Prudence*

The kind of learning which children of this age begin to undertake is different from what has come before; it requires their active engagement beyond what they have previously experienced. We begin encouraging a deeper level of learning which teaches them to look beyond the immediate task or facts, and into the principles behind them. The virtue of truth is the habit of seeking that deeper knowledge and trying to see how all truths fit together.

This virtue is therefore two-fold and both sides should be cultivated. The first side, seeking a deeper level of knowledge and engagement, can be easily achieved through the curriculum and you can connect the virtue of truth with the curriculum in your approach. If children are encouraged to look beyond what they are presented with on a regular basis, they will be walking the road towards truth.

The second side to the virtue of truth, of putting all truths together, seems more challenging but children of this age are already trying to do this by synthesising everything they have learned and testing what fits and what does not. Taking the habit of putting all truths in connection with one another as a goal for the year means highlighting connections between different areas of learning and assisting them in making those connections for themselves. Asking the question of how such-and-such fits with another thing they have learned is also a good approach. Any activity which reinforces a habit of deeper searching builds on this virtue.

## Justice: a virtue by which we give what is owed.

Awareness of justice is always a school-wide project but justice takes on newer and deeper meanings at this stage of development as children become increasingly responsible for their own choices and as those choices have greater impact on the world around them. Their maturity makes it possible to discuss issues of justice and to explore different dimensions of justice as a part of their learning. However, developing maturity also means increasing levels of personal responsibility in their behaviour.

There are **two main layers to justice**, and introducing children to these two will be important to form their understanding and to make more mature choices. The two categories are: commutative justice, and distributive justice.

- 1. Commutative justice** is about how we, as individuals, behave towards one another - 'how I treat my neighbour.' Virtues like friendliness, thankfulness, peace from previous years are all about this kind of justice. Acts of respect, courtesy, manners, kindness, and so forth are acts of this kind of justice.
- 2. Distributive justice** is about goods which are, or should be, common to all - 'how my neighbour should be treated.' Acts which address inequality or inequity, the subject of universal rights, the use of programs which address poverty, and care for the environment are all examples of distributive justice.

There are many sides to cultivating justice as a virtue in our children. Ultimately the main avenues or approach are teaching about justice issues and helping them to engage those issues effectively, and personal practice of justice in behaviour. To help children to engage in matters of justice, roleplaying is particularly effective. To put themselves in the shoes of the most vulnerable through role-play or discussions of justice issues will help them to engage with what it means to build a just society and to care for the vulnerable. A point should be also made of giving some leadership or responsibility to these children in the school's justice-focused projects. Lastly, open discussion and debate about issues of justice will be fruitful and we encourage teachers to find effective ways to facilitate that kind of discussion. Issues of justice are so many and so deep they cannot be explored here, however all teachers are encouraged to share and explore issues, guides, or resources that they find. However, care should be taken to remain impartial even in contentious matters. Lastly, promoting justice as something we practice on a personal level is vital to cultivating justice as a virtue, as something they habitually act on. Ways to do this include focussing the approach to behaviour on personal responsibility and on recognising that we cause real harm and injustice through poor behaviour. Also, explicitly promoting and rewarding just behaviour will serve to help all children to understand their personal approach to justice, rather than just those who struggle with behaviour the most.

# Virtues in Year 6

Exams, a burgeoning social awareness, heightened expectations, and much more besides - this year is a complex and challenging one for many of our children. The goal of the virtues in this year is to bring to fruition the resilience which has been cultivated, and to continue deepening a sense of personal responsibility for what each of them is undertaking. Ultimately, this year should not only enable them to reach their utmost academic potential, but also to approach themselves and the challenges they face with a new level of maturity.

**Fortitude:** a virtue by which we overcome difficulty to achieve a challenging good.

End-of-year exams loom large on the curriculum as well as on the mental horizon of our children. To overcome this significant challenge they need the virtue of fortitude. Different elements of fortitude include confidence, perseverance, and magnanimity, all of which have already been explored in prior years. Faced with the coming challenge, it is time for them to piece those dimensions together to produce the fruits of fortitude: a positive bias towards action which can overcome any challenge and which can endure any hardship.

Understanding what fortitude looks like for each character in the classroom is key to cultivating all fortitude as a whole. For example, a shy child may not demonstrate much confidence when answering questions in class, however they might show great confidence when faced with a challenging piece of work. Building upon the kind of confidence that this child possesses as a means to build confidence in other areas of their life will be a way forward.

Strategies for cultivating this virtue include honesty about difficulty level, asking the children what they are going to do about an academic challenge they are facing, picking up on subtle ways that different children demonstrate confidence, perseverance, and magnanimity. Having a relentless positivity and a can-do attitude as a teacher is vital in communicating those same attributes to our children.

**Health:** a virtue by which we exercise prudence with regards to our bodily needs - a part of *Prudence*

The stresses and strains of exams, difficult learning, a growing social awareness, and the various anxieties that come from being a child in this difficult age, and in this cultural climate, must be taken seriously. In the same way that they have been encouraged to take responsibility for their choices in previous years, we now aim to help them to take deliberate care for their own physical and mental well-being.

Cognisant of the stresses through the year, as well as major events in class which shape their overall morale, we must give our children the tools to look after themselves. Much of your approach to this virtue comes from your own experience and instinct as a teacher and as a human being, as well as your personal knowledge of the children's welfare. By using skills of personal reflection, self-knowledge, meditation, and honesty, we can facilitate a growing emotional intelligence and equip them to address both positive and negative developments in their emotional lives.

This focus on health as a virtue should inform our approach to RSE. Gory details are one thing, and the questions which emerge should be answered as fruitfully as possible, but equipping them with an appreciation for their emotional health is a core component which children often overlook. Also, assisting girls to develop a positive approach to issues of feminine health which can become present even at this age is essential.

**Studiousness:** a virtue by which we apply our minds - a part of *Temperance*

As our children approach the greatest academic challenge they have yet encountered they must develop the virtue of studiousness. Of course, this virtue includes skills which will equip them to study and revise for exams, much of which is fleshed out in your approach to the curriculum. The virtue, however, goes beyond study skills. The virtue of studiousness includes understanding what needs to be learned, as well as the process that it will take to learn it.

A studious student is more than a child who studies a lot, but is someone who knows what needs to be learned, the means by which they will learn it, and who takes personal responsibility for that process of learning.

Building up and drawing upon skills of self-knowledge and truth as explored in previous years will be helpful and effective. Anything which encourages children to plan their studies and revision themselves, especially for more advanced children, is strongly encouraged. Your experience as a teacher is vital to inform your approach to this virtue.

While approaches to learning will vary according to ability level, cultivating the attitude of learning and encouraging active engagement with the materials they are presented with is the main focus of studiousness and applies to every child. Indeed, even if a child's academic ability does not skyrocket, if they become an engaged, habitual learner, we have succeeded in our mission as teachers and cultivated the virtue of studiousness.