

**AN EVALUATION OF THE POWER OF KINDNESS IN PRIMARY AGED  
CHILDREN: A WHOLE-CLASS INTERVENTION**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

Kindness has been considered 'the new cool' (Rowland, 2018), after research has revealed links with improved health, relationships and well-being (Curry et al., 2018). In this study, kindness is central to a whole-class intervention where children are encouraged to develop and practice this virtue. Two theories underpin the programme: positive psychology (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) and neo-Aristotelian character education (Sanderse, 2012).

A mixed methods design was used to evaluate the impact of the six-week intervention on children's wellbeing, peer acceptance and kindness compared to a control group. Self-report measures were used at three time points – pre-intervention, post-intervention and after a six-week follow up period – alongside a teacher interview and child focus group, post-intervention. Quantitative data revealed that the kindness intervention had no significant effects on well-being, peer acceptance and kindness in children, whilst teacher and child reports indicated positive improvements in prosocial behaviours, emotional regulation and virtue literacy. Interestingly, quantitative correlations indicated a relationship between kindness and both peer acceptance and well-being. The divergence in findings led to critical consideration of data collection methods and possible confounding factors. Teacher and child reports should be treated with caution due to a relatively small number of participants and the possible influence of a response bias. This research highlights the challenges of intervention-based research in schools and possible solutions including an investment in robust training. Children offered invaluable perspectives in helping to understand the outcomes of the study.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CE</b>	Character Education
<b>EP</b>	Educational Psychologist
<b>HIFAMAS</b>	How I Feel About Myself and School Questionnaire
<b>LITOP</b>	Like to Play Questionnaire
<b>SENDCo</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator
<b>SKS</b>	School Kindness Scale
<b>TEP</b>	Trainee Educational Psychologist
<b>VIA-IS</b>	Values in Action Inventory of Strengths
<b>VIA-YS</b>	Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Context**

This research forms the first volume of a two-part thesis which is required for the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme at the University of Birmingham. It was completed whilst on placement as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) in a West Midlands Local Authority.

## **1.2 Background and Rationale**

This research investigates the impact of The Power of Kindness Project using a mixed methods study with two Year 4 classes and their teachers. The Power of Kindness Project is a whole-class intervention, which aims to develop kindness and improve well-being and peer relationships in school-aged children. The intervention was developed as part of this doctoral thesis and is underpinned by neo-Aristotelian character education (Sanderse, 2012) and the positive psychology perspective (Peterson and Seligman, 2004), which are explored in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the literature review.

The decision to implement such an intervention, was partly motivated by a personal interest in supporting children to develop good character as part of their education, which I developed in my past role as an assistant educational psychologist (EP) working full-time in one primary school. Alongside my supervisor, we developed a token-based whole-school reward system called REKO, that encouraged children to use three selected character strengths, which the school identified as most

valuable. 'REK' represents **R**esilience, **E**ffort and **K**indness and **O** signified the tokens. Challenging behaviour was a concern for staff members, and they felt that children required support and guidance to understand the meaning of 'being good' and to develop a motivation to act morally. Helping children to identify and utilise their strengths is something I value in my practice as a trainee EP, so developing an intervention that could be more widely beneficial to children is something I wanted to take further as part of this Volume 1 research.

Further exploration of the research and literature on the development of character led to two initial advancements of the programme. Firstly, the validity of using rewards to develop character strengths and virtues came into question when reviewing mixed outcomes within the literature. Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral reasoning describes how rewards and punishment guide children in the early stages, before their behaviours are eventually determined by their own personal values and conscience. However, the use of rewards in character education (CE) has been criticised as the use of external rewards may diminish intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1997). Batson et al. (1978) concluded that extrinsic incentives can undermine the motivation to help others and suggested "A person's kindness, it seems, cannot be bought" (p.90). Fabes et al. (1989) found that children who received rewards for helping, sharing and caring were less likely to keep going with these things when compared to others who did not. More recently, Marshall, Caldwell and Foster (2011) compared two CE programmes. One of the primary differences between the programmes was student motivation (extrinsic through rewards for positive character strengths or intrinsic through curriculum integration)

and the results showed that discipline referrals dropped by 35% in the schools using the programme fostering intrinsic motivation, compared to 16% in the comparison schools. Based on the conclusions drawn from the literature, The Power of Kindness Project does not use rewards to develop character and aims to cultivate an intrinsic motivation to act virtuously from the outset.

Secondly, further thought was given to the choice and number of character strengths focussed on within the programme. One aim of the project is for children to cultivate and enhance their use of virtues or character strengths and for this to occur, sufficient time is required for children to fully understand, habituate and practice the virtue (Aristotle, cited in Bowditch, 2008). The nature of this research as part of the doctoral thesis also places some restraints on capacity, so the idea of focusing on one universally accepted character strength was taken forward. The decision to focus on kindness is detailed in Table 1 in Section 2.8 and summarised below:

- kindness is conceptualised as a character strength or virtue that is theorised to lead to increases in psychological flourishing when acquired;
- meta-analysis research has shown kindness-based interventions to be associated with improvements in well-being;
- kindness is related to positive outcomes, not only for the individual practising the virtue, but also the recipient which leads to improved relationships; and
- research has shown positive outcomes of kindness-based interventions across cultures.

Beyond my own interest in CE, there are several motivations to develop a programme which aims to cultivate good character and well-being in school-aged children which are detailed in Chapter 2. In summary:

- CE programmes have been associated with improvements in academic achievement, self-regulatory behaviour, positive emotions and relationships;
- the development of a universal intervention aiming to improve well-being, helps to reach the increasing numbers of young people who show some signs of mental health difficulties;
- it provides a refreshing angle to tackle well-being which focusses on what is going well rather than fixing the deficits within children and young people;
- there is only one existing study looking at kindness-based interventions in school aged children;
- there are some barriers to implementing CE in schools which this programme aims to overcome; and
- CE features in the recent Ofsted '*Education Inspection Framework*' in September 2019 (Education Inspection Framework, 2019), so this research is timely in helping schools develop creative ways to incorporate CE into the curriculum.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 An Introduction to Character Education

#### 2.1.1 Defining Character Education

Before considering the definition of 'character education', it is important to note what is meant by 'character'. We commonly refer to someone acting atypically or eccentrically as having 'a character', but this research uses Berkowitz and Bier's following definition of the term:

*"...the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent...character is multifaceted. It is psychological."*

(Berkowitz and Bier, 2004, p.73)

Berkowitz and Bier (2004) go on to suggest these facets of character develop throughout life, especially during childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, they are predominately driven by family, but also the school context. Jeynes' (2017) meta-analysis of CE programmes, states that Lickona's (1991) definition of CE is "probably the most recognized in contemporary society" (p.2). He defines CE as,

*"...the deliberate effort to develop the virtues that enable us to lead fulfilling lives and build a better world."* (Lickona, 1991, p.228)

Previously, the definition of character education has lacked some consistency within the literature (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007), however Jeynes (2017) revealed a high

level of homogeneity in the definitions used amongst the 52 studies included in his meta-analysis. The quality of the definition was measured on a scale of 0 to 3, revealing a mean quality rating of 2.69. The Jubilee Centre's *'Framework for Character Education in Schools'* (2017) uses a similar definition describing CE as,

*"...all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues"* (Jubilee Centre, 2017, p.2)

The principles agreed in these definitions were also found to underlie 78 CE programmes that were reviewed by Berkowitz and Bier (2007). They found that regardless of titles given to these programmes, all suggested that CE is a deliberate effort to teach and cultivate positive strengths or virtues in young people.

### *2.1.2 A Brief History*

The notion of developing good character has seen a renewal of interest in both education and politics in the UK and internationally (Arthur, 2005; 2008; Morgan, 2014 cited in Arthur et al., 2015), however educating students in virtues and character has a long history tracing back to ancient Greek philosophy and particularly the work of Plato and Aristotle (Arifin, 2017). This approach to moral education is described by Lickona (1993) as, "as old as education itself" and is founded on the view that "education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good" (p.6).

In the UK, schools became influenced by CE in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but it was not until 1958 when a seminal paper by Anscombe (1958) led to the renaissance of Aristotle's approach to virtue ethics in the 1970s and 80s and many influential philosophers became interested in Aristotelian concepts of character and virtue (Jubilee Centre, 2015). Despite this long history, CE has only recently been reflected in policy development. CE emerged in education policy in the government's Green Paper, *'Schools. Building on Success'* (2001) and in 2011, when a call for building character in schools increased, following the riots across the country. Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) claimed these were caused by people having "a twisted moral code" (cited in Jubilee Centre, 2015, p.8). In 2012, the Jubilee Centre of Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham was established, which focusses on the development and research of character and virtues in the workplace, communities and schools. Recent developments have led to the Jubilee Centre working closely with the implementation of the new Ofsted *'Education Inspection Framework'* in September 2019 (Education Inspection Framework, 2019), which is set to ensure that teaching staff have a duty to develop positive personal traits and virtues in their students to help guide their behaviour. The government published a non-statutory guidance for schools titled *'Character Education: Framework Guidance'* (DfE, 2019) to help them consider the rationale for character education and the practical implementation of provision.

CE is most often associated with two underpinning theories, namely, neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and a strand of social science called positive psychology. These are explored below.

## 2.2 Neo-Aristotelian Character Education

The history of CE dates back to the work of Aristotle (340BC) and neo-Aristotelian character education is the contemporary application of Aristotle's ideas to CE (Kristjánsson, 2015). Neo-Aristotelian perspectives suggest that the cultivation of moral character is essential to human flourishing in life and reaching a state of 'eudaimonia' (Sanderse, 2012). Ackrill (1980) defines this as simply meaning "the best possible life" (p.24). Throughout this thesis, the terms happiness, well-being and flourishing will be used interchangeably. However it is worth noting that flourishing entails both positive affect (i.e. life satisfaction and positive emotions), positive social functioning (i.e. social acceptance, integration and contribution) and positive psychological functioning (i.e. autonomy and purpose in life) which suggests that flourishing is good for society as well as the individual (Nelson, Cole, Layous and Lyubomirsky, 2016).

Virtues are defined by Aristotle as:

*'...a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is as the prudent man would determine it.'* (Aristotle, cited in Sanderse, 2012, p.80)

Aristotle refers to 'the mean' as a middle point between a virtue's excess and deficiency and the ability to reflect critically and learn from experiences is required to find the mean. This well-founded judgement, which considers both the context

and circumstances is referred to in Greek terms as 'phronesis', meaning practical wisdom or 'good sense' (Sanderse, 2012). This overarching 'meta-virtue' is necessary for good character and is required to solve moral dilemmas by learning from previous mistakes, live with an open mind and be reflective on experiences and decisions (Jubilee Centre, 2017). "The degree to which one is phronimos is a matter of the probability...that one will respond in a given situation in the best way and in accordance with the best reasons available to them." (Darnell, Gulliford, Kristjánsson and Paris, 2019, p.15).

Neo-Aristotelian CE does not define a specific list of virtues, as different cultures and contexts may recognise certain virtues very differently. However, the Jubilee Centre, whose work is underpinned by neo-Aristotelian principles, have reported a number of virtues that transcend time and culture, which CE practices may draw upon. These include gratitude, respect, justice and honesty. The Jubilee Centre developed a '*Framework for Character Education*' in 2017 which defines some key features:

- *"Character education is more than just a subject. It has a place in the culture and functions of families, classrooms, schools and other institutions."*
- *"It is about helping students grasp what is ethically important in situations and how to act for the right reasons, such that they become more autonomous and reflective in the practice of virtue."*
- *"The aim of character education is the development of good sense, or practical wisdom; the capacity to choose intelligently between alternatives."*

(Jubilee Centre's Framework for Character Education in Schools, 2017, p.2)

### *2.2.1 A Neo-Aristotelian Model of Moral Development*

It is not enough to assume that every person will take the same journey to become virtuous, given the varied experiences and contexts individuals are brought up in. The model of moral development accounts for these differences and describes how the nature of their moral education in early childhood will govern which process they take. Some will progress faultlessly through the trajectory of virtue habituation, developing virtues which are sought autonomously and chosen reflectively, providing them with intrinsic motivation to act virtuously. Others may need to detour through a path of practical habituation, which supports them to develop skills of self-regulation required to act virtuously at least motivated by extrinsic factors. Habituation, as Aristotle defines it, is the process of imitation and repetition of virtuous actions performed by a virtuous person. Through repetition and imitation, a young person learns to take pleasure in acting virtuously and continues to do so autonomously (Aristotle, cited in Bowditch, 2008).

### *2.2.2 Neo-Aristotelian Character Education Practices*

For most, virtue knowledge, understanding and reasoning can be supported by several teaching practices detailed in neo-Aristotelian character education literature. Sanderse (2012) notes three important vehicles of teaching good character: 'Socratic dialogue', 'role models' and 'use of the arts'. Socrates describes dialogue as:

*“...a shared enquiry by persistently asking each other questions that stimulate critical thinking and illuminate and justify the meaning of ideas.”*  
(Sanderse, 2012, p.150)

The second teaching practice is ‘role modelling’. It is suggested that the moral dimensions of teaching have more to do with being a ‘moral teacher’ than ‘teaching morals’. Teachings of character education summarised by Sanderse (2012) suggests that good character can only be cultivated by teachers in their students if they demonstrate good character themselves. Finally, neo-Aristotelian perspectives suggest that moral education can be taught using the arts. Literature, poetry and film can be used to promote critical thinking, pose ethical questions and guide emotions to dispose virtuous actions. Some of these practices help to inform the development of The Power of Kindness Project which is discussed in Section 2.7.

### **2.3 Positive Psychology and Character Education**

Contemporary CE has had the support from positive psychology, a strand of social science, which can be described as:

*‘...the scientific study of optimal human functioning [that] aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive.’*  
(Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.427)

Positive psychology attends to promoting the positive aspects of life rather than ameliorating the negatives (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) by developing

strengths and virtues leading to a thriving society (Gable and Haidt, 2005). The history of positive psychology defined in this way, can be sourced in James' (1902) writings on a 'healthy mind', in Allport's (1958) interest in positive human traits, in Maslow's (1968) promotion of research into healthy people rather than the sick and in the study of resilience in sick children (Cowan, 2000). Since then, psychology has focussed predominately on the absence of mental disorder to describe well-being rather than the presence of positive psychological resources, but the past near 20 years have seen a new movement of positive psychology (Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood, 2006).

Positive psychology aims to research the things that go well in life and contribute to human flourishing or well-being (Gable and Haidt, 2005). These include components of both hedonic well-being (i.e. life satisfaction, positive affect and happiness; Diener, 1984) and eudaimonic well-being (i.e. autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relationships and purpose in life; Keyes, 2002; Ryff, 1989). Positive psychology operates at three pillars: 'Positive Experience', that is 'feeling good', 'Positive Individual Traits' which describes the strengths, virtues and personal qualities necessary to 'being good' and finally, 'Positive Institutions', which emphasises the actions or positive behaviours that go beyond ourselves and contribute to the development of the community.

### *2.3.1 Positive Psychology and Character Strengths*

Proctor, Maltby and Linley (2011) suggest that the identification and use of one's character strengths is hypothesised to increase an individual's sense of identity and

purpose and therefore their well-being. The benefits of exercising good character have led to the development of a classification system of virtues, which has identified twenty-four character strengths, categorised under six overarching virtues: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom and transcendence (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). The Values In Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) is used in schools to help students identify their 'top five' or 'signature strengths' which Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest people possess. These are the personal characteristics that a person feels they own and frequently exercise. Seligman's (2005) systematic research among adults, demonstrated lasting effects on happiness when adults were encouraged to identify and use their signature strengths in a new way every day. Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2002) is a useful model to explain the relationship between using strengths and well-being. They suggest that people are more engaged, intrinsically motivated and demonstrate higher levels of well-being when they have feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness. Utilising practices which focus on strength development enhances feelings of competence; encouraging people to choose which strengths to use or how they want to use them fosters feelings of autonomy; and increased opportunities for cooperation and group practice increases feelings of connectedness.

Whilst the terms 'virtues' and 'strengths' are interchangeably used in virtue ethics, Peterson and Seligman (2004) have defined them distinctively. Character strengths are the 'psychological ingredients' that constitute a virtue, and virtues are the core values identified by religious thinkers and moral philosophers. In some research

(Govindji and Linley, 2007), a broader definition of psychological strengths is used to include activities that a person enjoys doing and is naturally good at, which is not synonymous with the moral presence of a strength and differs from the meaning given to virtues in neo-Aristotelian character education. Therefore, caution should be taken to define these terms used throughout the literature. Throughout this research, the terms 'virtue' and 'character strengths' will be used interchangeably with the same meaning.

#### **2.4 Disentangling the Perspectives of Positive Psychology and Neo-Aristotelian Character Education**

Whilst there are some parallels between neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology, there are also some contrasts which Sanderse (2012) attempts to disentangle. The first distinction that Sanderse (2012) makes, is that 'flourishing' or 'happiness' is assumed to be a moral concept in neo-Aristotelian character education, whereas in positive psychology it is not. 'Moral' is described broadly as having an interest in the well-being of others, in addition to one's personal well-being. Therefore, the problem arises that children could be very happy, but act immorally at the same time. However, those in favour of positive psychology practices would argue that those people who have increased levels of happiness, less stress and conflict, will be less inclined to hurt others and more likely to have better friendships. Fredrickson (2001) suggests that according to the 'broaden-and-build' theory of positive emotions, there is a link between experiencing feelings of positive emotion and a person's flourishing, their capabilities to build relationships and their capacity for fostering virtues. This can explain why teaching happiness

(i.e. teaching children how to manage negative feelings and boost positive emotions and self-confidence, Sanderse, 2012) can support students' moral education as well.

Sanderse (2012) goes on to suggest that whilst positive psychology interventions are having positive impacts on moral behaviours, teachers are not supporting students to connect feelings of happiness and the cultivation of virtues. Positive psychology assumes that happy people are more inclined to act virtuously, whereas neo-Aristotelian principles, suggest that 'happiness' or 'flourishing' is the ultimate goal, and the acquisition of virtues is essential to one's happiness. Shankland and Rosset (2016) also highlight that with regards to positive psychology interventions focussing on gratitude, emphasis is often placed on the effects (i.e. enhancing well-being) rather than on the intrinsic value of gratitude. Kristjánsson (2013) suggests that students should understand that being virtuous is a reward in itself through the use of stories and opportunities to reflect, rather than seeing it as a means to some other end.

Another contrast between positive psychology and a neo-Aristotelian standpoint is the presence of the over-arching virtue of 'practical wisdom' in the latter. This well-founded judgement allows humans to flourish by experiencing and overcoming all emotions including fear and anger according to the 'doctrine of the mean' (in moderation), leading to resilience and development of capabilities. In contrast, positive psychologists encourage only experiences that lead to positive emotions in the pursuit of flourishing (Sanderse, 2012). Ciarrochi et al. (2016) recognised this

criticism and proposed that positive psychology in schools should recognise the contextual influences and aim to “increase behaviours that helps a person to flexibly adapt to their environment in a way that is value consistent and helps them to reach their full potential” (p.7). However, this thinking is yet to inform many positive psychology interventions in schools.

Finally, the two approaches differ in their understanding of ‘happiness’. Sanderse (2012) suggests that those who teach happiness, are mostly interpreting it in terms of hedonism (making people feel good) or life satisfaction (encouraging a positive attitude towards life), whereas neo-Aristotelian education infers happiness from the ‘eudaimonistic’ perspective, which refers to the pleasure people acquire from self-actualisation and developing their capabilities. It seems that Sanderse’s (2012) critique of positive psychology refers to Seligman’s initial conceptualisation, which described the focus of positive psychology as ‘authentic happiness’, where ‘life satisfaction’ was the gold standard for measuring this construct (Seligman, 2003b). Since then, his conceptualisation has changed to go beyond the subjective report of one’s happiness to include “having good meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment” (Seligman, 2003b). He describes this as “well-being theory”, where the goal is to increase flourishing (Seligman, 2011, p.25). However, Sanderse (2012) proposes that these elements within cultivating happiness, do not always transcend into positive psychology interventions. Moreover, positive psychology intervention research predominately uses measures of ‘life satisfaction’ to evaluate the effects of the intervention, which may suggest that these changes in theory have not translated into research and practice.

Despite these differences, Sanderson (2012) advocates that both perspectives can benefit one another. On one hand, those who 'teach happiness' can highlight the importance of fixing happiness to what people care about and enjoy, and neo-Aristotelian's can emphasise that virtue is not a welcomed bonus, but instead, "central to the cultivation of happiness" (Sanderson, 2012, p.182).

## **2.5 Positive Psychology Interventions**

Following the seminal paper on positive psychology in 2000 by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, many interventions based on the principles of positive psychology have emerged. Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) define these as programs, practices, treatment methods or activities "aimed at cultivating positive feelings, positive behaviours, or positive cognitions" (p.467) which lead to increased levels of well-being. In 2019, White, Uttl and Holder published a meta-analysis of positive psychology interventions in adults and children. They re-analysed the studies selected in two published meta-analyses, Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) and Bolger et al. (2013), taking into account a small sample size bias which they suggest was overlooked in the previous studies. Outcomes of the meta-analysis suggest that positive psychology interventions had a small but significant effect on well-being (effect size=.10), which is smaller than previously reported. Studies exploring the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions mostly feature adult participants. However more recently, the rise in positive psychology has seen new intervention models aimed at promoting well-being and positive mental health in schools and

they are emerging into these contexts with varying degrees of successful implementation and effectiveness (Shankland and Rosset 2016).

A review of school-based positive psychology interventions by Waters (2011) identified 12 programmes designed to either cultivate pupil's positive emotions, resilience or character strengths (e.g. gratitude, serenity and hope). Programmes encouraging pupils to identify and utilise their own personal character strengths using the Values In Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) reported greater increases in social skills and school engagement and enjoyment (Seligman, et al., 2009). In Shankland and Rosset's, (2016) review of school-based brief positive psychology interventions, in addition to programmes focussing on namely, gratitude, mindfulness and character strengths, interventions aimed to foster positive relationships were found to be essential to the development of well-being. Diener and Diener (1995) explored predictors of happiness across widely differing cultures and found that social relationships were the only factor to consistently predict happiness. Studies which implemented co-operative learning methods found positive effects on learning, acceptance of others (Johnson and Johnson, 1987) and prosocial behaviour (Choi et al., 2011).

### *2.5.1 Brief Positive Psychology Interventions*

Shankland and Rosset (2016) identified that positive psychology interventions usually require a relatively high degree of commitment in terms of time, resources, expertise and cost in order to implement them in school settings. The high level of commitment required can often deter teachers from using these practices

altogether. Alternatively, Shankland and Rosset (2016) present 'brief' positive psychology interventions which teachers can more readily use to begin introducing positive psychology approaches into the classroom. They outline a set of criteria which identifies a brief positive psychology intervention. Key features suggest they can be put into place by individual teachers; can be integrated into the existing curriculum; do not require extensive time, special training or materials to put into place; can be used with students of different ages and in different school systems; and are aimed at increasing the positives rather than fixing weaknesses. Shankland and Rosset (2016) suggest some key considerations to effectively implementing brief positive psychology interventions. Before starting the intervention, teachers should ensure that students have an in depth understanding of the concept which is focussed on (e.g. gratitude, kindness etc.) considering relevant cultural and normative perspectives that can differ between countries.

## **2.6 Evidence Base of Character Education Interventions**

The following section explores the evidence base of CE in school settings both internationally and within the UK. Until Berkowitz and Bier's (2007) review, CE lacked large-scale and systematic research in schools and further education settings. Seventy-eight scientific CE studies were evaluated in this research and demonstrated that 51% of the programmes led to the development of positive character. Several positive outcomes included improvements in academic achievement, conflict-resolution skills, self-esteem and respect for teachers. To be successful, they identified that programmes needed to be integrated into the school

ethos and culture, effectively designed and implemented, value teachers as role models and be driven by leadership in the school.

More recently, an extensive meta-analysis, including 52 studies examined the relationship between CE and student behavioural and academic outcomes within a school context (Jeynes, 2017). A total of 225,779 subjects were included in the research and only quantitative studies were included in the analysis for ease of coding purposes. CE was defined as “instruction designed to enhance love, integrity, self-discipline and compassion in the lives of youth” (Jeynes, 2017, p.12). Results demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between CE and both behaviour and academic student outcomes from kindergarten through to college freshman youth (ages 5 to 18 years). Studies in this review were mostly conducted in the US, but the analysis also included research in Canada, Europe and China. No UK studies were reviewed and although a reason for this was not stated, it may be assumed that the research methods employed by the existing UK studies did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Jeynes (2017) provides a summary of several statistically significant outcomes of CE programmes including, improved social skills, fewer suspensions, more honesty, better moral judgement and increased self-control. Most interestingly, was the emergence of results relating to age; high school students benefitted the most from character education and the effects were lesser for younger students. This trend was most evident for academic achievement outcomes. Jeynes (2017) proposes two possible explanations for this: CE simply has a greater impact on adolescents rather than younger students, or to the contrary, the larger impact found

later in education could be an aggregate effect of the character instruction input throughout their education. Therefore, it is not to say that CE *is not* beneficial for younger students. Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn and Smith's (2003) study found positive outcomes of CE in elementary school supporting this claim. In California, they confirmed that schools who implemented CE to a higher level, tended to have higher academic achievement in language, maths and reading; albeit yielding a small effect size. The outcomes of Jeynes' (2017) review indicate that the relationship was larger between CE and behavioural outcomes when compared to academic outcomes, which may be expected given that the CE is concerned with the moral actions of young people. However, scholars argue that the development of virtue leads to increased sense of purpose, self-discipline and determination, which are all thought to lead to success (Rae and McConville, 2015), so increases in academic achievement may be seen due to downstream effects.

In addition to large scale review studies, CE has been researched more widely using smaller studies measuring the effects of individual programmes or exploring the relationship between outcomes and the presence of character strengths. Weber and Ruch (2012) made a distinction between mind-related (e.g. perseverance and love of learning) and heart-related (e.g. hope and gratitude) character strengths and found that both positively correlated with students (aged 10 to 14 years) academic self-efficacy, school experiences and positive behaviour in the classroom. Wagner and Ruch (2015) also found the presence of character strengths to be positively correlated with good classroom behaviour and greater academic achievement and similarly, strengths relating to pro-socialness including empathy, helpfulness and

sharing have also been found to positively predict achievement (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura and Zimbardo, 2000). Character has also been positively correlated with higher levels of well-being in students. Weber, Wagner and Ruch (2016) found that with the exception of humility, all Values In Action character strengths, were positively associated with increased levels of positive affect. Character strengths including hope, gratitude and zest have also been positively correlated with emotional school engagement, school satisfaction and life satisfaction (Shoshani and Slone, 2013).

#### *2.6.1 Evidence-Base of Character Education in UK*

A systematic literature review to support this research revealed a total of six UK studies measuring the outcomes of CE programmes between 2000 and 2018 (see Appendix 1 for details). Four have been conducted in primary settings (Arthur et al., 2015; Clifford, 2013; Davison et al., 2016; White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011) and two in secondary (Francis et al., 2018; Proctor et al., 2011) totalling 29 schools and 2,819 students aged between 5 and 13 years. Of the five programmes evaluated across the six studies, three are underpinned by neo-Aristotelian principles, one is grounded in positive psychology, and trait theory (Deary, 1996) underpins the fifth programme. Whilst some teaching strategies were homogenous across all programmes (targeted teaching sessions, integration within the whole school and reflective class discussion) outcomes of the review revealed some variations. The most noteworthy being that some programmes, associated with neo-Aristotelian principles, utilised narrative-based methods to teach the acquisition of virtues (Arthur et al., 2015; Francis et al., 2018), whereas others associated with

positive psychology and trait theory encouraged the practical use of virtues throughout school and made efforts to encourage generalisations of these actions at home (White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011).

As the designs and methods varied greatly between the studies, overarching conclusions on their effectiveness were difficult to deduce. However, several outcomes were reported. Proctor et al. (2011) found that students participating in the Strengths Gym programme yielded significantly higher scores on the Life Satisfaction Scale than the control group. Teacher reports were also found to indicate positive impacts on well-being following the CE programme (Clifford, 2011; White and Warfa, 2011).

CE programmes were also found to have a positive impact on behaviour. White and Shin (2016) and White and Warfa (2011) found that the number of office referrals and disruptive incidents significantly decreased, and the amount of time students spent on their learning tasks increased. Teachers also reported that students demonstrated increased examples of problem solving and self-regulating behaviours alongside evidence of altruism and empathy following the CE intervention (Clifford, 2011). Improved relationships between students and their peers and teachers were also found and pupils suggest that learning about virtues has increased their understanding of relationships with others (Arthur et al., 2015).

Virtue literacy, a term used to describe the understanding and knowledge of virtues has also been found to improve following CE programmes (Arthur et al., 2015;

Francis et al., 2018). Alongside virtue literacy, one study aimed to measure the development of 12 virtues in pupils using a self-report measure pre and post-intervention (Francis et al., 2018). No significant difference was found, and the authors hypothesised that this was due to the short period of exposure to the intervention. It was thought that pupils would require longer than six weeks to recognise the internalisation of virtues within their lives.

Whilst the quality of the research included in the review was mostly of medium quality, there are some limitations. Some programmes were only delivered for a limited time, which may have influenced the outcomes. Sin and Lyubomirsky, (2009) found in their meta-analysis that programmes running for a greater period of time showed higher levels of well-being. It could be suggested that this is because students require sufficient time to practice and habituate virtues in order for them to be cultivated (Berkowitz and Bier, 2004).

Aside from the evidence-based research surrounding CE, teacher and parent perceptions of such programmes have also been explored. Strong support for the idea that schools should promote character development has been found among parents and teachers where 84% of UK parents valued its place in education and 91% of adults surveyed in the UK indicated that morals and values should play a part in schooling alongside academic study (Jubilee Centre, 2013a).

## **2.7 Kindness**

### *2.7.1 Defining Kindness*

In UK CE literature, kindness is considered as a universal moral virtue (Arthur, n.d.) and in positive psychology, Peterson and Seligman (2004) name kindness as a character strength categorised under the 'humanity' virtue in their VIA Inventory of Strengths. However, within research the meaning of kindness varies between studies. Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) views kindness as a behaviour that benefits others but is costly to oneself, whereas Neff (2003a) sees it as a form of self-kindness. It could be argued that simply smiling to a stranger could be viewed as kind, without this being of much cost to oneself. The idea of kindness intertwines with other concepts including helping, cooperation and altruism and perhaps encompasses all of these terms in describing a broad set of behaviours (Canter, Youngs and Yaneva, 2017).

Attempts to define and measure kindness in research have most recently been conducted by Canter et al. (2017). This research established three components of kindness: 'benign tolerance' (the acceptance and love of others), 'empathetic responsivity' (a consideration of other's emotions) and 'principled pro-action' which describes behaving honourably towards others. 'Core kindness' was also identified as an overarching component of kindness which describes one having feelings of empathy, but also acting on these feelings through warm, genuine gestures. Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, and Penner (2006) use a broader definition to suggest,

*“prosocial behaviour is an umbrella term encompassing actions to benefit others including small acts of kindness, such as bringing soup to a friend who is sick, as well as more formal methods of helping, such as volunteering weekly at a local food bank.”* (cited in Nelson et al., 2015, p.463)

This definition is often used in kindness-based research (Layous et al., 2012; Mongrain et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2016; Ouweneel et al., 2014).

### *2.7.2. The Consequences of Kindness*

In 2017, The British Psychology Society published a blog post on World Kindness Day discussing the surge of interest in kindness, which has seen a number of scientific findings use headlines, such as *‘Empathy Triggers Oxytocin Release’* (Barraza and Zak, 2009) and *‘Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness’* (Dunn, Aknin and Norton, 2008). The article even refers to kindness as “the new cool” (Rowland, 2018).

Several peer-reviewed, experimental studies have published positive outcomes associated with engaging in or receiving acts of kindness. These have included a reduction in social anxiety (Trew and Alden, 2015), increased psychological flourishing (Nelson et al., 2016) and surprisingly, reduced common cold symptoms (Raposa et al., 2016) and high blood pressure (Whillans, Dunn, Sandstrom, Dickerson and Madden, 2016). Positive effects of kindness on well-being have also been found across cultures in two studies (Layous, Lee, Choi and Lyubomirsky, 2013; Nelson et al., 2015). College students from South Korea and the US were

randomly assigned to either perform kind acts, express gratitude, or engage in a neutral task for a positive activity intervention. Well-being increased in both cultures for those performing kind acts, whereas positive effects were only seen in US participants after the gratitude intervention (Layous et al., 2013). Although the above findings are promising results on the positive effects of kindness, they are only single studies.

This research led Curry, Rowland, Van Lissa, Zlotowitz, McAlaney and Whitehouse (2018) to conduct a systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence relating kindness interventions to subjective well-being, in attempts to answer whether kindness can prove to yield positive outcomes from a body of research. Twenty-seven studies (total  $N= 4045$ ) met the inclusion criteria. Kindness interventions included 'acts of kindness' and 'prosocial purchasing' as the two most common types. Prosocial purchasing interventions involved the participant being instructed to spend a given sum of money on someone else. Participants involved in the 'acts of kindness' interventions were typically instructed to perform acts of kindness and report them, including the response from the recipient. Acts of kindness might include holding the door open for someone, helping parents cook dinner or visiting an elderly relative. Several outcomes were measured amongst the studies including happiness, subjective well-being, life satisfaction and positive or negative affect. The results of the systematic review and meta-analysis indicate that kindness interventions significantly improve the actor's well-being (effect size=0.28). Kindness had a small-to-medium effect size, which is similar to other positive psychology interventions including 'counting your blessings' (Weiss,

Westerhof and Bohlmeijer, 2016) and ‘positive thinking’ (Sin and Lyubomirsky, 2009).

### *2.7.3 A Qualitative Review of ‘Acts of Kindness’ Interventions*

Of the 27 studies included in Curry et al.’s (2018) meta-analysis, 12 involved ‘acts of kindness’ interventions. I was unable to access one of these papers (Layous, Kurtz, Margolis, Chancellor and Lyubomirsky, 2017) and I included two additional papers found during a wider search of the literature. Appendix 2 outlines the characteristics of the 13 studies found to measure the effects of acts of kindness.

#### 2.7.3.1 Study Characteristics

Most of the kindness-based intervention research has been conducted in Canada (Alden and Trew, 2013; Layous, Nelson, Oberle, Schonert-Reichl and Lyubomirsky, 2012; Mongrain, Chin and Shapira, 2011; Trew and Alden, 2015) and the USA (Lyubomirsky, Tkach and Sheldon, 2004; Nelson, Della Porta, Bao et al., 2015; O’Connell, O’Shea and Gallagher, 2016). Two studies were based in Korea (Layous, Lee, Choi and Lyubomirsky, 2013; Nelson et al., 2016) and single studies were included from Japan (Otake et al., 2006), Spain (Chancellor et al., 2017), the UK (Buchanan and Bardi, 2010) and the Netherlands (Ouweneel et al., 2014). Of the 13 studies, 11 (all included in the Curry et al., 2018 paper) utilised a randomised control design, whilst Otake et al. (2006) opted for a non-randomised design and Lyubomirsky, Tkach and Sheldon (2004) used a control group but did not identify if random allocation was used.

Five of the studies compared two groups including either a neutral control group, which asked participants to engage in tasks including writing their experiences that day; record three life events or acts of novelty; visit three places; or record an early memory (Layous et al., 2012; Mongrain et al., 2011; Ouweneel et al., 2014;) or a no treatment control (Lybomirsky et al., 2004; Otake et al., 2006). Eight studies compared three groups where an alternative treatment condition was also used alongside a neutral or no treatment control to explore additional comparisons. These included the difference between self-directed and other-directed kind acts; giving or receiving kind acts; and other treatments aimed to increase positive affect (e.g. expressing gratitude, behavioural experiments, receiving autonomy support) (Alden and Trew, 2013; Buchanan and Bardi, 2010; Chancellor et al., 2017; Layous et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2015; Nelson, Layous, Cole and Lyubomirsky, 2016; O'Connell et al., 2016; Trew and Alden, 2015).

All studies used quantitative tools to measure well-being outcomes including subjective happiness, life satisfaction, positive and negative affect and social anxiety. Other outcomes included relationship closeness, peer acceptance and work engagement. Eight of the studies gathered quantitative follow-up data at time points ranging from two weeks to six months where the same measures were used to assess outcomes over time (Chancellor et al., 2017; Layous et al., 2013; Mongrain et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2016; O'Connell et al., 2016; Otake et al., 2006; Ouweneel et al., 2014).

### 2.7.3.2 Participant Characteristics

The participants in the 13 studies had a wide age range, with the youngest aged nine and the oldest aged 72. Six of the 13 studies had participants who were undergraduate students (Alden and Trew 2013; Layous, et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2015; Otake et al., 2006; Ouweneel et al., 2014; Trew and Alden 2015), one included school-age participants (Layous et al., 2012), five studies included adults (Buchanan and Bardi, 2010; Chancellor et al., 2017; Mongrain et al., 2011, Nelson et al., 2016; O'Connell et al., 2016) and one did not state this information (Lyubomirsky et al., 2004). Eleven of the studies included typically functioning participants whilst two (Alden and Trew 2013; Trew and Alden 2015) involved socially anxious subjects.

### 2.7.3.3 Intervention Characteristics

Kindness interventions ran for a range of time periods, from one week (Mongrain et al., 2011; O'Connell et al., 2016; Otake et al., 2006; Ouweneel, Le Blanc and Schaufeli, 2014) to six weeks (Layous et al., 2013; Lyubomirsky, Tkach and Sheldon, 2004; Nelson et al., 2015). Five of the studies ran for four weeks (Alden and Trew, 2013; Chancellor et al., 2017; Layous et al., 2012; Nelson et al., 2016; Trew and Alden, 2015) and one study ran for ten days (Buchanan and Bardi 2010). Most studies instructed participants to perform a specific number of kind acts per week, usually between three and six. Some were asked to perform all of these acts in one day (Nelson et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2016) over two days (Alden and Trew, 2013; Trew and Alden, 2015) or across the span of the week (Chancellor et al., 2017; Layous et al., 2012; Ouweneel et al., 2014). Studies implemented for seven to ten

days asked participants to perform their kind acts on a daily basis (Buchanan and Bardi, 2010; Mongrain et al., 2011) or bi-daily basis (O’Connell et al., 2016) and two studies did not state how many acts of kindness should be performed (Layous et al., 2013; Otake et al., 2006).

One study found that outcomes were determined by the frequency of kind acts (Lyburosky, Tkach and Sheldon, 2004). Significant increases in well-being were only found when the kind acts were committed all in one day compared to being spread over the week. However, since this research, participants performing kind acts at times throughout the week have also experienced significantly increased levels of well-being (Mongrain et al., 2011; Layous et al., 2012; O’Connell 2016; Ouweneel et al., 2014).

A similar definition of kindness was used in most studies with many giving examples including donating blood, helping a friend with a paper or carrying groceries (Layous et al., 2012; Nelson et al., 2015, Ouweneel et al., 2014) or defining it either as an “act compassionately towards someone by actively helping or interacting with someone in a supportive and considerate way” (Mongrain et al., 2011, p. 969) or an act of kindness which “directly benefits another person” (Nelson et al., 2016, p. 852). Studies by Alden and Trew (2013) and Trew and Alden (2015) and Lybomirsky et al. (2004) made an explicit distinction that kind acts should typically be at a cost to oneself.

#### *2.7.4 An 'Acts of Kindness' Intervention with School-Aged Children: A Critique of Layous et al. (2012)*

Of the studies reviewed in section 2.7.3, one included child participants (Layous et al., 2012) which influenced the design of this research. Layous et al. (2012) recruited children aged between 9 and 11 years old across 19 classrooms in Canada to take part in a quasi-experiment. Children were randomly assigned to either perform and record three acts of kindness or visit and record three places each week over four weeks. The 'whereabouts' task was designed to be a distracting and mildly pleasant control activity. Children in the kindness group were compared to children in the whereabouts group on measures of life satisfaction, subjective happiness, positive affect and sociometric peer nominations (a popularity measure) pre and post intervention. Student's well-being scores significantly improved in both conditions following the intervention and this was expected given that both tasks were designed to induce positive feelings. Interestingly, levels of peer acceptance significantly improved in the kindness group only, which led researchers to conclude that being kind leads to improvements in peer acceptance rather than merely feeling good.

Although Layous et al. (2012) demonstrated an increase in popularity in children, without a neutral control group or measure of kindness in children, researchers cannot adequately demonstrate that the kindness intervention caused this effect. Alongside this, the sociometric scale used to measure popularity in this study asked children who they 'would like to be in school activities with' in their class. Whilst sociometric measures are generally known to be reliable and stable (Coie et al.,

1982) the study uses indirect language and its validity as a measure of popularity may need to be demonstrated through further research. Additionally, an increase in peer nominations when the measure was repeated post-intervention could be explained by a response bias. Finally, no qualitative information was provided about children's experiences of identifying and recording their acts of kindness. This critique was considered in the development of The Power of Kindness research and the advancements made on Layous et al.'s (2012) will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.8 Developing The Power of Kindness Project**

### *2.8.1 An Introduction to the Study*

As presented in Section 1.2, a personal motivation to develop an intervention designed to instil and cultivate virtues in children, stemmed from my experience working as an assistant EP in a primary school. The school's primary challenge was to improve the behaviour of students and develop their moral understanding. The principles of CE aligned with the school's aims and provided a solid foundation for the development of the intervention. Following a wider review of the literature, this project combined both neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and principles of positive psychology theory to develop a universal intervention which aims to instil positive pro-social values and behaviours alongside increasing levels of well-being and flourishing in students. The Power of kindness project aims to utilise the most effective elements of both approaches which are typically seen alone. Firstly, when exploring the kindness-based positive psychology research and particularly Layous et al.'s (2012) study, although participants were encouraged to undertake kind acts,

the opportunity to enhance virtue development using teachings from CE was omitted from the intervention. Positive psychology interventions are usually defined as activities or practices that cultivate positive thoughts, feelings or behaviours (Sin and Lyubomirsky, 2009). Therefore, the ultimate aim of kindness-based positive psychology interventions is to increase well-being, which is evident through the outcomes measures used in these interventions (Curry et al., 2018). These usually observe the effects of hedonic aspects of wellbeing such as life satisfaction, subjective happiness and positive affect. The Power of Kindness Project builds on Layous et al.'s (201) study as it aims to cultivate kindness in children and develop their character by drawing on the teachings of neo-Aristotelian CE, such as Socratic dialogue to enhance critical reflection, and role modelling. Neo-Aristotelian CE states that the development of moral character is essential to flourishing, so the combination of both positive psychology principles (i.e. performing and recording kind acts) and neo-Aristotelian CE (i.e. class reflection and role modelling) should lead to increases in both hedonic *and* eudaimonic well-being as kindness develops. Therefore, this research measures well-being as a dual construct rather than simply positive feelings seen in previous research (Layous et al., 2012).

Another element to consider is the use of narrative-based approaches in character education programmes inspired by neo-Aristotelian CE, where students acquire virtues through the use of stories that guide reflection and develop understanding (Arthur et al., 2015; Francis et al., 2018). When outcomes of these studies are compared to those which favour the practical application of virtues in varied contexts, effects on behaviour change are typically more successful in the latter

(White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011). Kindness-based positive psychology interventions explicitly encourage the use and practice of kindness, so it was important to retain this principle in The Power of Kindness Project in efforts to yield higher levels of virtue development. Therefore, this research aimed to explicitly measure virtue development, something that is typically seen in Neo-Aristotelian CE research, but omitted from positive psychology-based character strengths research. As teachers and peers play a vital role in this research as coaches of character, a measure of school kindness was also used to measure children's perceptions of kindness in their teachers, classroom and school as a whole. Table 1 outlines the key features of the programme and the associated theories or research evidence which underpin them.

Alongside the measures of kindness, school kindness and well-being, The Power of Kindness study was interested in the effects on peer acceptance examined in Layous et al.'s (2012) study. Increasing peer acceptance is a critical goal, as it is related to a variety of important academic (Wentzel (2005) and social (Wentzel, Baker and Russell, 2009) outcomes. Previous research in addition to Layous et al.'s (2012) study has shown a relationship between early prosocial behaviour and higher levels of peer acceptance in adolescence measured using a sociometric assessment (Caprara et al., 2000). Also, LaFontana and Cillessen (2002) used sociometric surveys to explore children's perceptions of popularity. Popular children described as prosocial which demonstrates the utility of interventions that aim to increase prosocial behaviours to improve peer acceptance in isolated children. Kind acts promote positive relationships which are significant correlates and predictors

of children's happiness (Holder & Coleman, 2009). Therefore, this study was interested in observing whether an intervention aiming to encouraging kind thoughts and actions would also improve peer acceptance within the classroom. Building on Layous et al.'s (2012) study, this research favours a sociometric tool that asks children how much they like to play with every child in their class, rather than a peer nomination system evident in Layous et al.'s study to overcome concerns about the use of indirect language and construct validity.

Contrary to Layous et al.'s (2012) study, The Power of Kindness Project collected data at three time points: pre intervention (Time 1), post intervention (Time 2) and after a follow-up period of six weeks (Time 3). In the design of this intervention it was hoped that any outcomes could be maintained over time to ensure a high level of efficacy. Previous positive psychology intervention research, including kindness-based tasks have demonstrated lasting effects on well-being for up to 6 months (Curry et al., 2018; White et al., 2019) so this study predicted that increases in well-being would be maintained between Time Point 2 and 3 in children in both conditions. Caprara et al. (2000) found prosocial behaviours predicted peer acceptance in a longitudinal study, so it was predicted that positive effects on peer acceptance found at Time 2 in the kindness intervention group should remain stable at Time 3 despite no intervention relative to the control group. Based on neo-Aristotelian literature on virtue development (Bowditch, 2008; Jubilee Centre, 2017), it was expected that the development of kindness in children would develop over the course of the intervention due to an increased understanding and habituation of kindness. Aristotle (cited in Bodwitch, 2008) states that through repetition and

imitation, a young person learns to take pleasure in acting virtuous and continues to do so autonomously, so it is expected that both self-reported kindness and school kindness should continue to increase between Time 2 and 3 in the kindness intervention group despite the intervention ceasing relative to the control group. Despite previous neo-Aristotelian CE programmes revealing mixed outcomes on virtuous behaviours (Francis et al., 2018) these programmes place less emphasis on practical application of virtues and often expose students to several virtues which may dilute the outcomes. The Power of Kindness Project enables an in-depth understanding and use of a single virtue and encourages its practical application to overcome these issues.

Finally, this study was also interested in understanding the perceptions of those taking part in the intervention. Contrary to Layous et al.'s (2012) study, children's views were gathered to provide a perspective of their knowledge and experience of undertaking kind acts to enable future developments of the programme and further research.

### *2.8.2 Research Questions and Predictions*

The research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What impact does a whole-class kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the development of (a) kindness, (b) well-being, and (c) peer acceptance in children?
2. What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?

### 3. How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?

It was expected that quantitative data would show:

1. A significant increase in kindness scores between Time 1 and 2, and Time 2 and 3 in the experimental condition but not in the control condition.
2. A significant increase in school kindness scores between Time 1 and 2, and Time 2 and 3 in the experimental condition but not in the control condition.
3. A significant increase in well-being scores between Time 1 and 2 in the experimental condition and in the control condition. Effects to remain stable between Time 2 and 3 in both conditions.
4. A significant increase in peer acceptance scores between Time 1 and 2 and results to remain stable between Time 2 and 3 in the experimental condition but not in the control condition.

#### *2.8.3 A Universal Intervention*

Universal interventions are defined by Mackenzie and Williams (2018) as interventions which are “delivered to all pupils irrespective of perceived need” (p.2). Around 1 in 8 young people (aged 5 to 19 years old) have had at least one mental health disorder (NHS Digital, 2018), and 25% of children show some signs of mental health difficulties (Department for Education, 2016). Yet, access to appropriate services for children and young people in need can be as low as 25% (NHS Digital, 2018). Limited access to specialist support such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has led to an increase in school-based interventions to support young people (Masia-Warner, Nangle and Hansen, 2006). Overall, the

**Table 1 - The Power of Kindness Project's Features and Associated Theory and Evidence**

Programme Features	Theory or Research Evidence Behind the Programme Features
<p><b>The Virtue of Kindness</b></p>	<p>In both neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology, kindness is viewed as a virtue or character strength, which is theorised to lead to improvements in psychological flourishing when acquired and practiced (Jubilee Centre, 2017; Peterson and Seligman, 2004).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positive outcomes associated with kindness:</b> Curry et al.'s (2018) systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence of kindness interventions on subjective well-being found that kindness interventions significantly improve the actor's well-being (effect size=0.28).</li> <li>• <b>Positive outcomes across cultures:</b> Cross-cultural studies have shown kindness to be related to increases in well-being (Nelson et al., 2015) in both western and eastern culture, whereas gratitude yielded positive effects in western cultures only (Layous et al., 2013).</li> <li>• <b>Developing relationships:</b> Kindness not only sees benefits to the giver, but also the receiver (Chancellor et al., 2017) and has been shown to increase peer acceptance amongst school aged children (Layous et al., 2012). Furthermore, conclusions drawn from Segrin and Taylor's (2007) research suggest that positive</li> </ul>

	<p>relationships are essential to well-being in schools. Social relationships were also shown to be the only factor which consistently predicted happiness across widely differing cultures (Diener and Diener, 1995). O’Connell et al.’s (2016) research also found that positive psychology activities fostering social kindness significantly strengthened relationship satisfaction.</p>
<p><b>Definition of Kindness used: ‘Kindness describes actions intended to benefit others’</b></p>	<p>In kindness research (Canter, Youngs and Yaneva, 2017; Nelson et al., 2015), the terms helping, prosocial behaviour and kindness are used interchangeably, as are the terms in this study. This research uses a broad definition of kindness, used by Curry et al. (2018) which refers to “action intended to benefit others” (p.321) rather than emphasising a cost to one’s self (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Drawing on Shankland and Rosset’s (2016) guidelines to effectively implement brief positive psychology interventions, examples of kindness are discussed in the initial whole-class session to ensure students grasp an understanding of the concept so they can think critically about when it might be used.</p>
<p><b>Children are instructed to perform three</b></p>	<p>Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2007) found that well-being increased more in the group that performed varied acts of kindness than those who performed the same acts. Participants performed their positive psychology activity for longer and more often when they were varied, and participants had increased levels of autonomy.</p>

<p><b>kind acts per week of their choice</b></p>	<p>Conclusions from this research have helped to inform The Power of Kindness Project, as students will be encouraged to perform a variety of kind acts and not be instructed on what these should entail.</p> <p>Based on the kindness intervention studies explored in Section 2.7.3 and more specifically in Layous et al.'s (2012) research with school aged children, The Power of Kindness Project instructed students to record three acts of kindness per week. Although some studies reviewed in Section 2.7.3 used up to six kind acts, these interventions involved adults, and it seems more realistic for children to be able to notice and record fewer kind acts, whilst still yielding positive outcomes as demonstrated by Layous et al. (2012).</p>
<p><b>6 Week Intervention</b></p>	<p>Kindness interventions discussed in Section 2.7.3 varied in their length from seven days to six weeks. Although positive outcomes were found across all intervention lengths, Sin and Lyubomirsky's (2009) meta-analysis of positive psychology interventions found higher levels of well-being for interventions greater in length. The Power of Kindness Project is aiming to intrinsically cultivate the virtue of kindness in children rather than simply displaying kind acts, so sufficient time is required for them to practice, habituation and reflect on kindness in order to acquire this virtue (Berkowitz and Bier, 2004).</p>

<p><b>Implemented by Class Teacher</b></p>	<p>The Power of Kindness Project draws on research by Shankland and Rosset (2016) which identifies key elements of brief positive psychology interventions which make them more accessible to teachers and allow for positive psychology approaches to be used in the classroom. These can be integrated into the existing curriculum, carried out by teachers in school and do not require extensive resources or time. Waters (2011) highlighted potential benefits of teachers implementing positive psychology activities rather than outside professionals including already established relationships and continued opportunities for reinforcement throughout the day.</p>
<p><b>Teaching Practices included:</b></p>	<p>Neo-Aristotelian CE literature details several teaching practices or coaching tools, which aim to help children develop virtue knowledge, understanding and reasoning (Sanderse, 2012). According to the Jubilee Centre, virtues can be ‘caught’, ‘taught’ or ‘sought’ (Jubilee Centre, 2017). The Power of Kindness Project offers the opportunity for kindness to be ‘taught’ and ‘caught’.</p> <p><i>“Caught: the school community of both staff and students provide the example, culture, and inspirational influence in a positive ethos that motivates and promotes character development.</i></p>

	<p><b><i>Taught:</i></b> the school provides educational experiences in and out of the classroom that equip students with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes that enable character development.</p> <p><b><i>Sought:</i></b> the school provides varied opportunities that generate the formation of personal habits and character commitments. These help students over time to seek, desire and freely pursue their character development.” (Jubilee Centre’s Framework for Character Education in Schools, 2017, p.9)</p>
<p><b>Integrated into the class culture and curriculum</b></p>	<p>The review of CE in Section 2.6.1 and outcomes of Berkowitz and Bier’s (2007) research suggest that CE is most effective when integrated into the ethos of the school. Within the remits of this research project, The Power of Kindness Project aims to integrate CE within the whole-class ethos utilising, ‘teachable moments’, modelling, reflections and discussion in situ throughout the day. This is proceeded by one targeted teaching session where children are introduced to the virtue of kindness. Throughout the project, children are asked to display their kind acts in writing/drawing on the classroom display, which all children will contribute to over the duration of the intervention.</p>
	<p>Reflective class discussions are designed to be used at least twice per week and coaching conversations will be used when required throughout the day. Dialogue between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves</p>

<p><b>Coaching Conversations</b></p>	<p>enhances critical thinking and creates opportunities to discuss and justify examples of virtuous behaviour. Sanderse (2012) favours ‘Socratic’ methods of dialogue in character education as the principles can inform group discussion rather than between just two people. Sanderse (2012) suggests that participation in a dialogue is itself morally educative and can develop practical wisdom by reflecting on experience, leading to students making intelligent decisions when faced with moral dilemmas. “Coaching involves asking very specific open questions to help others to understand more fully; our role when coaching is to ask, not to tell” (Arthur, n.d).</p>
<p><b>Role Modelling and Spotting Kindness in their peers</b></p>	<p>Neo-Aristotelian CE presented by Sanderse (2012) discusses the importance of educators modelling virtuous actions and behaviour in order for students to habituate and practice acting virtuously. Sanderse (2012) suggests that for students to truly recognise what it means to be virtuous rather than simply imitating, teachers should provide a reflective commentary of their feelings and choices they make and why (Wood and Geddis, 1999). Aside from anecdotal evidence there is little research evidence for teachers as role models (Berkowitz and Bier, 2004) however, one exception is Ryan and Patrick (2001) study, where higher levels of self-regulatory skills were found in students whose teachers were perceived to expect respectful relations.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Meaningful Praise</b></p>	<p>The Jubilee Centre has provided guidance for teachers on delivering CE based on neo-Aristotelian principles (Arthur, n.d). Some key elements are drawn from this to inform The Power of Kindness Project. Meaningful praise aims to replace non-specific phrases, such as ‘well done’ and instead identifies a specific example of the student being kind. By reflecting this back to the individual or the group, this enhances their understanding and recognition of virtuous behaviour.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guidance and Correction</b></p>	<p>Guidance from the Jubilee Centre (Arthur, n.d.) also highlights the importance of teachers guiding pupils to help them see virtues from different perspectives. This also supports the development of the meta-virtue, practical wisdom and helps students to think critically about how to apply kindness in different ways in their life. Rather than reprimanding a child when they are observed behaving in an unkind way, children should be supported to understand the effects of their behaviour and problem solve to think about how kindness could have been used in that instance.</p>

evidence-base of universal interventions targeting well-being and positive mental health are mixed. Durlak et al.'s (2011) review of 213 school-based universal programmes targeting social and emotional skills, suggested positive effects on social behaviours, social emotional skills, problem solving, emotional distress and academic performance when compared with controls. However, more recently, Mackenzie and Williams' (2018) review of 12 studies measuring the effects of universal interventions found neutral to small effects on well-being. Weare and Nind (2011) have highlighted the importance of prevention in school settings using universal interventions and conclude that although research suggests 'small' or 'moderate' effect sizes, these statistical outcomes are translated into positive 'real world' changes for young people and should be valued. I think it is important to provide effective support to as many children as possible using universal approaches, which The Power of Kindness Project aims to explore.

#### *2.8.4 Aims of The Power of Kindness Project*

Based on conclusions drawn from the literature within this chapter, The Power of Kindness Project aims to:

- develop the virtue of kindness in young people;
- improve the well-being of young people;
- increase positive peer relationships within the classroom; and
- be effectively implemented by the class teacher, with limited pressures placed on time, expertise and resources, and supported initially by the trainee EP.

## **2.9 Barriers to Delivering Effective Character Education**

It is important to highlight the barriers to delivering effective CE programmes in the literature that have been considered throughout the development and implementation of the project.

- CE is not incorporated into many classrooms in the US, because the emphasis is placed on testing and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2017; Siegal, 2009), which limits time spent developing children's well-being and character. This suggestion also seems relevant to the UK context (Jubilee Centre, 2017).
- Some teachers believe CE does not belong in schools and instead, should be left to parents within the home. They believe their role should be solely focused on cultivating intelligence and achievement (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006; Purpel, 2005).
- Teachers do not feel adequately trained to deliver such interventions (Brunn, 2014; Siegal, 2009).

## **2.10 Summary of Literature Review Chapter**

This chapter began with a brief history of CE in Section 2.1, which then continued to present the two most commonly associated theories underpinning CE and their practices: neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics in Section 2.2 and positive psychology in Section 2.3. In Section 2.4, attempts were made to illustrate both parallels and contrasts between the two theories and their practices particularly drawing on Sanderson's (2012) writings.

The research associated with positive psychology interventions and their outcomes including well-being, positive relationships and academic engagement was explored in Section 2.5. Section 2.6 explored evidence base of CE and particularly the meta-analysis conducted by Jeynes in 2017. UK based research was reviewed which highlighted several teaching practices utilised in CE including targeted teaching sessions, use of literature, reflective discussion and guidance and teaching in situ. Positive outcomes were demonstrated in well-being, student behaviour, relationships and virtue knowledge and understanding. Developing good character is something highly valued by teachers and parents.

Focus then turned to the virtue central to this current project in Section 2.7, kindness. Positive outcomes in single studies have been found, which have been evaluated in a recent meta-analysis (Curry et al., 2018) reviewing all kindness-based research internationally. Outcomes indicate that interventions were associated with statistically significant increases in well-being of the actor, effects which were similar to other positive psychology interventions. The chapter then delved deeper into the study characteristics of some of these individual articles, focussing specifically on the use of 'acts of kindness' to increase well-being. Interestingly, only one of these studies involved school-aged children (Layous et al. 2012), which is most relevant to the current project. The exploration of CE theories, teaching practices and specifically kindness-based positive psychology studies have informed the development of the intervention, used within this research. The Power of Kindness Project and its individual features are outlined in Section 2.8 alongside the relevant theory and evidence-base underpinning them.

This research aims to develop a whole-class kindness programme, which encourages children to acquire, practice and reflect on the virtue of kindness, which aims to have positive effects on their well-being and peer relationships within the classroom. Efforts are made to design a programme which can be effectively and efficiently employed by class teachers, which considers literature discussing the barriers to successful implementation of character education (Section 2.9).

This research is designed to answer the following questions.

1. What impact does a whole-class kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the development of (a) kindness, (b) well-being, and (c) peer acceptance in children?
2. What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?
3. How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the philosophical position of the research, critical realism, is considered (Section 3.1). This is followed by an exploration of the mixed methods design of the study (Section 3.2), the invention procedure (Section 3.3) and the participants and sampling method in Section 3.4. Section 3.5 and 3.6 discusses the quantitative methods of data collection and analysis and Section 3.7 and 3.8 focuses on the qualitative methods and analysis. The final sections of this chapter discuss the ethical considerations (Section 3.9) and rigour and quality of the study (Section 3.10).

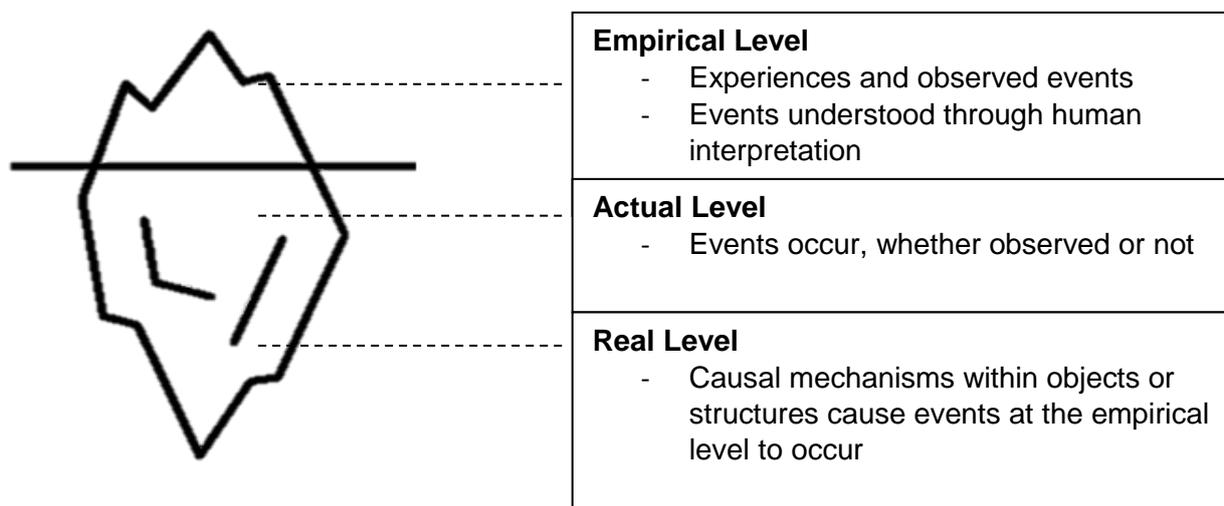
### 3.1 Philosophical Position

This research is underpinned by critical realism, which is explored in the following sections alongside the rationale for taking this position.

#### 3.1.1 *Ontological Position*

Ontology refers to the nature and structure of existence and the study of being (Crotty, 1998). It considers the nature of the social phenomena that we are studying and has been conceptualised as a continuum with realism and relativism either end (Cohen et al., 2017). Critical realism is positioned within realism (Maxwell, 2012) as it assumes an objective reality which is independent to our perceptions of its existence. That said, Bhaskar (2008) considers critical realism ontology in greater depth across three levels (Bhaskar, 2008). Figure 1 describes these levels using an iceberg metaphor (adapted from Fletcher, 2017). At the *empirical* level objects or

events can be empirically measured, but they are filtered through human interpretation. At the second level, *actual*, events occur independent of how we interpret them and these true occurrences differ from observations at the empirical level (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jaksobsen and Karlsson, 2002). The final and deepest level is the *real*. This refers to the mechanisms within objects that cause events to happen at the empirical level. Critical realism aims to investigate the effect of the causal mechanisms under particular social conditions on the observed phenomena (Fletcher, 2017).



**Figure 1.** An Iceberg Metaphor for Critical Realist Ontology and Epistemology

(Adapted from Fletcher, 2017)

### 3.1.2 Epistemological Position

Epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know and how we might extend the knowledge that we have (Peim, 2018). Epistemology has often been constructed in a dichotomous fashion contrasting interpretivism and positivism

(Cohen et al., 2017). Ontological assumptions often inform epistemological assumptions. For example, research taking a positivist epistemology will usually be underpinned by a realist ontology. In contrast, critical realism combines a realist ontology (the belief that there is an objective reality that exists whether we observe it or not) with an interpretivist epistemology (the belief that our knowledge of the world is constructed by those experiencing it) (Maxwell, 2012).

Fletcher (2017) highlights that in one respect, critical realism deviates from both positivism and interpretivism as it assumes that “human knowledge captures only a small part of a deeper and vaster reality” (p.4). Reality cannot be reduced to what can be empirically known (e.g. using scientific experiments), but it is also not entirely constructed through human discourse. Critical realists treat the meanings held by individuals as equal to physical objects and conceptualises both aspects of reality as influencing one another. Critical realism assumes that all knowledge is ‘theory-laden’ and whilst this does not contradict that there is a real social world, it accepts that some knowledge is closer to reality than other knowledge (Danermark et al., 2002).

### *3.1.3 Rationale for Critical Realism*

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) position critical realism as an alternative to both interpretivism and positivism, where the two are balanced to provide an approach where an objective reality is considered through the lens of human knowledge and experience. This considered approach complements my world view and informed the design of this research.

Research question one aims to evaluate the effects of an intervention on kindness, well-being and peer acceptance in children. Under a critical realist lens, the knowledge of these phenomena is predominantly theory-led, but this does not preclude me from exploring the underlying mechanisms that produce the observable behaviours. This is investigated through triangulating the experiences and perceptions of both the children and teachers, with the empirical evidence. Alongside this, the research aims to explore, (2) the role of teachers in helping children to develop kindness, and (3) how children perceive their participation in the intervention. Ontologically speaking, this question lends itself to an interpretivist approach to understanding how the intervention was experienced by both the teachers and the students and therefore what elements contribute to the impact it has. The ability to draw on both positivist and interpretivist principles to most effectively answer my research questions, roots this study in a critical realist perspective (Bhaskar, 1998).

### **3.2 A Mixed Methods Design**

This research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a greater understanding of the research questions that neither quantitative or qualitative methods could do alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Notably, an 'embedded mixed design' is utilised. The collection of qualitative data using teacher interviews and a pupil focus group is embedded within a quantitative quasi-experimental design and used to help explain the results and to follow up on the experiences of the participants (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Research question one is answered using both quantitative and qualitative methods which aim

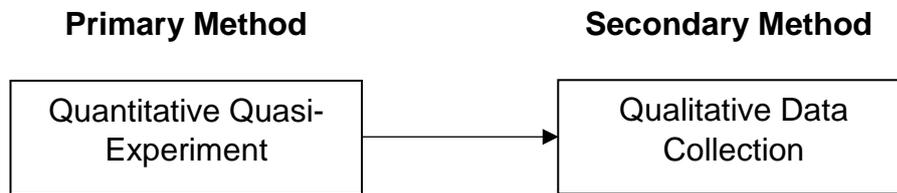
to provide further explanations alongside addressing the notion of triangulation. The research also uses elements of a “quasi-mixed design” (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p.142) as both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered, however, they are not integrated in answering all of the same questions. Research question two and three are primarily answered using qualitative data, as they look to discover *why* and *how* the intervention worked or didn’t work. They are as follows:

*RQ2 - What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?*

*RQ3 - How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?*

The effects of the whole-class kindness intervention are evaluated primarily using a quantitative quasi-experiment (see Figure 3 for the mixed methods design). Previous studies have used a mixed methods design, with a quasi-experiment to evaluate the impact of interventions and provide explanations for these effects (Light, Calkins, Luna and Drane, 2009; Mahendran, Tan, Griva et al., 2015; and Nielsen, Randall and Christensen, 2017). Creswell and Plano Clarke (2017) suggest that mixed methods research can provide insights into the processes of the intervention and the multiple views of the phenomenon, therefore increasing the credibility and usefulness of results and allowing unexpected results to be explained. Denscombe (2014) suggests that mixed methods research provides a more complete picture of the phenomenon and can increase the reliability and accuracy of data through triangulation and overcome the biases and weakness of single approaches. In line with critical realist approaches, the use of mixed methods

considers the complexities of the social world, but also maintains the existence of an objective reality.



**Figure 3.** A Mixed Methods Design

### 3.2.1 A Quantitative Quasi-Experiment

The study uses a between-groups design where the experimental group receives a kindness intervention and the control group receives a distraction task which aims to isolate the independent variable to assess its effects more reliably (see Figure 4 for design frame). Children in the control condition were asked to write down three enjoyable activities they have participated in per week.

	<b>Pre- Intervention September 2019</b>	→	<b>Post- Intervention October 2019</b>	→	<b>Follow-Up December 2019</b>
<b>Experimental Group</b>	Data Collection	Kindness Intervention	Data Collection	No intervention	Data Collection
<b>Control Group</b>		Control Activity			

**Figure 4.** Design Frame

Previous research outlined in Section 2.7.3 has used a randomised control design, but due to the experiment taking place in a real-world setting, it was not possible to randomly allocate the children to either the intervention or control group. In quasi-experiments the researcher has less control over extraneous variables or experimental conditions than in 'true' experiments, so inferring causality is more challenging, however they enable the use of experimental design within a natural setting. In the quasi-experiment, the dependant variables (kindness, well-being and peer acceptance) were observed at three time points (pre-intervention, post-intervention and after a six-week follow up period) to measure the impact of the independent variable (kindness intervention). Of the 13 kindness intervention studies reviewed in Section 2.7.3, eight of the studies included a follow up data collection stage ranging from two weeks to six months. It was important to consider the timing of the data collection to capture both the immediate impacts of the intervention and impacts over time.

#### 3.2.1.1 The Control Task

The control task was designed to be a mildly pleasant and distracting control activity. For pragmatic and ethical reasons, the option of a 'neutral' task was dismissed to prevent children from completing a task which they may find boring or pointless. Furthermore, simply making a record of either novel things they have done or places they have visited has been shown to improve life satisfaction (Layous et al. 2012; Buchan and Bardi, 2010). In Layous et al.'s (2012) study with children, they included a mildly positive control group to dismiss the possibility that being kind increased peer acceptance simply because it feels good. Findings showed improvements in

life satisfaction in both the intervention and control group, but only the intervention group demonstrated increases in peer acceptance. This led them to conclude that being kind increases peer acceptance rather than feeling happy. See Appendix 3 for an example of a record booklet used in the control task.

### **3.3 Intervention Procedure**

Prior to the intervention commencing, children in both the kindness group and control group completed the first round of data collection. I spent around an hour in each classroom administering questionnaires which are outlined in section 3.5. The teacher in the control group classroom aided the administration by ensuring more vulnerable children could follow and understand the questionnaires. A teacher in the kindness intervention group was present but did not aid this process. At the time of the first data collection, children were unaware of the details of the intervention.

#### *3.3.1 Introductory Session for Teachers*

Following the first point of data collection, teachers in the kindness group were introduced to the details of the intervention during a 45-minute introductory session. The Power of Kindness Project aimed to integrate the practices of CE into the classroom by enhancing the skills of the class teacher. Alongside this, children were asked to write down three random acts of kindness per week and present these in the classroom on a working display. Therefore, due to the integrated nature of the project into classroom practices, the intervention was managed and run by the class teacher rather than the researcher. During the introductory session I provided training using the researcher-made manual (Appendix 4) and 'Coaching Tools'

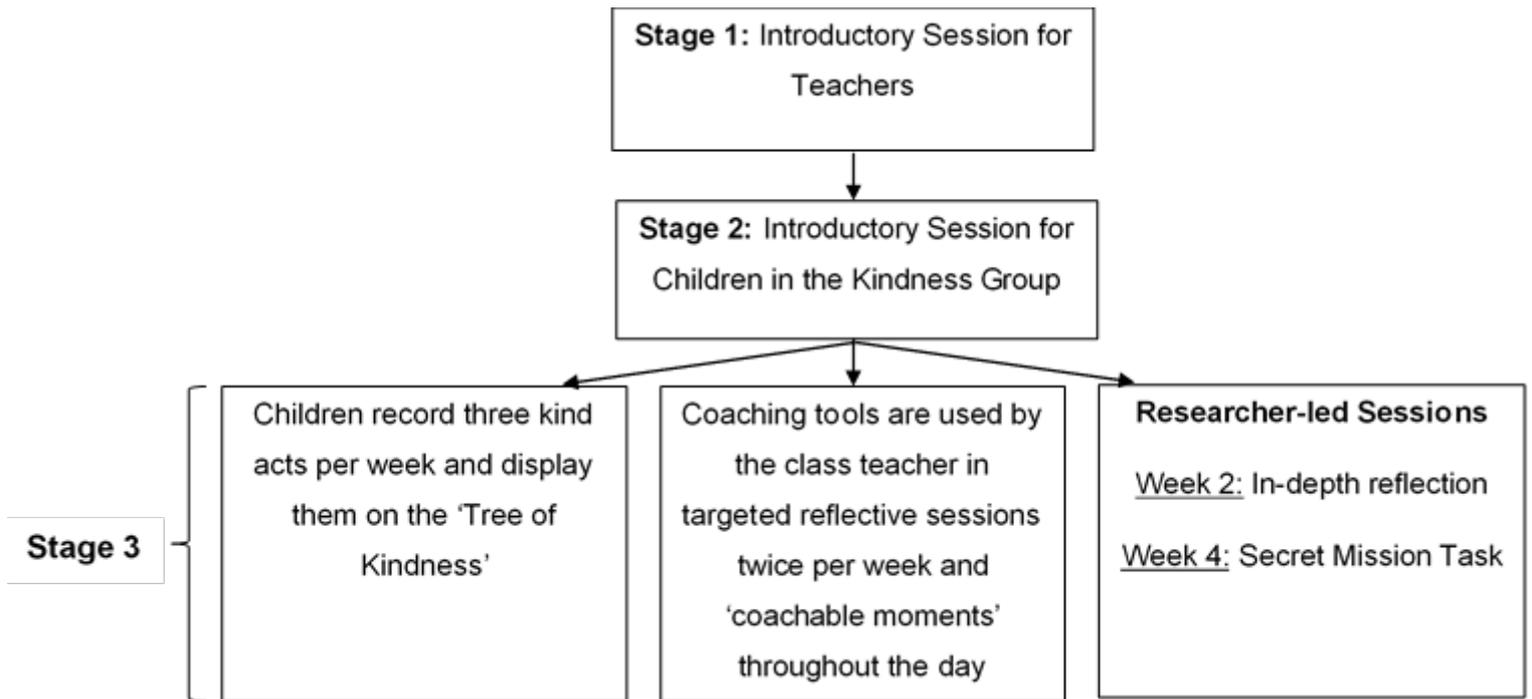
document (Appendix 5) and answered any queries about the intervention. Teachers were introduced to the key principles and aims of both positive psychology and neo-Aristotelian CE and how they link to each elements of the intervention. The importance of children completing and recording three acts of kindness per week was emphasised due to relationship between positive psychology activities and increased well-being. Alongside this, I provided training on the difference between coaching and teaching to encourage teachers to ask rather than to tell when encouraging a child's moral development. I introduced and modelled the 'Core Coaching Questions' (for example, 'how did you feel and what did you think?') to demonstrate how these could be used in fictional scenarios to guide thoughts and behaviours. Finally, teachers were introduced to each of the coaching tools, which included, 'class discussion', 'meaningful praise', 'correction' and 'role modelling'. The aim of coaching was presented to teachers as a way of encouraging children's in-depth thoughts and feelings about their kind acts to develop an internal motivation to be kind to others. For example, when introducing teachers to the 'correction' tool, teachers were informed of how they could use this tool to manage challenging behaviour through a series of questions: What effect do you think your actions had on others? or 'How could you use your strength of kindness in this situation instead?'. This replaces typical language that might usually highlight negative behaviours and their consequences or ask children to apologise. Some coaching tools had been identified as 'coachable moments'. These are important moments throughout the day where coaching can occur in situ, for example spotting a kind act and asking the child how they feel. Some coaching tools required protected time during the week where children were asked to share and reflect their kind acts. And

teachers were asked to provide two sessions of at least 15 minutes per week. Teachers were also informed of the benefits and aims of developing good character in children in relation to existing theory and research.

### *3.3.2 Introductory Session for Children*

Immediately after the Teacher Session, I conducted a 1-hour introductory session (see Appendix 6 for further details) for children undertaking The Power of Kindness intervention. The aim of the session was to encourage children to think about what kindness means, share examples of kind acts and reflect on how it feels to be kind. As discussed in Section 2.5.2 Shankland and Rosset (2016) suggest that for a positive psychology intervention to be successful, the concept (i.e. kindness) should be considered in detail to ensure the students have in depth understanding.

On the same day, I informed children in the control condition that they would be asked to write down three things they have enjoyed doing each week in their 'Book of Fun'. This could be a few words or a sentence depending on their confidence in writing. The class teacher was asked to protect around 15 minutes each week for children to complete their booklet.



**Figure 2.** Kindness Intervention Procedure

### 3.3.3 The Kindness Intervention

For the following six weeks, children in the kindness group were encouraged to write down three random acts of kindness per week (Appendix 7) and display these on the 'Tree of Kindness' in their classroom (Appendix 8). The class teacher takes on the role of coach, by using coaching tools outlined in the manual. These include practices, such as facilitating class discussion about their acts of kindness and reflecting on their feelings; providing meaningful praise and feedback; facilitating paired discussion; encouraging children to spot kindness in each other; and modelling kindness. These practices are designed to be integrated throughout the school day, but targeted discussion periods occur at least twice per week. This also gives children the opportunity to write down their acts of kindness. I completed two 40-minute visits during the intervention to observe and facilitate the reflective class

discussion within week 2 and 4. I modelled different coaching tools including the coaching questions, meaningful praise and spotting kindness. During week 2, I guided a reflective discussion about using varying amounts of kindness in different contexts and used the following questions to facilitate this ‘Can you ever be too kind?’ and ‘What does it mean to be cruel to be kind?’ to develop higher-level thinking. During week 4 I set a kindness-based ‘secret mission’ task where children were asked to draw a name at random from a pool of class names. Children were challenged to complete three acts of kindness towards this peer without them identifying who had selected them. The intervention procedure is outlined in Figure 2.

#### *3.3.4 Final Stages of Data Collection*

Following the six-week intervention period, I returned to both classes and administered the same questionnaires outlined in section 3.5. Similarly, to data collection time 1, this process took around 1 hour in each class. ‘My Book of Fun’ booklets were collected at this time from the control class. At data collection time 2, I also interviewed teachers and conducted a focus group for children in the kindness group in the same week. The teacher interview took around 45 minutes and the focus group lasted for 25 minutes. A period of six weeks followed, where no intervention was undertaken in either the control or experimental group and I returned after this timeframe to repeat the administration of the questionnaires in both classes for a third time.

### **3.4 Participants and Sampling**

Participants were gained through convenience sampling from one mainstream, three form entry primary school in an urban local authority. Two classes from Year 4 (aged 8 or 9) were selected by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo) to take part in the research. The class assigned to the experimental condition was chosen by the SENDCo based on the needs of the class. She suggested this class would benefit most from an intervention of this kind. Fifty-three children took part in the study, 25 children in the experimental condition and 28 in the control condition, of which 40% were girls. Two class teachers were interviewed from the experimental group. Both teachers were female and had more than five years of teaching experience. One of the class teachers also had the role of SENDCo which she had undertaken for two years. Two groups of six children were randomly selected by the researcher to take part in a focus group. Four of the 12 children consented to take part including two girls and two boys.

### **3.5 Quantitative Data Collection Methods**

Standardised self-report questionnaires were favoured to answer research question one due to the relatively large sample size. These measured kindness, well-being and peer-acceptance. Qualitative methods of data collection would not be suitable to ensure data is gathered from all participants in both groups. The strengths and limitations of self-report questionnaires outlined in Table 2 were considered. Quantitative data was also used to aid triangulation when answering question two. Table 3 provides an overview of the quantitative methods and specific measures used to answer the research questions.

**Table 2 – Strengths and Limitations of Self-Report Questionnaires (Robson and McCartan, 2016)**

	<b>Self-Report Questionnaires</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimal demands on participants</li> <li>- Straightforward analysis</li> <li>- Can measure change</li> <li>- Can gather larger quantities of data quickly</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced flexibility of response</li> <li>- Questions may not be treated seriously by participants</li> <li>- Participants may misunderstand the questions</li> <li>- Social desirability response bias</li> </ul>

Alongside the type of data collection methods, it was important to consider the specific instruments used to measure the phenomenon most effectively.

### *3.5.1 Kindness Measures*

In this research, kindness was measured using two questionnaires completed by the child participants: the 9 item kindness scale from the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-YS) (Park and Peterson, 2004, 2006) and the School Kindness Scale (SKS) (Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl, 2016). See Appendix 9 and 10 for copies of both the VIA-YS kindness measure and the School Kindness Scale.

**Table 3 - Overview of Quantitative Data Collection Methods and Specific Measures**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Method of Data Collection</b>	<b>Specific Measure</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Time Point</b>
1a) <i>What impact does a kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the development of <u>kindness</u> in children?</i>	Self- report questionnaire	School Kindness Scale (SKS, Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl, 2016) Kindness Scale from VIA-YS (Park and Peterson, 2006)	Students in both experimental and control groups	Time 1, 2 and 3
1b) <i>What impact does a kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the <u>well-being</u> of children?</i>	Self- report questionnaire	How I feel about Myself and School (HIFAMAS, McLellan and Steward, 2012, 2015)	Students in both experimental and control groups	Time 1, 2 and 3
1c) <i>What impact does a kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on <u>peer acceptance</u>?</i>	Self- report questionnaire	Like to Play (LITOP, Frederickson and Furnham, 1998, 2004)	Students in both experimental and control groups	Time 1, 2 and 3
2) <i>What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?</i>	Self- report questionnaire	School Kindness Scale (SKS, Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl, 2016)	Students in both experimental and control groups	Time 1, 2 and 3

When considering which methods would be most appropriate to measure the virtue of kindness, I considered examples in the literature. Previous studies attempting to measure the development of virtues following a character strengths intervention have used structured observations looking at disruptive behaviour incidents (White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011); teacher interviews (Clifford, 2011); and self-report questionnaires measuring virtue knowledge (Arthur et al., 2015; Francis et al., 2018). Limited specific instruments measuring kindness exist for children and young people and previous studies have used either the kindness scale taken from VIA-YS (Park and Peterson, 2006; Yoo, Feng and Day, 2013) or the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1983). The items used in the VIA-YS measure of kindness focus more on kindness as prosocial behaviours, whereas the items on the IRI view kindness as empathy. As this research is encouraging random *acts* of kindness, the VIA-YS was most suitable. The VIA-YS asks children to rate from 1 to 5 how much the statement is like them (1= not like me at all; 5= very much like me). A Kindness score was provided for each participant by totalling their responses for each of the items and dividing this by the number of items to find an average score. Participants could attain a minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 5.

Authors highlight that the measure is suitable for children aged 10 to 17 years, so the language was adjusted to suit the participants in this study. Park and Peterson (2006) reported that the measure as a whole demonstrates good test-retest reliability over six months and Cronbach's alpha for all scales was .70 demonstrating adequate internal consistency (Vaske, Beaman and Sponarski, 2017). Yoo, Feng and Day, (2013) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .83 for the 9-item kindness scale when using the scale as a standalone measure in their study. However, the measure

was standardised on US population in both studies. Park and Peterson (2006) report promising validity of the twenty-four scales of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth.

The School Kindness Scale (SKS, Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl, 2016) was used to measure the prevalence of kindness in school. The measure asks children to rate on a scale from one to five how much they agree with five statements (1= disagree a lot, 5= agree a lot). This includes the extent to which adults model and encourage kindness. This helps to establish how children perceive the role of their teachers in developing their kindness. A School Kindness score was provided for each participant by totalling their responses for each of the items and dividing this by the number of items to find an average score. Participants could attain a minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 5. Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl (2016) demonstrated evidence for convergent and discriminant validity when the outcomes of the measure were compared with self-report measures of other relevant constructs, such as classroom supportiveness, prosocial and social goals and happiness. Cronbach's alpha was .71, which is adequate (Vaske, Beaman and Sponarski, 2017). The measure was standardised on a US population of children between the ages of 9 and 13 years. This was considered when establishing whether the language and number of responses (i.e. 1 to 5) were appropriate for the participants in the current study.

### *3.5.2 Well-being Measure*

Student well-being was measured using the Year 3 version of the 'How I Feel About Myself and School' questionnaire (McLellan et al., 2012; McLellan and Steward, 2015). See Appendix 11 for a copy of the 'How I Feel About Myself and School' questionnaire. This is 21-item measure (e.g. 'I feel good about myself') asks children to reflect on their feelings and experiences and indicate how frequently they agree with the statement from three options (not often, sometimes, often). A Wellbeing score was provided for each participant by totalling their responses for each of the items and dividing this by the number of items to find an average score. Participants could attain a minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 3. This instrument taps into both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being giving a more comprehensive and current conceptualisation of well-being (McLellan and Steward, 2015). The subscales measure 'Interpersonal Well-being', 'Life Satisfaction', 'Perceived Competence' and 'Negative Emotion'. The questionnaire was developed in English schools and is considered in UK policy documents, so it is likely to be more relevant than student well-being measures developed in alternative countries. The use of a 3-point scale will provide less information than the 5-point scale which is included in the Year 6 questionnaire, however, the Year 3 questionnaire is more accessible for the participants in this study. McLellan and Steward (2015) noted that further exploration of the instruments' reliability and validity is required. Allen et al. (2018) reported moderate test-retest reliability (intraclass correlation coefficient=.62) and moderate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values from .62 to .67).

### *3.5.3 Peer Acceptance Measure*

Children completed the 'Like to Play' (LITOP) a sociometric measure of peer acceptance used in previous research (Fredrickson and Furnham, 1998, 2004) (see Appendix 12). The questionnaire asks children how much they like to play with each child in their class. This is indicated by ticking either a smiling, sad or neutral face where smiling indicates whom they like to play with, neutral indicates whom they don't mind whether they play with or not and a sad face indicates whom they prefer not to play with. A fourth option, a question mark, is used to indicate if they do not know the child well enough to decide how much they like to play with them. A peer acceptance index is calculated for each child by dividing the number of smiling faces by the total number of ratings to provide a score between 0 and 1. Fredrickson and Furnham (1998) have reported good test-retest reliability scores of .70 for acceptance over a five-week period on a UK population. This format has been used extensively with children who have special educational needs and their classmates, aged between 7 and 12 years old (Pinto, Baines and Bakopouou, 2019; Saborine, Marshall and Ellis, 1990; Symes and Humphrey, 2010). Construct validity has been demonstrated where all sociometric classification methods consistently identified rejected and accepted groups that were significantly differentiated from the neutral group (Fredrickson and Furnham, 1998). The Like to Play was favoured over 'peer nomination measures' described by Fredrickson and Furnham (1998) where children are asked to choose three peers they most and least like to play with, as it enables a rating from every peer to be given to a particular child. The use of peer nominations is favoured over teacher reports to ensure child perceptions are represented rather than their teachers.

## **3.6 Quantitative Data Analysis**

### *3.6.1 Mixed ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)*

A 2 x 3 mixed ANOVA statistical test was initially conducted and follow-up paired t-tests were used to explore any significant values. The purpose of a mixed ANOVA is to understand if there is an interaction between the between-subjects factor (condition) and the within-subjects factor (time) on the dependant variable (kindness, peer acceptance and well-being). A mixed ANOVA was used rather than a two-way repeated measures ANOVA because different subjects were used for each condition.

- Between-group factor has two levels: control and experimental group
- Within-group factor has three levels: time 1, time 2 and time 3

### *3.6.2 Assumptions*

There are several statistical assumptions associated with a mixed ANOVA that need to be met (Field, 2009); they are discussed below.

#### 3.6.2.1 Sphericity

Sphericity means that the variances of the differences between the within-subject conditions are equal. Mauchly's statistical test is used to assess whether the assumption of sphericity is violated or not. A probability value (F ratio) of more than .05 suggests that one can reasonably conclude that the variances of difference are not significant. If the F- ratio is not valid ( $p < .05$ ) and the assumption of sphericity is violated, modifications need to be made to the degrees of freedom so that a valid F-ratio can be obtained.

- Kindness: Time - Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated ( $X^2(2) = .648, p > .05$ ).
- School Kindness: Time - Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated ( $X^2(2) = .109, p > .05$ ).
- Well-being: Time - Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated ( $X^2(2) = .112, p > .05$ ).

Therefore, any differences between the test conditions would be a result of extraneous factors rather than a result of existing significant variance across the data.

- Peer Acceptance: Time - Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated ( $X^2(2) = 37.65, p < .05$ ). The main effect of time does violate the sphericity assumption because the significance value is less than .05, therefore the F-value for the main effect of time (and its interaction with the between-group variable, 'condition') does need to be corrected or violations of sphericity. Please see Appendix 13 for details of Mauchly's test.

### 3.6.2.2 Normally Distributed

A Shapiro-Wilk tests the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed. For most of the dependant variable data, p values for Shapiro-Wilk tests are greater than .05, so the null hypothesis is retained, and the normal assumption is met; the data are assumed to have come from a normally distributed population. Some of the data did yield p values of less than .05, for example the School Kindness scores. However visual interpretation of the box plots (Appendix 14) indicates outliers in the

data, for example, in the School Kindness values in both the control and experimental condition which may account for a significant p value of less than .05.

### 3.6.2.3 Homogeneity of Variance

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependant variable is equal across groups. Of the dependant variables, kindness, peer acceptance and well-being had p values of more than .05, so homogeneity of variance can be assumed. School Kindness p values at time point 2 and 3 are less than .05 so homogeneity can be assumed. The values at time point 1 (<.05) indicated that this data does not have homogeneity of variance. On closer observation of the histograms (Appendix 15) there appears to be an outlier in the pre-intervention data for school kindness scores, thus potentially skewing this value.

## **3.7 Qualitative Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative methods were used following the intervention to gather information from class teachers and four children in the experimental condition. Semi-structured interview schedules were devised for the class teacher and pupil focus group based on the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were favoured over structured interviews as they allow for changes in question sequence, wording and choice of questions based on the participants responses (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Interview schedules were developed using Thomas' (2016) example framework (see Appendix 16 for interview schedules).

The teacher interview and the pupil focus group were used to gather qualitative data about the outcomes of the project to aid methodological triangulation when answering research question one, which asks, “ What impact does a kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the development of (a) kindness, (b) well-being, and (c) peer acceptance on children?”. Research question two (What role do teachers have in helping children to develop kindness?) was answered using data from the teacher interview and the pupil focus group. Teachers and pupils were asked a combination of open and closed questions to explore first, a broad understanding of the role of teachers in the intervention and specifically, which coaching tools were used and found most and least useful. Possible barriers to implementation and intervention fidelity were explored to help explain quantitative results. Throughout the study, teachers were also asked to record the frequency of coaching methods used to help validate information, so reports were not solely reliant on memory, however this was not completed. See Appendix 4 for the Coaching Tools document.

Research question three asks “How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?”. This was answered using data from the pupil focus group alone. Semi-structured interview questions explored their perceptions of the intervention, outcomes and possible improvements. Care was taken not to use leading questions and to ensure that questions were clear and unambiguous. Focus groups were chosen over individual interviews, to help address a power imbalance potentially perceived by children during a one to one interview.

**Table 4 - Overview of Qualitative Data Collection Methods**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Method of Data Collection</b>	<b>Specific Measure</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Time Point</b>
1) <i>What impact does a kindness intervention based on principles of neo-Aristotelian character education and positive psychology have on the</i> a) <i>development of kindness in children;</i> b) <i>well-being of children; and</i> c) <i>peer acceptance in children?</i>	Semi-Structured Interview	Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Teachers (Appendix 16)	Two teachers in experimental condition	Time 2
	Focus group	Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Pupil Focus Group (Appendix 16)	4 pupils in experimental condition	
2) <i>What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?</i>	Semi-Structured Interview	Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Teachers (Appendix 16)	Two teachers in experimental condition	Time 2
	Focus group	Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Pupil Focus Group (Appendix 16)	4 pupils in experimental condition	
3) <i>How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?</i>	Focus group	Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Pupil Focus Group (Appendix 15)	4 pupils in experimental condition	Time 2

This may encourage the students to feel more confident in donating their responses and potentially reduce respondent bias (Robson and McCartan, 2016). However, the limitations of both qualitative methods outlined in Table 5 were considered.

**Table 5 - Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative Data Collection Methods**

(Robson and McCartan, 2016)

	<b>Semi-Structured Interview</b>	<b>Focus Group</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of verbal responses are facilitated by non-verbal cues</li> <li>- Flexible and responsive</li> <li>- Accessible to participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible and inexpensive</li> <li>- Reduces power imbalance of interviewer and participant</li> <li>- Contributions can be encouraged from quieter or more reluctant participants</li> <li>- Efficient method of collecting more data simultaneously</li> <li>- Participants react to and build on responses from others providing natural quality control on responses</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Require extended administration, transcription and analysis time</li> <li>- Interviewer bias</li> <li>- Interview skills required by the researcher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certain participants can dominate</li> <li>- Expertise is required to facilitate the group</li> <li>- Limited number of questions covered, and findings are limited in their generalisability</li> </ul>

### **3.8 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Both the interview and focus group data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. This process was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six phases of analysis, summarised in Table 6. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest thematic analysis can reflect reality whilst also unravelling the surface of reality. This method is congruent with the aims of my research which sets out to

identify the outcomes of a kindness intervention and the mechanisms that contribute to these outcomes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that this method is not bound by any theoretical framework and can be realist or relativist or contextualised between the two. The offer of flexibility has been viewed as a limitation (Nowell et al., 2017) however, critical realism can be characterized by sitting between both poles, so thematic analysis is congruent with this framework (Willig, 1999). Braun and Clarke (2019) highlight that whilst they previously termed thematic analysis as ‘theoretically flexible’ (2006), their procedure reflects the values of a qualitative paradigm, attaining an organic and recursive coding process, deep reflection and engagement with the data.

**Table 6-** Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019)

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description of the Process</b>
1. Familiarize yourself with the data	Familiarization began when transcribing the data. I read and re-read the data actively by recording initial ideas
2. Generate initial codes	First, I systematically coded interesting features of the teacher transcript collating data relevant to each code. Then I coded the pupils’ data using the same codes as the ones found in the teacher transcript and adding any further codes. Initial codes were generated using largely inductive analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
3. Generate (initial) themes	Then, with the first research question in mind, I collated codes into potential themes highlighting them in specific colours and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme. I repeated

	<p>this process for each research question. Data from both the teacher and pupil transcripts were used to answer RQ1 and RQ2. RQ3 was answered using data from the pupil focus group transcript only.</p>
4. Review themes	<p>I checked the themes were reflective of the coded extracts and the entire data set and generated several thematic maps relating to each research question until a final map for each question was established.</p>
5. Define and name themes	<p>I completed ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and generate clear definitions and names for the themes. Although an inductive analysis was initially used, Braun and Clarke (2006) note that the researchers theoretical knowledge can influence the identified themes and codes. I acknowledge that at this stage, specific theme and subthemes names were influenced by my theoretical understanding and knowledge.</p>
6. Produce the report	<p>A significant, compelling extract example was selected and final analysis was completed relating back to the research questions and the literature.</p>

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

#### *3.9.1 Ethical Considerations and Management*

The University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Committee granted ethical approval on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Ethical considerations made in the research were guided by

the British Psychological Society ‘Code of Human Research Ethics’ (BPS, 2014) and the British Educational Research Association ‘Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research’ (BERA, 2018). The key ethical considerations and steps taken to address these are summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7 – Key Ethical Considerations**

<b>Ethical Consideration (BPS, 2014; BERA, 2018)</b>	<b>Steps Taken in the Current Research</b>
<p>Researchers should ensure that participants understand and agree to their participation, and the terms and practicalities of it so they can give informed consent.</p>	<p>An information sheet was provided to parents, children and class teacher (See Appendix 17). Consent forms and information sheets were adapted for the students to make them accessible and teachers were instructed to read these to the children who required additional support. Both parents and children had to consent for the child to be able to take part in the research.</p> <p>An opt-out consent form was used due to the large number of participants (See Appendix 18). I liaised with the school to ensure that the information sheet and consent forms were given to parents and ppts through the most appropriate means. These were sent out via email to parents and paper copies were sent home with the students.</p>
<p>Participants have the right to withdraw without needing to provide any explanation.</p>	<p>This right was explicitly stated in the information form and participants were provided with my personal contact details if they wished to withdraw. Parents were informed that they had two weeks from the end of each data collection period to inform either the class teacher or researcher directly. Any data already</p>

	collected would be destroyed and no further data would be collected (See Appendix 17).
Participants have a right to confidentiality. They should be informed about the retention, sharing and any possible secondary use of the research data.	I complied with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) in terms of handling, processing and destroying all participants' data. Participants were informed that all data collected would be kept strictly confidential; that data would be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed, having been stored securely over the interim. Participants were informed that their names (and the name of the school and all other research participants) would remain anonymous in the write-up of the study.

BERA (2018) and the BPS (2014) highlight that researchers have a responsibility to consider their duty of care in order to recognise the potential risks, prepare for them, and be in a position to minimise and manage any discomfort or distress that may arise. The following risks and steps taken to overcome them are outlined in Table 8.

**Table 8 –Ethical Risks and Considerations**

<b>Ethical Risks</b>	<b>Steps Taken in the Current Research</b>
The sensitive nature of the well-being measure may elicit some unwanted feelings in the children.	Before completing the surveys, children were informed that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. Children indicating low scores on either the peer acceptance survey or the well-being survey were reported to their teachers and teachers were informed of ways in which to support these children.
If ppts were to share their responses on	Children completed the survey in 'test conditions' with sufficient space between children which reduced the

the measure of peer acceptance, peer conflicts could potentially arise.	chances of children looking at their peer's responses. Children were firmly reminded not to discuss their responses with any of their classmates before, during or after the questionnaire.
A difference in power inevitably exists between the researcher and the ppts. Children may give socially desirable responses.	Focus groups were favoured over individual interviews to help address power imbalances. Steps were taken to encourage an informal context. For example, children addressed me using my first name. I was also familiar to the children as I can visited their class several times during the project.
The between groups research design may advantage one group over then other.	If the outcomes of the intervention are effective, the control group will be offered the intervention after the research is complete. The decision to take up the offer will be that of the schools.

### *3.9.2 Feedback to Participants*

A letter was sent to the class teachers involved in the project thanking them for their participation and providing them with an overview of the outcomes of the study. A letter was also written for parents which outlined the findings of the study (See Appendix 19).

### **3.10 Rigour and Quality**

In this section I will outline the steps taken to ensure that the research is rigorous and of as high quality as possible. I will discuss the positionality and context; reliability and validity; and generalisability of the research.

### *3.10.1 Positionality and Context*

Thomas (2013) describes positionality as the researchers “likes, dislikes, their backgrounds and their pastimes, their vested interests and expectations” (p.144) and the undeniable impact this can have on the interpretations and observations that they make. Therefore, it is important to consider my position within this research:

- I enjoyed school; friendships were very important to me;
- I value a strengths-based approach in my work as a trainee EP; and
- I believe that ‘being kind’ is not something that comes naturally to every individual and some children will require more coaching and modelling than others.

Whilst I acknowledge that my beliefs and interests may shape the interpretations of the data, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods and data to explore the impact of the intervention. Qualitative data is used to provide further depth and explanation of the outcomes, so this limitation is reduced.

It is important to consider the context of the school and more specifically the classes in which the research took place. The school is a three form-entry mainstream primary school with no religious affiliation. It was rated ‘good’ by Ofsted in 2017. Based on the pupil population in 2018/2019 the number of children eligible for free school meals is well above the national average (36%), whilst the number of pupils with SEN is similar (12.6%) and the number of pupils whose first language is not English is slightly below (18.6%). The class in which the intervention took place had 25 children and two class teachers who shared the class. The control class had 28

children and one class teacher. This school was unfamiliar to me, as it was not a school that I had completed any work in as a TEP, however my supervisor worked in this school and they showed interest in the research following an initial conversation between them. The school agreed to take part in the research following a further meeting between the SENCo and I. At the time of the research, the Year 4 children were exposed to additional social and emotional education in the form of weekly Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education sessions which focused on 'Respecting Rights'. My visits to the school during the research enabled me to form a general view of the school's ethos. The school maintained high expectations of behaviour, whilst encouraging and valuing the development of relationships between staff and children. The school were open to trying new approaches to develop children's social and emotional skills and provided an inclusive setting to support children with varying special educational needs. In my view, the teachers in the control condition and the experimental condition differed in their interactions with children. The teacher in the former favoured a firm but nurturing approach, whereas the class teachers in the experimental used sanctions and consequences to guide behaviour and less relational strategies.

### *3.10.2 Reliability and Validity*

This research implements a quasi-experiment, so the contribution of confounding variables within social research should be acknowledged. Several steps were taken in attempts to control these variables to increase confidence in the results of the study.

- Torgerson and Torgerson (2008) highlight the threat of contamination to internal validity where children in both groups may talk to each other and effect the results. Although children within both groups may have discussed the project with each other, children were only taught within their assigned classes throughout the duration of the six- week intervention and follow-up period. Classes were not mixed for any subjects.
- The use of questionnaires yielding quantitative data brought a degree of objectivity to the research. This reduced the possibility of observer effects, such as recording things inaccurately, inconsistently or selectively which may distort the experiment (Cohen, 2011).
- Standardised instruments were used to measure kindness, school kindness, well-being and peer acceptance and their reliability and validity are considered in Section 3.5. I administered all questionnaires with both classes as a whole. The class teachers were asked to support children with English as an additional language and/or special educational needs that may affect their understanding of the questionnaire items.

Fidelity strategies were used to monitor and enhance the consistency and accuracy of the intervention to aid its implementation:

- Child participants were asked to mark next to their name on a register each time they displayed an act of kindness on the 'Tree of Kindness' to ensure every child was completing and recording three kind acts per week. This part of the intervention was not implemented, so it was difficult to monitor intervention fidelity using this method.

- The class teachers were asked to record the frequency and type of coaching tools they used, but this was not completed during the intervention.
- I conducted two observations of coaching and 'reflective discussions' where children discussed their acts of kindness and I modelled the coaching tools to the teachers.
- The control group recorded 'three enjoyable things' per week and I reviewed these documents at two timepoints to ensure they were being completed.

Triangulation is simply viewing things from different angles or using different methods to increase confidence in the proposed explanation on the basis of the research findings (Thomas, 2013). Denzin (1978) outlined several types of triangulation including methodological triangulation and theory triangulation which are used in the current study. Several methods including questionnaires, an interview and a focus group were used to answer research question one and the combination of using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the mixed methods design provided several angles of explaining the data. McEvoy (2006) suggests using combined methods provides completeness, and "a greater level of detail than could be obtained from using either data source" (p. 72).

Recommendations from Cohen et al. (2011) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) were followed to establish trustworthiness in this research. Both quantitative (i.e raw questionnaire responses) and qualitative (i.e transcriptions and initial generated codes) data were retained and a sample reported as appendices. Interview and focus group data were also recorded accurately by using a recording device and transcribed verbatim. A systematic approach was used to rigorously analyse the

qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Care was taken to input the quantitative data into the SPSS software accurately.

### *3.10.3 Generalisability*

Research conducted in a real-world context has the advantage of higher ecological validity however, the relatively small sample size within one setting challenges the generalisability of this study. This research is concerned with exploring the effects of the intervention on this particular group of children and what mechanisms may contribute to these effects. Although findings will be specific to the group studied and the particular context in which the study took place, the outcomes of this study can contribute to the wider literature in helping to create a robust picture of the efficacy of interventions based on principles of positive psychology and neo-Aristotelian character education.

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study will be presented in relation to each research question. In Section 4.1, findings related to children’s self-reported kindness, school kindness, well-being and peer acceptance will be presented (see Appendix 20 for further details of statistical output), followed by teachers and children’s perceptions of the intervention’s impact. In Section 4.2 the results pertaining to research question two (the role of teachers in character education) will be presented followed by children’s perceptions on their involvement in The Power of Kindness Project (Section 4.3). For an example of a coded section of an interview transcript, see Appendix 21.

### **4.1 Research Question 1 – What impact does a whole-class kindness intervention have on the development of kindness, well-being and peer acceptance in children?**

#### *4.1.1 Quantitative Data*

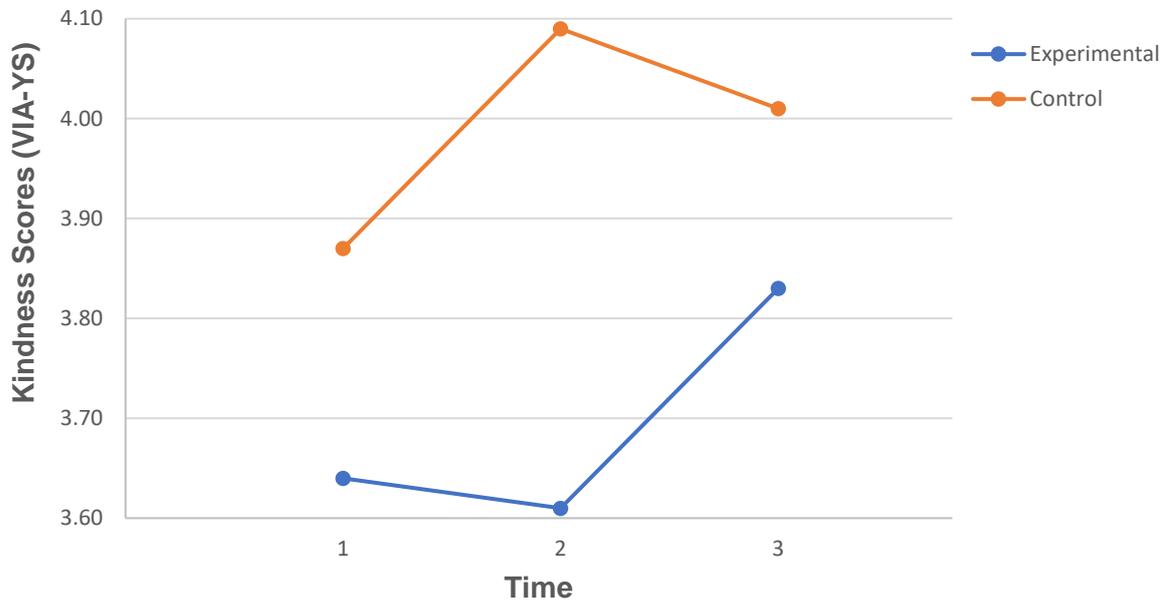
##### 4.1.1.1 Kindness: Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-YS)

It was expected that scores from the VIA-YS would increase in the experimental condition compared to the control condition following the intervention and again after six weeks. Table 9 displays the mean kindness scores and standard deviations at three timepoints for the control and experimental condition from the VIA-YS (values are between 1 and 5). Figure 5 also represents the mean kindness scores visually.

**Table 9-** Mean Kindness Scores and Standard Deviations for Both Groups at Time 1, 2 and 3 from the VIA-YS.

	<b>Time Point 1 (Pre-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 2 (Post-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 3 (Follow- up)</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	3.636 (SD - .702)	3.609 (SD - .774)	3.831 (SD - .798)
<b>Control</b>	3.865 (SD - .502)	4.091 (SD - .635)	4.008 (SD - .795)

Table 9 and Figure 5 indicate an increase in kindness in the control group between Time 1 and 2 and a decrease in kindness between Time 2 and 3. In the experimental group, there is a slight decrease in kindness between Time 1 and 2 and an increase between Time 2 and 3.



**Figure 5.** Mean Kindness Scores from the VIA-YS

After checking that the assumption of sphericity and homogeneity of variance had not been violated, a mixed ANOVA was conducted. The results show that there was

no significant interaction between time and group  $F(2,102) = 1.38, p = .256$ . There was also no significant between-groups effect  $F(1,51) = 3.53, p = .066$ .

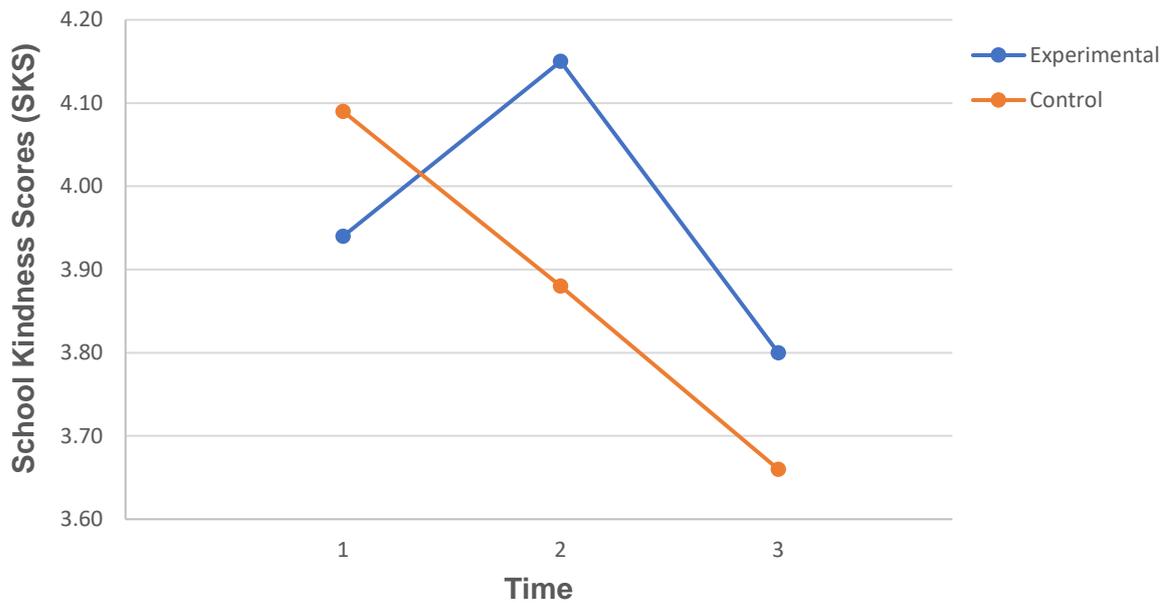
#### 4.1.1.2 School Kindness: School Kindness Scale (SKS)

It was expected that the school kindness scores would increase in the experimental condition compared to the control condition following the intervention and six weeks later. Table 10 displays the mean school kindness scores and standard deviations from the School Kindness Scale at three timepoints for the control and experimental condition. Values are between 1 and 5. Figure 6 also represents the mean school kindness scores visually.

**Table 10** - Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Both Groups at Times 1, 2 and 3 from the SKS.

	<b>Time Point 1 (Pre-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 2 (Post-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 3 (Follow-up)</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	3.936 (SD - .854)	4.152 (SD - .584)	3.8 (SD - .751)
<b>Control</b>	4.093 (SD - .479)	3.879 (SD - .605)	3.65 (SD - .734)

Table 10 and Figure 6 indicate a decrease in school kindness scores in the control condition between Time 1 and 2 and Time 2 and 3. In the experimental group, school kindness increased between Time 1 and 2 and decreased between Time 2 and 3.



**Figure 6.** Mean School Kindness Scores from the SKS

After checking that the assumption of sphericity and homogeneity of variance had not been violated, a mixed ANOVA was conducted. The results show that there was a significant interaction between time and group  $F(2, 102) = 3.537, p = .033, \eta_p^2 = .065$ . Although the ANOVA does not detect where the significant differences lie, analysis of the means shows that whilst school kindness scores increase between Time 1 and 2 in the experimental group, scores decrease during this time in the control group. A paired samples t-test confirmed a significant decrease between Time 1 and Time 2 school kindness scores in the control condition,  $t(27) = 2.21, p < .036$ , but no significant increase between school kindness scores between Time 1 and Time 2 in the experimental condition  $t(24) = -1.508, p = .145$ . A paired samples t-test also indicated a significant decrease in scores between Time 2 and 3 in the experimental group  $t(24) = 2.32, p = .029$  and the control  $t(27) = 2.741, p = .011$ .

ANOVA output revealed no significant between-subjects effect for school kindness.  $F(1, 51) = 1.706, p = .197$ .

4.1.1.3 Well-Being: How I Feel about Myself and School Questionnaire (HIFAMAS)

It was expected that well-being scores would increase in both conditions following the intervention and again after six weeks. Table 11 displays the mean well-being scores and standard deviations at three timepoints for the control and experimental condition from the HIFAMAS. Values are between 1 and 3. Figure 7 also represents the mean well-being scores visually.

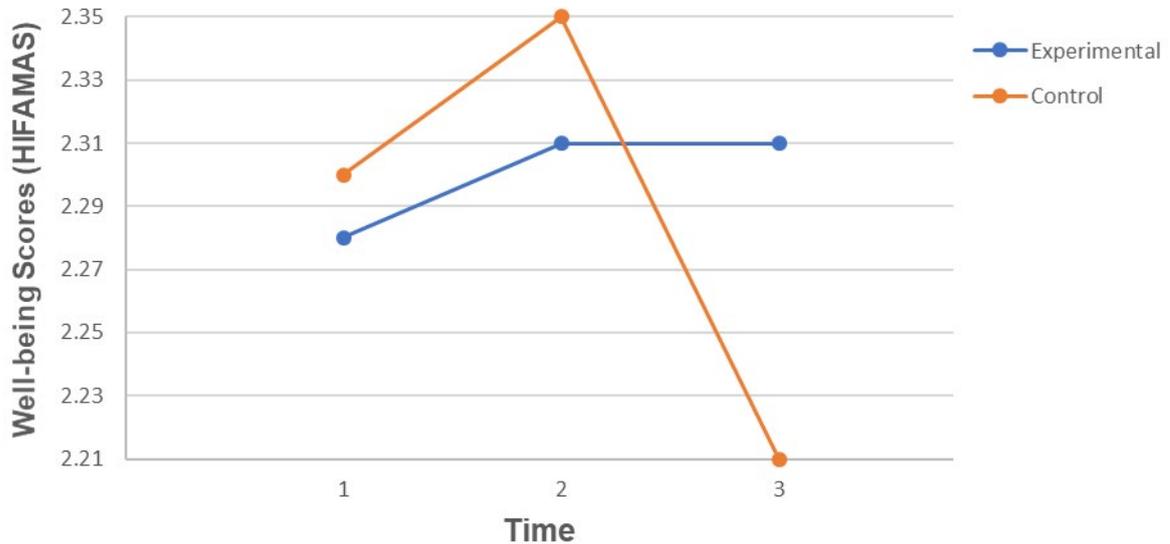
**Table 11** - Mean Well-Being Scores and Standard Deviations for Both Groups at Time 1, 2 and 3 from the HIFAMAS.

	<b>Time Point 1 (Pre-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 2 (Post-intervention)</b>	<b>Time Point 3 (Follow- up)</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	2.284 (SD - .338)	2.314 (SD - .39)	2.307 (SD - .368)
<b>Control</b>	2.301 (SD - .31)	2.349 (SD - .405)	2.214 (SD - .422)

Table 11 and Figure 7 indicate a increase in well-being in both groups between Time 1 and 2. Whilst well-being scores remain similar between Time 2 and 3 in the experimental group, well-being scores decrease in the control group.

After checking that the assumption of sphericity and homogeneity of variance had not been violated, a mixed ANOVA was conducted. The results show that there was no significant interaction between time and group  $F(2,102) = 1.247, p = .292$  and no significant between-groups effect  $F(1,51) = 0.23, p = .880$ . Further analysis was conducted on the sub-constructs of well-being measured by the HIFAMAS

questionnaire (Interpersonal Well-being, Life Satisfaction, Perceived Competence and Negative Emotions). Results indicate that there was no significant difference between time or group for each of the four constructs.



**Figure 7.** Mean Well-Being Scores from the HIFAMAS

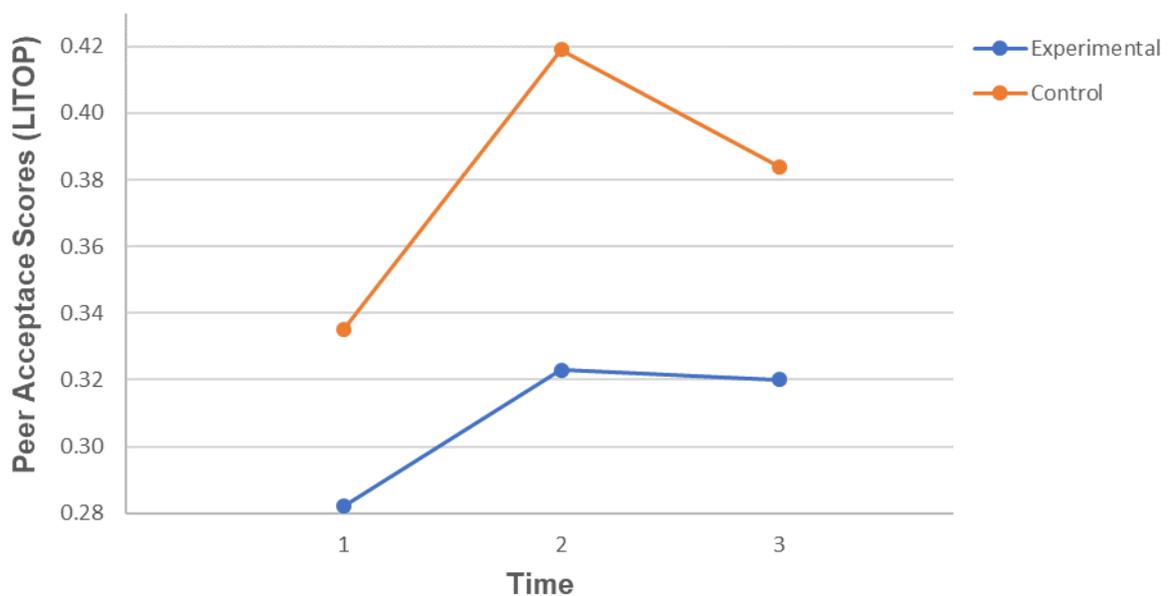
4.1.1.4 Peer Acceptance: Like to Play (LITOP)

Peer acceptance scores were expected to increase in the experimental condition compared to the control condition following the intervention and six weeks later. Table 12 displays the mean peer acceptance scores and standard deviations at three timepoints for the control and experimental condition from the Like to Play. Values are between 0 and 1. Figure 8 also represents the mean peer acceptance scores visually.

**Table 12 - Mean Peer Acceptance Scores and Standard Deviations for Both Groups at Time 1, 2 and 3 from the LITOP.**

	Time Point 1	Time Point 2	Time Point 3
Experimental	.282 (SD - .162)	.323 (SD - .119)	.320 (SD - .139)
Control	.335 (SD - .179)	.419 (SD - .161)	.384 (SD - .139)

Table 12 and Figure 8 indicate an increase in peer acceptance scores in both groups between Time 1 and 2. Between Time 2 and 3, peer acceptance scores decreased in the experimental group and the control group.



**Figure 8.** Mean Peer Acceptance Scores from the LITOP

After testing for the assumption of sphericity and homogeneity of variance and subsequently making corrections to the degrees of freedom, a mixed ANOVA was conducted. The results show that there was no significant interaction between time and group  $F(1.308, 66.698) = .440, p = .562$ . There was a significant main effect of group,  $F(1, 51) = 5.032, p = .029$ . This effect tells us that if we ignore all other

variables, the control group results were significantly different to the experimental results. Information presented in the graph, shows the control group had significantly higher ratings of peer acceptance compared to the experimental group and an independent samples t-test indicated that peer acceptance scores were significantly higher in the control condition ( $M=2.209$ ,  $SD=.341$ ) than the experimental condition ( $M=1.938$ ,  $SD=.32$ ) at Time 1,  $t(51) = -2.967$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

#### 4.1.1.5 Correlational Data

The relationships between kindness, peer acceptance and well-being were analysed on the whole data set using Pearson's Correlations. There was a significant positive correlation between well-being scores on the HIFAMAS questionnaire and school kindness scores on the School Kindness Scale  $r=.463$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p = .000$ . There was also a significant positive correlation between kindness scores on the VIA-YS and peer acceptance scores on the Like to Play  $r=.412$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p = .002$  and school kindness scores on the School Kindness Scale and peer acceptance scores on the Like to Play  $r=.299$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p = .03$ .

#### 4.1.1.6 Summary of Quantitative Findings

The results indicate that there was no significant effect of the intervention on kindness, school kindness, well-being and peer acceptance. Despite these results being non-significant, an increase in kindness was found in the experimental condition between Time 2 and 3 (i.e. between the post-intervention assessment and the follow-up assessment). Non-significant positive trends in well-being were also found between Time 1 and 2 in both the control and experimental condition. The

results revealed a significant effect of time and group for school kindness, however visual interpretation of the results shows that a significant effect cannot be attributed to the intervention as the control group showed a decrease in school kindness scores. Peer acceptance scores were significantly higher in the control condition compared to the experimental condition overall and the control group showed a negative non-significant trend on all measures between Time 2 and Time 3. Correlation analysis shows a positive relationship between well-being scores and school kindness scores. Peer acceptance scores were also positively correlated with school kindness scores and kindness scores.

#### *4.1.2 Qualitative Data*

Figure 9 shows a thematic map of the themes and sub-themes that were generated from the thematic analysis of the interview with the class teachers and the focus group of four children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project. The initial codes are listed in Appendix 22.

##### *4.1.2.1 Theme One: Impact on Prosocial Behaviours*

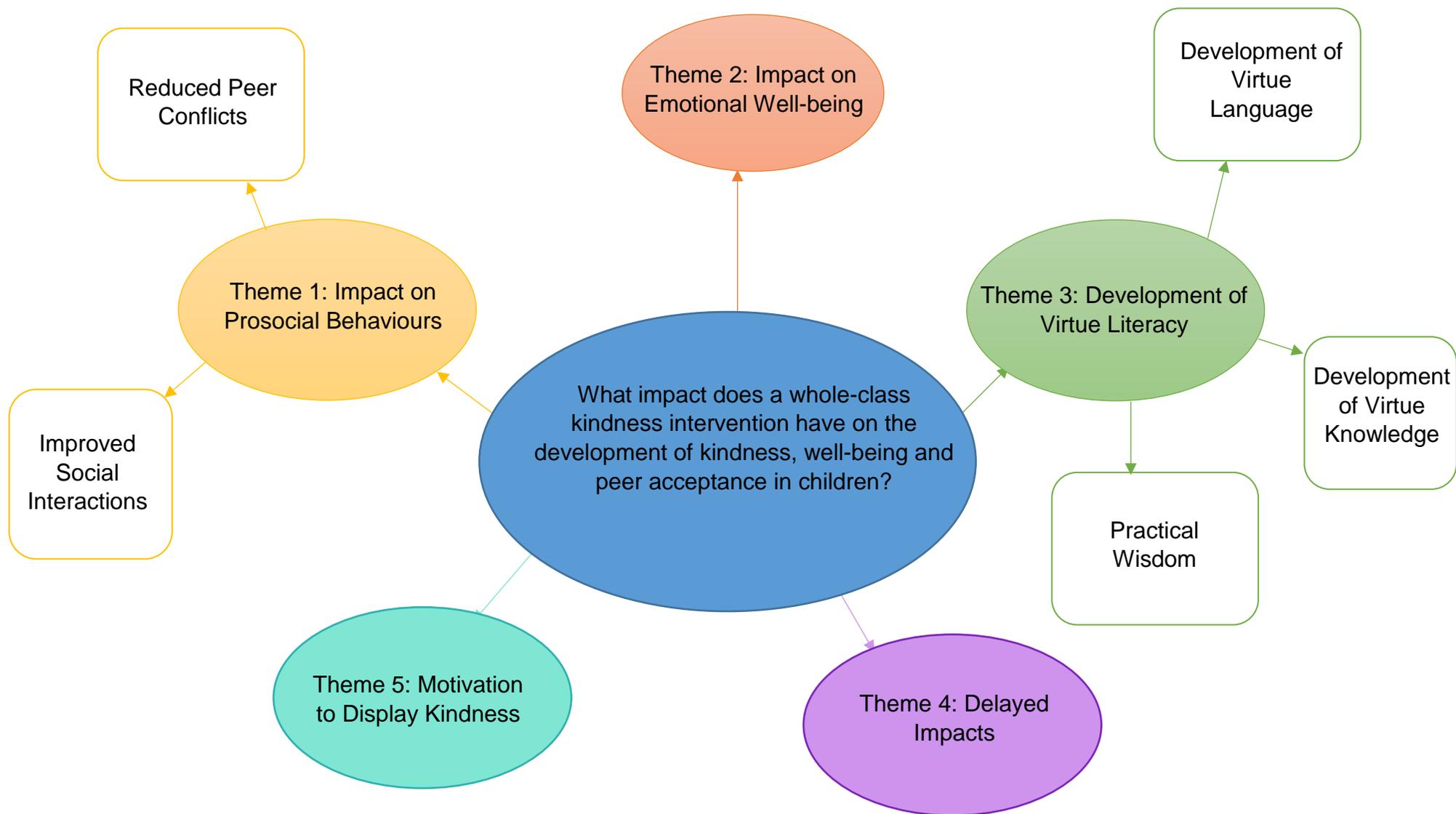
###### *4.1.2.1.1 Reduced Peer Conflicts*

One class teacher and two of the children spoke about the reduced instances of name calling and arguments since their involvement in The Power of Kindness Project. It suggests that the intervention may have helped to reduced conflicts in school.

*“Like one of them said about name calling, last term there was a lot of name calling but this term they’re coming home and they haven’t said about any name calling, which I suppose is linked to kindness” (Teacher 1 talking about parents at parents evening)*

*“and people aren’t being bullies anymore” (Child 4)*

*“We have improved a lot since the start of the year. We kept getting into arguments and getting mad and people kept on kicking people because they were mad.” (Child 1)*



**Figure 9.** Thematic Map of Teacher and Child Perceptions of the Impact of The Power of Kindness Project

#### 4.1.2.1.2 Improved Social Interactions

All four of the children and one class teacher spoke about improved interactions between peers, and also children and their class teacher. Children talked about their relationships with their peers improving and both children and teachers shared that listening skills have developed.

<p><i>“they are starting to be more kind” (Child 3)</i></p> <p><i>“...and being more kind to the teacher as well...” (Child 4)</i></p>
<p><i>“I feel like I’ve got more friends” (Child 1)</i></p>
<p><i>“It has helped us to get on with our peers more” (Child 2)</i></p>
<p><i>“I have noticed in PSHE that they have being better at listening to each other, I have noticed that over the last two weeks that it has been better. So maybe not directly linked, but it has had an impact on their interactions.” (Teacher 1)</i></p>
<p><i>“...and not always interrupt and chat anymore” (Child 4)</i></p>

#### 4.1.2.2 Theme Two: Impact on Emotional Well-Being

Both teachers and two children spoke about children feeling fewer challenging emotions. Teachers shared that parents have noticed that their children are happier at home and about coming to school. Children spoke about seeing their peers manage their emotions in more positive ways in school.

<p><i>“so many parents have commented on it at parents evening last week that they have seen a positive change... that their children are happier as well” (Teacher 1)</i></p>
<p><i>“I’ve noticed as well, the last two weeks of term and today, that they are more open to a bit of humour. Like in maths today I had squares on the board and I said ‘and were not</i></p>

<p><i>going to squish all the numbers into one box like this are we' and they really responded, they just giggled and before they would just not allow that to happen" (Teacher 1)</i></p>
<p><i>"Yeah, and you know the fact that they are not going home and being angry or upset and you know some of the children would take it out on their peers or parents" Teacher 2 talking about parents views shared at parents evening)</i></p>
<p><i>"a lot of them were that they are happier, they wanted to come to school" (Teacher 1 talking about parents views shared at parents evening)</i></p>
<p><i>"and when the teacher would say, move your name down, they would throw their chair down" (Child 3) "they are much calmer now, they don't really do that" (Child 4) "and when people are asked to move their name down they take a deep breath and don't react. Because before it was complete chaos, people had to have things to help them calm down" (Child 3)</i></p>

#### 4.1.2.3 Theme Three: Development of Virtue Literacy

##### 4.1.2.3.1 Development of Virtue Language

Both class teachers shared that children were more able to use the language of kindness and discuss their kind acts towards the end of the project. Children mirrored the language of their teachers and encouraged their peers to think about how they have been kind in peer discussions.

<p><i>"or I had said, 'oo you have been really kind there' if someone then hears that, and they have been passed a ruler they have said 'thank you that's really kind' and they have mirrored my language"(Teacher 1)</i></p>
<p><i>"they would have other children who would say 'did you do this, and I did this and oo yeah I did that' and I think they were having a bit more of a discussion about it. Like 'I helped my mum get a nappy for my baby sister' and things more like that." (Teacher 2 talking about children sharing their kind acts)</i></p>

#### 4.1.2.3.2 Development of Virtue Knowledge

Both class teachers spoke about children finding it difficult to recognise their own acts of kindness at the start of the project. Children were more able to think about and identify their kind acts towards the end of the intervention.

*“...and I think that they kind of like got better towards the end, you know what I mean, you know, because I think they were thinking more... because at the start I don’t think they realised that was a kind thing to do going to get a nappy for their baby sister”*

(Teacher 2)

*“Yeah. They are not realising what they are doing is kind.”* (Teacher 1)

*“...holding a door for somebody and things like that, because when they went to do it, they struggled to write things down and as Miss XXX said, I would then go and remind them, well ‘who held that door open? who’s done this who’s done that?’”* (Teacher 2)

#### 4.1.2.3.3 Practical Wisdom

Three children in the focus group showed a deeper understand of kindness and were able to give examples of when to use kindness at the right time and in the right context.

*“so, say if it’s raining and really cold outside but your parent doesn’t let you outside it’s like that”* (Child 2)

*“also when you’re chewing something and you can choke on it they (parents) say stop putting it in your mouth and you think ahh I can put it in my mouth all I want, they’re being so rude, but actually they don’t want you to choke”* (Child 3)

*“If you give someone too much stuff and they keep saying thank you all the time, I think they need to give you some things back. Being kind goes both ways”* (Child 4)

#### 4.1.2.4 Theme Four: Delayed Impacts

Both class teachers spoke about delayed impacts of The Power of Kindness Project and how character takes time to develop. One teacher talked about character education having a better impact on more mature students. Notably, in January 2020, ten weeks after The Power of Kindness Project, the class teacher reported in a conversation with the EP linked to the school that the impacts of the project are “entirely felt now”.

*“...and I think that they kind of like got better towards the end, you know what I mean, you know, because I think they were thinking more”* (Teacher 2 talking about children writing their down their kind acts)

*“I think it just takes time to develop good character”* (Teacher 1)

*“I think different groups of children will respond differently. For example, the Year 5s I don’t think they would respond well, they are very immature, whereas the current year 3s are more mature so it depends on the cohorts of the children.”* (Teacher 1)

#### 4.1.2.5 Theme Five: Motivation to Display Kindness

Two children and one of the class teachers talked about children displaying kindness because it felt good to help other people rather being motivated by external rewards. Teachers reported that around half of the class display kindness for these reasons.

*“Yeah I think a mixture, I think you could definitely pick out probably about half of them in here that will be kind just because they wanted to do it or to help somebody.”*  
(Teacher 1)

*“...like the children that help sharpen the pencils, they wouldn’t expect us to give them a reward or a XXX token, but they would do it because they want to help us out.”*

(Teacher 2)

*“I shared my iPad with my dad cause he wanted to know something on it when I was playing a game... I got a bit annoyed at first, but I felt helpful.. (Child 4)*

*“Sometimes being kind means doing something you don’t want to do but it helps the other person.” (Child 4)*

*“I’ve learnt, well just if you know you don’t want to do something, if you do it you will make yourself feel better and it will make them feel better too.” (Child 1)*

## **4.2 Research Question 2 – What role do teachers have in helping children to develop kindness?**

Figure 10 shows a thematic map of the themes and sub-themes that were generated from the thematic analysis of the interview with the class teachers and the focus group of four children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project.

### *4.2.1 Theme One: Coaching*

#### 4.2.1.1 Identifying Kind Acts

Both teachers and one of the children spoke about teachers noticing and reinforcing the children’s kind acts during the project. They suggested that children benefited from teachers explicitly identifying examples of kindness.

*“...point out when they were being kind without realising, so sometimes they would do things, if someone couldn’t tie their shoe laces and I would make a point of ‘oh that was*

*really kind, thank you for doing that, that's something you could write about for our kindness tree"* (Teacher 1)

*"I think it was about reinforcing that the things they do are kind... and I don't think they actually realise it is kind."* (Teacher 2)

*"Well she gave us some ideas of what we have done that's kind for the leaves."* (Child 1)

*"Holding a door for somebody and things like that, because when they went to do it, they struggled to write things down and as Miss XXX said, I would then go and remind them, well 'who held that door open? who's done this who's done that? So, it is noticing things and reminding them"* (Teacher 2)

#### 4.2.1.2 Engaging in Discussion

One teacher spoke about their role in engaging children in discussion about both their virtuous and non-virtuous behaviours. The teacher talked about using this discussion to help guide their behaviours.

*"I do think though they are better, they have got better, I mean just with the discussion in general."* (Teacher 1)

*"Yeah and there is coaching going on there with the discussions you are having with the children about the right and wrong behaviours they are showing."* (Teacher 1)

#### 4.2.1.3 Modelling

One teacher talked about their role of modelling kind behaviours and how children respond by being kind themselves. One teacher spoke about how children copied their language and used it to label kind acts observed in their peers.

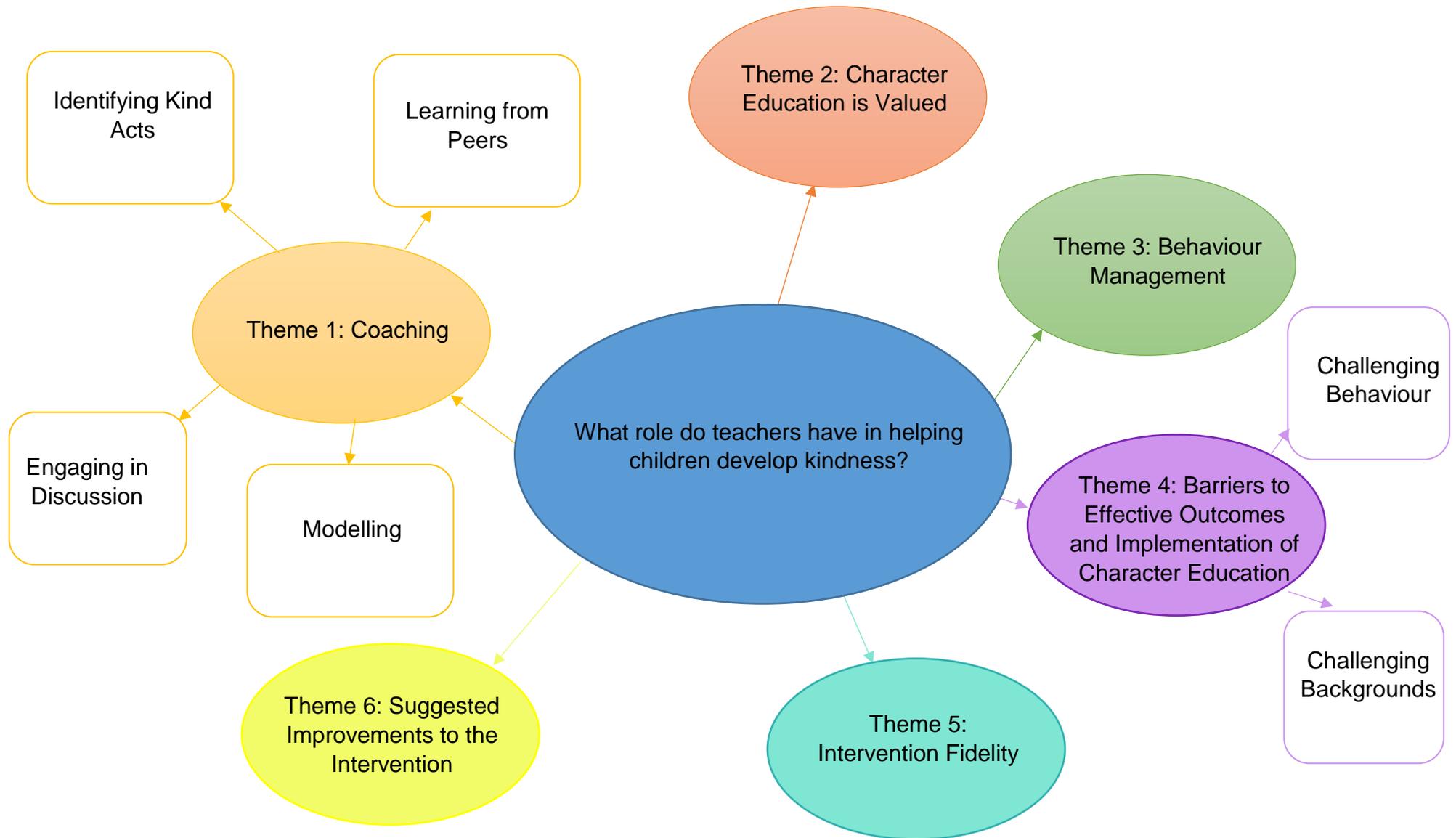
*“...and showing it ourselves, like if we give things out, you know or if someone gives something to us, saying thank you. Erm yeah you know if we show, because they mirror what we do so if we are nice and kind and say thank you and everything to them, they are going to be kind back so its understanding if we do it, they will do it as well.”*

(Teacher 2)

*“...or I had said, ‘oo you have been really kind there’ if someone they hears that, and they have been passed a ruler they have said ‘ thank you that’s really kind’ and they have mirrored my language”* (Teacher 1)

*“they do a lot of mirroring of what other people do or what we do, which is good”*

(Teacher 2)



**Figure 10.** Thematic Map of Teacher and Child Perceptions of the Role of Teachers in Helping Children to Develop Kindness

#### 4.2.1.4 Learning from Peers

One teacher and one child talked about the role of their peers in helping to develop the virtue of kindness. They spoke about spotting kindness in each other, mirroring others' behaviours and engaging in discussions about their kind acts.

*"They would have other children who would say 'did you do this, and I did this and oo yeah I did that' and I think they were having a bit more of a discussion about it."*

(Teacher 2)

*"Some of the more confident children would say, 'I saw you doing this' or 'do you remember when you did this' and I think that is what helped."* (Teacher 2)

*"...but like about spotting other people, sometimes we do."* (Child 1)

*"They do a lot of mirroring or what other people do or what we do, which is good."*

(Teacher 2)

#### 4.2.2 Theme Two: Character Education is Valued

Both teachers spoke about the importance of character education. One teacher talked about the value of explicitly identifying examples of good character that children may otherwise not have recognised. One teacher shared they felt the importance of good character was greater than academic outcomes.

*"Teaching character is important I think because I think they need to know what they are doing is nice, and that's a big thing, and because they don't know it they're not understanding it so when you say, 'you're doing something nice, you're doing something kind' they're like 'what have I done?'. So, it is good for them to realise that they are doing nice things."* (Teacher 2)

*“...and actually, your character is with you for life. Getting good results academically or whatever, that’s not going to matter if you are not a good person.” (Teacher 1)*

#### *4.2.3 Theme Three: Behaviour Management*

Both teachers talked about the importance of boundaries and consistency when helping children to develop good character.

*Interviewer: “What do you think has contributed to the changes that you have seen?”*

*Teacher 1: “Boundaries”*

*Teacher 2: “Yeah definitely”*

*“...and despite there being two of us, consistency. I know that sounds daft because we swap over but actually, they know that there is no leeway.” (Teacher 1)*

*“Miss XXX is here, and I am here we work together, and I think they have realised that they can’t get away with things because we do talk to each other.” (Teacher 2)*

#### *4.2.4 Theme Four: Barriers to Effective Outcomes and Implementation of Character Education*

##### *4.2.4.1 Challenging Behaviour*

One teacher shared that children’s challenging behaviour prevented the implementation of the intervention at times.

*“I think sometimes, especially in the mornings, the behaviour just got in the way.”  
(Teacher 1)*

#### 4.2.4.2. Challenging Backgrounds

Both teachers spoke about the children's challenging home lives, adverse experiences and the lack of role models at home and the impact this had on children's understanding of kindness.

*"They don't have good role models at home." (Teacher 1)*

*"...and I don't think they actually realise it is kind. I think it stems from home life though as well sometimes, where they do things, but they are not saying 'that's kind of you, that's nice of you'." (Teacher 2)*

*"A lot of children in our class have issues outside of school, I would say at least half have got issues, whether that is social, child protection, family issues. They come in to be safe." (Teacher 1)*

#### *4.2.5 Theme Five: Intervention Fidelity*

Information gathered from observations of the reflective class discussion, suggested that the coaching questions were not being used to guide the discussion and encourage children to think about the reasons behind their kind acts. One teacher and three children spoke about the implementation of the intervention, which eluded to the lack of fidelity of the intervention. Two children shared that they were asked to write down two kind acts per week rather than three. One child and teacher spoke about limited opportunities to read each other's kind acts on the classroom display to help give children ideas of how to be kind. One child suggested that there were limited opportunities to share examples of kind acts with the class and neither class teachers intentionally used the coaching tools to guide their coaching practices.

<i>I can't remember off the top of my head what they are.</i> (Teacher 1 talking about the Coaching Tools)
<i>"Two every week"</i> (Child 2) <i>"Yes two every Friday"</i> (Child 1 talking about frequency of recording kind acts)
Interviewer: <i>"How often do you share your examples of being kind?"</i> Child 3: <i>"Hmm I don't know"</i> Child 1: <i>"Not that often but we do"</i>
<i>"We only take a stare at it when we're walking past for a few seconds and you can barely read it because it is so far away."</i> (Child 3 talking about the kindness display)
<i>"...maybe having more opportunities to look at each other's leaves to see what other people in their class have done."</i> (Teacher 2 talking about how the intervention could be improved)

#### 4.2.6 Theme Six: Suggested Improvements to the Intervention

Teachers talked about more opportunities for children to read the kind acts of others, more targeted teaching sessions and the use of reflective questioning. Teachers made suggestions that were already featured in the intervention suggesting lack of intervention fidelity.

<i>"Maybe something around, how do you feel if you do this for somebody. How does it make you feel, how does it make other people feel?"</i> (Teacher 1)
<i>"Maybe having more opportunities to look at each other's leaves to see what other people in their class have done."</i> (Teacher 2)

*"I think at the start, maybe having a few scenarios, for understanding what kindness actually is, so you could maybe erm you know do some role play. Some things like that. So you could pick out who was kind and you could spot low level kindness like holding open the door and getting them to realise."* (Teacher 2)

### **4.3 Research Question 3 - How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?**

Children in the focus group were asked to talk about what they had been doing whilst taking part in The Power of Kindness Project. They spoke about recording their kind acts on leaves for the kindness tree and a secret mission, where they were asked to be kind to someone in their class without the child guessing who they were.

*"We've been, erm, well we did a secret mission and we have to try and be kind to someone and erm we can't tell them who it is, who's got them because that will ruin it."*  
(Child 1)

*"We did one where every week we wrote the kind things that we had done on our leaves and then we stuck it on our tree, the kindness tree."* (Child 2)

It was difficult to draw themes from the data that captured what the children liked about the intervention as their answers were short. So, this information is presented in a question and answer format:

Interviewer: "What did you think of the project?"

Child 3: *"I enjoyed it"*

All Children: *"Yeah"*

Child 1: *"Yeah it was fun"*

Interviewer: *"What parts of the project did you particularly like doing?"*

Child 3: *"The secret mission"*

Child 2: *"Erm yes"*

Child 1: *"All of it"*

Child 4: *"Yes"*

Figure 11 shows a thematic map of the themes and sub-themes that were generated from the thematic analysis of focus group of four children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project.

#### *4.3.1 Theme One: Positive Impacts*

##### *4.3.1.1 Improved Social Interactions*

Three of the children spoke about the positive effect the intervention on their social interactions. Two children talked about negative behaviours displayed towards each other before the intervention and one child talked about the positive impacts on their friendships.

<p><i>"They are starting to be more kind" (Child 3)</i></p> <p><i>"...and being more kind to the teacher as well and not always interrupt and chat anymore" (Child 4)</i></p>
<p><i>"...and people aren't being bullies anymore" (Child 4)</i></p>
<p><i>"I feel like I've got more friends" (Child 1)</i></p>
<p><i>"...and people kept on kicking people because they were mad" (Child 1 talking about times before the intervention)</i></p>

#### 4.3.1.2 Improved Emotional Regulation

Three children talked about their peers displaying calmer behaviours in class and two shared that their peers were able to accept consequences more calmly. One child spoke about children experiencing more challenging emotions before the intervention.

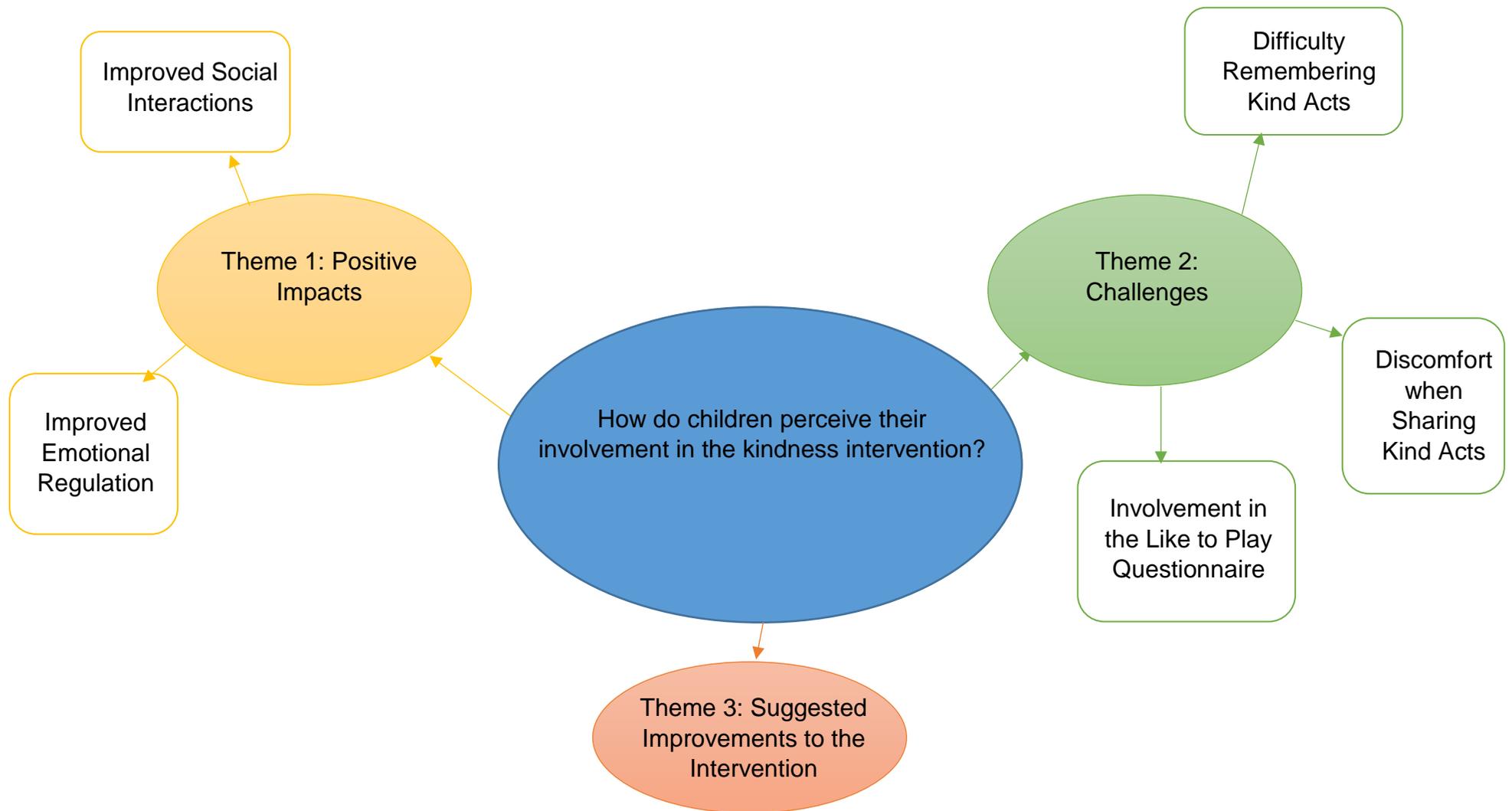
<p><i>“Well we kept getting in arguments and getting mad...”</i> (Child 1)</p>
<p><i>“...and when people are asked to move their name down they take a deep breath and don’t react. Because before it was complete chaos, people had to have things to help they calm down”</i> (Child 3)</p>
<p><i>“They are much calmer now, they don’t really do that”</i> (Child 4)</p> <p><i>“They might calming move their name down”</i> (Child 3)</p>

#### 4.3.2 Theme Two: Challenges

##### 4.3.2.1 Difficulty Remembering Kind Acts

Three children spoke about how it was difficult to remember and think about the kind acts they had displayed.

<p><i>“I find it hard to think about what I’ve done”</i> (Child 2)</p>
<p><i>“...because sometimes I can forget”</i> (Child 4)</p>
<p>Interviewer: <i>“How have you found writing your kind acts on the leaves?”</i></p> <p>Child 2: <i>“hard”</i></p> <p>Child 3: <i>“mines easy-ish”</i></p>



**Figure 11.** Thematic Map of Child Perceptions of their Involvement in The Power of Kindness Project

#### 4.3.2.2 Discomfort when Sharing Kind Acts

Two children talked about feeling like they were bragging or showing off when they shared their examples of kindness with the class.

*“...and sometimes I don’t want to put it on the wall because it feels like I’m bragging”*

(Child 2)

*“Yes its true. It just feels like OMG, people are going to think that you are showing off for what you did... because if you put something kind down that you did, they are going to think, oh they just did that to show it off at school”* (Child 1)

*“That’s what it feels like for me too”* (Child 2)

#### 4.3.2.3 Involvement in the Like to Play Questionnaire

Two children spoke about their discomfort when they were asked to rate how much they liked to play with their peers during data collection. One child shared that they found it difficult to keep this information a secret.

*“I didn’t like doing the friend thing because I thought, say if I put someone down and they didn’t put me down then I would have thought they weren’t my friend. And if they put me down and I didn’t put them down then they might have got upset.”* (Child 2)

*“Yes I thought that as well cause were not very good at keeping secrets”* (Child 4)

#### 4.3.3 Theme Three: Suggested Improvements to the Intervention

Three children suggested improvements for the intervention. One child spoke about recording their kind acts more immediately; one child talked about recording the kind acts of others rather than of themselves; and another child suggested more opportunities to read their peers examples of kindness.

*“Maybe we could, every time we do something kind we have it on our table, so we don’t forget to write it on our leaves.” (Child 4)*

*“...or like what we have in Year 3, we had a kindness confetti board and we have little strips of paper and you didn’t put what someone else, you didn’t put what you’ve done kind, you put what someone else has done kind to you. That would be a lot easier, because I find it hard to think about what I’ve done.” (Child 2)*

*“...or you can tell people to look at the leaves and think about what other people have put to get some ideas.” (Child 3)*

#### **4.4 Key Researcher Observations**

I observed the ‘coaching’ and ‘reflective discussion’ elements of The Power of Kindness Project at two time points (Week 2 and Week 4) to monitor the fidelity of the intervention and to model coaching conversations with the children. Key observations are listed below:

- use of the ‘Coaching Questions’ was not observed at either time points;
- children were eager to share examples of their kind acts with the class;
- teachers gave examples of being kind during the reflective class discussion;
- children required a high level of coaching when discussing the use of kindness in different contexts and the idea of ‘being too kind’, or ‘being cruel to be kind’. When I introduced these concepts at Week 2, all children reported that they were not familiar with the latter concept.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

First, this chapter discusses the findings pertaining to each research question and the existing research and theory. An in-depth consideration of the findings explores the strengths and limitations associated with qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and helps to offer explanations for the results and considerations for future research. Finally, the implications for theory and educational psychology practice are explored and the chapter concludes with a final summary.

### **5.1 What impact does a whole-class kindness intervention have on the development of kindness, well-being and peer acceptance in children?**

To answer the first research question, the study used quantitative data gained from self-report questionnaires, alongside qualitative data gathered from a teacher interview and student focus group and considered the findings in relation to the existing literature. The findings revealed discrepancies between the quantitative and qualitative results. Questionnaire results suggest that The Power of Kindness Project had no significant impact on the development of kindness, well-being or peer acceptance in children. Although positive trends were found in well-being and kindness either following the intervention or after six weeks in the experimental condition, these results were non-significant. Interestingly, teacher and student reports diverge from these findings. They indicated improvements in social interactions, including a reduction in peer conflicts; emotional well-being; and the ability to self-identify their kindness. It should be noted that whilst the findings appear to conflict, qualitative findings are drawn from a limited sample of children

and may be susceptible to socially desirable responses, so they should be treated with caution. Both methods of data collection and analysis will be considered critically to help interpret the findings in Section 5.4. Findings from research questions two and three provide potential causal mechanisms and conditions that help to answer research question one. In particular, issues with intervention fidelity had implications for the findings which are considered in this chapter.

### *5.1.1 Quantitative Findings*

Quantitative findings suggest that The Power of Kindness Project had no significant impact on the development of kindness, well-being or peer acceptance in children.

#### *5.1.1.1 Virtue Development and Kindness*

It was expected that the quantitative data would show a significant increase in children's self-reported kindness using the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-YS) immediately after the intervention and six weeks later in the experimental condition, but not in the control condition. Results indicated no significant increase either following the intervention or six weeks later in the experimental condition relative to the control group. Based on the neo-Aristotelian perspectives of moral development, virtues are developed through the process of gaining virtue knowledge and understanding, engaging in critical reflection and repetition and imitation of virtuous actions (i.e. kindness) (Aristotle, cited in Bowditch, 2008). Therefore, we would expect kindness scores to improve after the intervention, which is designed to develop an understanding of kindness, encourage kind actions and provide reflective opportunities to discuss them. However, Francis

et al. (2018) implemented self-report measures of virtue development across 12 virtues pre and post-intervention and found similar non-significant outcomes. The authors suggested that students required exposure to the intervention for longer than six weeks to be able to identify the internalisation of virtues within their own lives. In the present study, the experimental condition showed decreases in kindness scores after the intervention and increases six weeks later, whilst kindness scores increased in the control condition after the intervention and decreased after six weeks. Although this trend was not significant, improvements in kindness scores found at the six-week follow-up in the experimental group supports Francis et al.'s (2018) claims. Similarly, it was expected that children's reports of kindness in school using the School Kindness Scale (SKS) would increase in the experimental group compared to the control. Scores increased in the experimental group following the intervention, but they decreased in the control group. Hence, although a significant interaction was found, this cannot be attributed to the intervention.

#### 5.1.1.2 Well-Being

It was predicted that quantitative results would show a significant increase in well-being scores using the How I Feel about Myself and School Questionnaire (HIFAMAS) after the intervention and this increase would be maintained six weeks later in both conditions. Whilst marginal increases in well-being were shown in both conditions, these results were non-significant. Following the intervention, well-being scores decreased slightly in both conditions. These findings are surprising given the wealth of kindness-based, positive psychology intervention research showing positive effects on well-being using quantitative measures (Alden and Trew, 2013;

Buchanan and Bardi, 2010; Mongrain, Chin and Shapira, 2011; Nelson et al., 2016). Although most of the research has been conducted with adult participants, similar findings have been shown in school-aged children (Layous et al., 2012; Proctor et al., 2011). The current study's findings are contrary to Layous et al.'s (2012) results who found increases in well-being in both the kindness intervention group and the control group. The control group were asked to engage in a similar positive distraction task to this study, designed to enhance well-being following the four-week intervention. Sin and Lyubomirsky's (2009) meta-analysis found greater improvements in well-being for positive psychology interventions that ran for a longer period of time. Some interventions included in the research ran for up to 12 weeks; double the length of The Power of Kindness Project. However, improvements in well-being have been shown following four-week and six-week interventions, which included a similar frequency of kind acts to this study. (Layous et al., 2012; Lyubomirsky, Tkach and Sheldon, 2004); Nelson, Layous, Cole, Lyubomirsky, 2016).

Previous studies have found improvements in hedonic well-being where constructs, such as 'life satisfaction' are measured (Curry et al., 2018; Layous et al., 2012), whereas this study aims to measure both hedonic and eudaimonic constructs of well-being, which may account for differences in findings. However, similar non-significant effects were found when the 'life satisfaction' component of the questionnaire was analysed alone. Nevertheless, correlational findings indicated a positive relationship between well-being scores using the HIFAMAS and school kindness scores using the SKS. Existing literature suggests that well-being scores

improve either after completing kind acts or receiving kind acts (Chancellor et al., 2017; Curry et al., 2018). Based on this evidence, it could be suggested that children who perceive kindness to happen regularly in school and in their classroom have higher levels of well-being. This provides support for theories underpinning the intervention and highlights potential issues instead with its implementation.

#### 5.1.1.3 Peer Acceptance

The final prediction expected a significant increase in peer acceptance scores, measured using the Like to Play (LITOP), after the intervention which would be maintained after six weeks in the experimental condition compared to the control condition. Quantitative results revealed no significant increase in peer acceptance scores in the experimental group compared to the control group following the intervention or after six weeks. Again, these results do not corroborate with existing research where improvements have been found in relationships in adults and children participating in kindness-based interventions compared to those who did not (Layous et al., 2012; O'Connell, O'Shea and Gallagher, 2016). Layous et al.'s (2012) findings went further to suggest that increases in peer acceptance were due to kindness alone, rather than a by-product of increased feelings of happiness; whilst well-being scores increased in both conditions, peer acceptance scores increased in the kindness intervention group only.

Interestingly, quantitative findings did reveal a significant positive relationship between kindness scores on the VIA-YS and School Kindness Scale, and peer acceptance scores reported on the Like to Play (LITOP). Although this test does not

prove causality, one interpretation of the findings could suggest that students who perceive themselves and those around them as kind, are more socially accepted by their peers. These findings converge with previous research which has shown prosocial behaviours to predict social acceptance in adolescents (Caprara et al., 2000). Again, this suggests that the fidelity of the intervention should be considered.

Quantitative findings in the present study appear to reveal contrary results to those yielded from kindness-based intervention research. Findings from research question two and three will help to provide possible explanations for this discrepancy in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 along with the consideration of several confounding variables in Section 5.4.

#### *5.1.2 Qualitative Findings*

Alongside quantitative data yielded from the student questionnaires, findings from the teacher interview and student focus group were also used to answer research question one. Contrary to the quantitative results, teachers and children reported improvements in prosocial behaviours, including a reduction in peer conflicts; emotional well-being; and ability to identify and talk about their acts of kindness. As previously highlighted, these findings should be treated with caution for reasons explored in section 5.4.2.

##### *5.1.2.1 Prosocial Behaviours*

Both teachers and students reported improvements in social interactions immediately after the intervention including less bullying and arguments, improved

friendships and listening skills. Parents also noticed that their children were reporting less instances of name calling when they got home from school. These findings support Jeynes' (2017) meta-analysis of international studies, which found improvements in social skills following programmes aimed to foster good character. These findings also support evidence from Clark and Marinak's (2012) study, which showed that deliberately cultivating kindness in teenagers was related to less bullying in school (cited in Shankland and Rosset, 2016). The current study's findings also support CE literature in the UK which has found interventions to improve relationships between children and their peers and teachers and their ability to resolve conflict (Arthur et al., 2015; Clifford, 2011; White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011).

#### 5.1.2.2 Well-being

Information from teachers and students also suggests improvements in well-being and regulation of emotions. Teachers shared that parents had noticed that their children were happier and wanted to come to school and there were fewer instances of feeling upset and angry after school. Students noticed that their peers had fewer aggressive outbursts and were using breathing techniques to help them control their reactions. These findings corroborate with existing CE literature where quantitative and qualitative results have found improvements in well-being, self-control and self-regulating behaviours (Clifford, 2011; Jeynes 2017; Proctor et al., 2011; White and Warfa, 2011). A small to medium significant effect on well-being has also been found in kindness-based intervention research across a range of ages (Curry et al.,

2018) including Layous' et al.'s (2012) study who found significant effects using child participants.

#### 5.1.2.3 Virtue Development

Both class teachers reported that students showed an improved understanding of kindness and were better able to describe their kind acts towards the end of the intervention. In the literature, virtue knowledge, reasoning and practice are described together as 'virtue literacy' (Arthur et al., 2015). Teachers and students reported that students found it difficult to recognise and discuss their kind acts at the beginning of the intervention and this improved over the duration of the project. During the focus group, students demonstrated a deeper understanding of kindness, considering its use in different contexts and circumstances. This indicated a presence of the 'meta-virtue', practical wisdom, which Aristotle suggests is pertinent to developing good character and is required to overcome moral decisions (Aristotle cited in Sanderse, 2012). These findings are supported by UK CE research that found virtue literacy to improve following the programme (Arthur et al., 2015; Francis et al., 2018). Francis et al. (2018) states that "a prerequisite for good CE is for students to acquire a language of virtue that enables them to think about the virtues that underpin good character" (p. 239). Complex language associated with virtues is required to enable students to overcome moral dilemmas and behave virtuously (Arthur et al., 2015). Practical wisdom was not explicitly measured in both groups prior to the intervention, so it is difficult to conclude causation between the intervention and the development of the meta-virtue. However, observations at week two of the intervention, indicated that children found it challenging to

contribute to discussions about using varying amounts of kindness is different circumstances. Despite this, the limited number of participants in the student focus group hinder the ability to infer firm conclusions regarding the development of practical wisdom following the intervention

Teacher interview data indicated that observable impacts on social interactions and children's understanding of kindness developed towards the end of the intervention. This suggests delayed, rather than immediate changes in their virtuous knowledge and behaviours. Existing research supports this finding of delayed effects. Whilst Francis et al. (2018) found improvements in virtue knowledge and understanding following the six-week intervention, no significant improvements were found in self-reported virtue development. As noted when exploring the quantitative results, this may reflect the amount of time required to recognise internalised virtuous behaviours in oneself. These findings may support a linear process of virtue development that requires the acquisition of virtue literacy to proceed changes in behaviour (Arthur et al., 2015). This helps to explain quantitative data which suggests a non-significant effect on self-reported kindness following the intervention.

Findings indicate that some children demonstrated kindness without the implementation of external rewards. Students in the focus group talked about feeling helpful and feeling better knowing they had helped someone else. Teachers reported that children's motivation to be kind varied, with around half showing kindness due to an internal motivation. Teacher interview data also suggested that

children in the study have challenging home lives, limited role models and adverse experiences at home. Aristotle's model of moral development suggests that a person's journey to become virtuous depends on their experiences in childhood and the circumstances in which they are brought up. Some will develop virtuous behaviour autonomously, whereas others may require enhanced practical habituation and support to develop self-regulation skills, initially motivated by extrinsic factors (Aristotle, cited in Bowditch, 2008). Aristotle's model of virtuous behaviour helps to explain the relationship between the variation in children's motivations and the presence of challenging childhood experiences in this study.

## **5.2 What role do teachers have in helping children develop kindness?**

In answer to research question two, teachers aided the development of kindness in children by explicitly identifying their kind acts, modelling kindness, facilitating discussions about their kindness, and employing behaviour management techniques. Teachers also recognised the importance of children learning from their peers, spotting kindness in each other and discussing their actions together. Teachers valued the implementation of CE in school and one claimed that the development of good character is more important than academic outcomes. Teachers did identify barriers to effective outcomes and implementation of the intervention including challenging behaviour and adverse experiences at home. Also, it was evident that elements of the intervention were not fully implemented. Children recorded two rather than three acts of kindness per week; teachers did not explicitly employ a range of coaching tools; and reflective class discussion using the 'coaching questions' occurred infrequently. These key findings in answer to

research question two will be discussed alongside their position within the existing literature.

### *5.2.1 Implementation of Character Education*

Teachers recalled the use of modelling, class discussion and explicit identification of kind acts within the intervention to help develop kindness in children. All of which are practices related to existing CE programmes. UK literature suggests that reflective class discussion is a key feature in all CE interventions to help students understand the meaning behind their actions and the impact on others (Arthur et al., 2015; Clifford, 2013; Davison et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Proctor et al., 2011; White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011). Findings support Berkowitz and Bier's (2007) review on CE programmes which stated the presence of 'adults as role models' in effective CE programmes. School guidance from the Jubilee Centre about delivering neo-Aristotelian character education (Arthur, n.d) also talks about the importance of explicitly identifying a child's virtuous behaviour which teachers employed in this study. Notably, when asked which 'Coaching Tools' were implemented most frequently, both class teachers were unable to recall any of the coaching tools that were shared during the training prior to the intervention. However, when asked more broadly about their role in supporting children to develop good character, teachers talked about explicitly identifying kind acts, engaging in discussions and modelling. All of these strategies featured within 'Coaching Toolbox' however, findings suggest that although some strategies were employed, the deliberate intention to implement all of these CE techniques may have been inconsistent. Lickona (1991) defines CE as "the deliberate effort to

develop the virtues that enable us to lead fulfilling lives and build a better world” (p.228). The Jubilee Centre (2015) highlight “the development of the whole child is an obvious but sometimes only implicit fact of school life” (p.26). They suggest that explicit CE practices are required to enable the development of virtuous students. Reports from both teachers and children, alongside the researcher’s observations suggest that teacher’s efforts to explicitly identify kind acts may be the only CE practice that was consistently implemented throughout the intervention.

The findings also suggest that children were encouraged to share *what* they had done rather than *why* they had done it. This limits the opportunities to learn from their actions and develop an understanding of kindness. The use of ‘Coaching Questions’ displayed in the classroom was not evident during both observations and this was modelled to one teacher on both occasions. The questions asked, ‘how did you feel and what did you think?’ and ‘what do you think the other person thought and felt?’. Teachers suggested that asking children how it felt to be kind would have improved the intervention. This also indicated that the coaching questions displayed in the classroom may not have been used. Sanderse (2012) notes the importance of reflective dialogue between teachers and students when supporting them to develop a critical understanding of moral actions and their use in future contexts. Children suggested that this practice was employed infrequently and omittance of this strategy may have hindered their development of kindness.

Furthermore, quantitative findings suggest that children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project were not more likely to report that their teachers modelled

kindness or encouraged kindness in the classroom, than those who did not take part in the kindness intervention. Whilst teachers reported the use of CE practice, they were unable to report the frequency in which they had employed them, as the Coaching Tools Checklist had not been completed. One interpretation of the findings could be that CE tools were not implemented frequently enough for children to recognise their teacher's efforts.

The findings also showed that children were asked to complete two kind acts per week rather than three as the intervention was designed. Previous kindness intervention research included in Curry et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis reports that participants were usually asked to perform between three and six kind acts. Layous et al.'s (2012) research with primary school-aged children found positive effects on peer acceptance and well-being after children recorded three acts of kindness per week. The reduced number of kind acts over the course of the six-week intervention may be a causal mechanism which influenced the outcomes of the intervention and may contribute to the dissonance between Layous et al.'s (2012) results and the present study's findings.

#### *5.2.2. The Use of Behaviour Management Strategies to Develop Good Character*

The use of behaviour management strategies, such as consistent boundaries and consequences were also employed by the teachers to help develop observable virtuous behaviours. Whilst behaviourist principles largely underpin the current government guidance for managing behaviour in UK schools (Bennet, 2017), they teach children to behave appropriately in order to avoid negative consequences or

receive rewards. Whilst these approaches are helpful in guiding behaviour, their implementation at the expense of CE overlooks opportunities for children to understand the reasons for morally justifiable actions. Kant (1781, 2003) explains:

*“If you punish a child for being naughty and reward him for being good, he will do right merely for the sake of the reward; and when he goes out into the world and discovers that good is not always rewarded, nor wickedness always punished, he will grow into a man who only thinks about how he may get on in the world, and does right or wrong according as he finds advantage to himself.”*

(Kant, 1781, 2003, p. 363 cited in White and Warfa, 2011, p.57)

Teachers identified that challenging behaviour was a barrier to implementing the project. This concern was shared with me during the intervention and it was explained how these instances provide opportunities for CE to be implemented as children can learn from their behaviours. Namely the ‘correction’ tool, where children are encouraged to think about the effects of their behaviours on the thoughts and feelings of those around them and themselves. It is noted that coaching conversations take longer than traditional behaviourist strategies and support staff might usually help with this support. During informal conversations about the progress of the intervention, teachers shared that support staff were not present in this class for the duration of the project and this put a strain the implementation of the programme.

### *5.2.3 Teachers Value Character Education*

Findings revealed that teachers value character education in school. One teacher stated “your character is with you for life. Getting good results academically or whatever, that’s not going to matter if you are not a good person.” These findings converge with existing literature that suggest teachers care more about children becoming happy and good than prospective grades (Jubilee Centre, 2015).

### **5.3 How do children perceive their involvement in the kindness intervention?**

The findings relating to children’s perceptions of the kindness intervention in answer to research question three are based on the views of four children who were recruited to take part in the focus group. Whilst these findings offer important insights into the experiences of children taking part in the project, the small number of children limits the ability to draw robust conclusions and should be treated cautiously.

Children enjoyed participating in The Power of Kindness Project, describing it as “fun”. They perceived the key elements of the intervention to be, recording their kindness on the tree display and engaging in the ‘Secret Mission’ to be kind to others without the receiver guessing who they are. Children observed positive changes in their peers following the intervention including improved prosocial behaviours and a reduction in negative emotional displays. Interestingly, children recognised that they found it difficult to identify and remember their kind acts and felt discomfort when displaying them on the Tree of Kindness for their peers to see. They proposed adaptations to the project that may help overcome these challenges.

### *5.3.1 Children Enjoyed the Intervention*

The findings suggested that children enjoyed taking part in The Power of Kindness Project. Existing research on CE and kindness-based positive psychology interventions in children, has not sought to understand their views on these programmes. However, the use of positive character strengths has been widely associated with improvements in well-being in the literature (Layous et al., 2012; Proctor et al., 2011; Shankland and Rosset, 2016; Waters, 2011), hence it could be assumed that most children would find enjoyment in being kind to others.

### *5.3.2 Sharing Kind Acts or Just Showing off?*

Notably, findings suggested that children enjoyed being kind, for example in the 'Secret Mission' task, but they found it uncomfortable to display their kind acts on the wall for their class to see. The findings indicated that children would prefer to record examples of kindness from the receiver's perspective rather than the actor's as this would be easier and more comfortable. Previous UK research has shown that children aged eight onwards understand that modesty leads to social approval, which might explain why children would prefer not to verbalise their achievements in fear of been labelled as a 'show off' (Banerjee, 2000). However, observational data indicated that children were eager to share their kind acts with over half of children raising their hands to volunteer their contributions on both occasions. The enjoyment related to sharing positive achievements can be explained by self-affirmation theory and research (Cohen and Sherman, 2014; Steele, 1988). Self-affirmations feature in many self-help guides and they have been shown to have

positive effects on well-being (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001). Taken together, it might be suggested that children's feelings towards sharing their kind acts may differ and the views of the focus group participants may not be representative of the whole class in this case.

### *5.3.3 Children Noticed Positive Changes*

Children reported positive impacts of the research, particularly; improved listening, less conflicts, better emotional regulation and improved friendships. This supports findings from CE research where children have been interviewed as part of the study. Children shared "it helps you not to argue" in Clifford et al.'s (2013, p.277) research and White and Warfa (2011) reported that children stated that "it is a lot easier to make friends... there's a lot less bullying" and "there is a lot less noise now and less kids messing about" (p. 56). These reports are very similar to those found in the present study.

### *5.3.4 The Importance of Recognising Kindness*

The findings indicated that children found it difficult to identify and remember their examples of kindness and this claim was also supported by teacher interview data. Layous et al.'s study (2012) did not report any qualitative findings so it is difficult to gain an insight into the workings of the intervention and the experiences of the children. As previously mentioned, Aristotle suggested that a prerequisite to virtuous action is acquiring 'virtue literacy' in which children have a in depth knowledge and understanding of virtues. Whilst positive impacts of CE have been demonstrated in children as young as five (Clifford et al., 2013), Jeynes (2017) found that outcomes

were more positive in older children than younger children. They proposed that this trend might be an outcome of older children being exposed to CE for longer throughout their time in education. It might be assumed that children know what 'being kind' is, but beyond surface level ideas, this research highlighted the importance of explicit character education and particularly the exposure to such practices from an early age. Children in this study required support to simply recognise kind behaviours and they indicated that specific practices, such as 'identifying virtues' helped them to self-identify and discuss their kind acts. Children suggested that their recall of kind acts may be aided by opportunities to record their kindness more frequently during the week rather than once a week on a Friday. They also proposed the use of the display to provide them with ideas and examples of how they can use kindness in their life. Again, this highlights issues with the intervention's implementation and the potential impact this may have had on the development of virtue and associated positive effects.

#### **5.4 Making Sense of Discrepancies within the Findings**

The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data in answer to research question one to aid methodological triangulation and completeness. Interestingly, there was divergence in the findings. Triangulation is commonly conceptualised as a search for increased validity when studying a phenomenon through the use of multiple methods (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Conversely, Kelle (2001) proposes another interpretation of triangulation, that aims to integrate multiple perspectives to reach a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon. Fielding (2009) suggests that the use of multiple methods extends the "scope and depth of understanding"

(p.429) and this viewpoint aids the process of drawing conclusions from the research. When attempting to make sense of dissonance between mixed methods findings, Moffat, White, Mackintosh and Howel (2006) propose various options, several of which are considered to aid the final conclusions in Section 5.6. (1) Treat the methods as wholly distinct rather than attempting to integrate them, (2) examine the methodological rigour of each instrument, (3) consider whether both components measure the same phenomenon or (4) consider further research.

#### *5.4.1 Critical Evaluation of Quantitative Methods*

Kristjánsson (2016) has highlighted the challenges associated with self-report measures of moral virtues, including response biases caused by social desirability norms and self-deception. It is possible that children over-represented self-perceptions of kindness, however it was important to gather data for every child and due to the number of participants, self-report measures were the most efficient option. Asking teachers to complete the same measure for every child would have helped to establish validity, however this request would not have been reasonable given the pressures this would place on their time. Kristjánsson (2016) proposes that the best option to measure virtues would combine self-report with objective measures, such as dilemma tests using a mixed methods instrument, but at present, no examples exist. The use of quantitative measures in this study provided a wealth of data for all 53 participants, something which other forms of data collection, such as observations and interviews would have failed to do.

The authors of the VIA- YS (kindness measure) (Park and Peterson, 2006) report that the measure is suitable for children between the age of 10 and 17 years. Participants in this study were aged between 8 and 9 years, therefore individual word definitions were clarified during administration using a script. Upon visual inspection of the data, it appeared that some children's responses to the 'negatively worded' items conflicted with the rest of their item responses. A simple t-test showed that, negatively worded items yielded statistically significant lower scores than the positively worded items on the data set as a whole. This may suggest that children misunderstood the negatively worded items despite clarification during administration. Analysis showed that insignificant effects on kindness were replicated when negatively worded items were removed, suggesting this limitation may not have had significant effects on the findings. However, to gain a true understanding of the effects of this limitation, future research should consider piloting the questionnaire with children aged between 8 and 9 years and using positively worded items only.

Although not a threat to the validity of the findings, the use of the LITOP is open to some critique as children reported feeling uncomfortable when completing this despite appropriate attempts to avoid negative feelings. Alternative peer nomination systems ask children to nominate who they like to play with only (Layous et al., 2012), rather than asking them to indicate which children they don't like to play with as well. This may help to avoid discomfort, but this method does not provide a rating for each child from every peer in the class.

#### *5.4.2 Critical Evaluation of Qualitative Methods*

Critics of qualitative research methods claim that they lack processes to assure reliability, validity and generalizability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this study, only four children consented to take part in the focus group out of a possible 12 who were asked for consent. The relatively small sample size questions the generalisability of the findings to the wider class. Children of parents who are willing to consent to their participation in the research may also differ to children of those who are not. Logistical and time constraints prevented the distribution of a second round of additional consent forms in attempts to gain enough children to hold a second focus group. Future research should consider more effective recruitment processes, as two or more focus groups would have helped to establish greater validity within the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that qualitative research should employ theoretical saturation methods to determine the number of participants required to provide an adequate sample. Theoretical saturation is reached when no new data are revealed in the analysis. This method requires the simultaneous process of sampling, data collection, and data analysis (Bryman, 2012) and the recursive process would not have been possible within the constraints of the current study. This process expects the researcher to complete additional data collection following the process of data analysis. This may have compromised my aim for objectivity in my approach as the researcher. Furthermore, although this was considered prior to the research design, interview and focus group methods can expose socially desirable responses. One way to reduce this could be to use multiple researchers, so the same researcher is not expected to implement the intervention and gather views on the perceptions of the intervention.

Parental views were shared by the teachers and these contributed to the findings, particularly relating to children's happiness and a reduction in peer conflicts. Whilst these findings corroborate with child reports, there is some dissonance between these findings and those yielded by quantitative data. The number of parents contributing their views was not reported, so it is difficult to claim that these are a representative sample. Future research should consider the inclusion of a representative sample of parent participants to help provide another perspective and aid triangulation.

A strength of this study is the endeavour to gather children's perspectives on their participation in the research, something which Layous et al. (2012) and UK CE research (Arthur et al., 2015; Davidson et al., 2016) omitted in reports. Hart (1992) states "most social science research with children is still of the distant adult controlled type", for example the use of questionnaires which "barely scrape the surface of what children are able to tell" (p.15). The focus group provided a positive and valuable method of gathering children's views on the project and particularly what mechanisms contributed to its outcomes. Children provided insightful contributions especially towards how the project could be adapted for future implementation. However, the focus group method did struggle to gather extended responses about the aspects of the intervention that the children most enjoyed. Future research should consider more creative methods to gather children's views. For example, individual completion of a visual card ranking activity may have

prompted children and yielded more useful data. Implementation by a trusted adult rather than a researcher could also have aided this process.

#### *5.4.3 Did Quantitative and Qualitative methods measure the same phenomenon?*

Moffat et al. (2006) highlight the importance of exploring whether the methods of data collection address the same domains or constructs and further consideration of the data revealed some differences. Qualitative data revealed improvements in emotional well-being, whereas quantitative data did not. However, one of the key contributors to improvements in emotional well-being according to the qualitative findings was the positive effects on emotional regulation observed following the intervention by parents and children. Self-regulation of emotions as a construct was not measured on the How I Feel About Myself and School Questionnaire, suggesting that both methods measured different aspects of the same phenomena. Therefore, it could be concluded that both findings can exist together in so much that whilst the intervention did not produce positive overall effects on well-being, positive impacts were shown on self-regulation.

Secondly, the qualitative findings suggested improvements in social interactions and prosocial behaviours, whereas quantitative findings revealed no significant effects on peer acceptance. This suggests discrepancies between the findings, however the Like to Play measures peer acceptance by asking children how much they like to play with each of their classmates. The qualitative data indicated outcomes relating to reduced peer conflicts, improved listening and social interactions, as well as increased friendships. Whilst we would assume that these

constructs would be related to peer acceptance, methods of data collection are not explicitly measuring the same construct. Whilst improvements in prosocial behaviours have improved, this may not have impacted on who children want to play with. That said, the critique of qualitative methods outlined in section 5.4.2 and in particular concerns relating to socially desirable responses and a limited number of students should be considered. This critique might be more convincing in explaining the discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative results.

#### *5.4.4 Critical Evaluation of the Research Design*

It should be noted that the participants selected to take part in the experimental condition were chosen by the school's SENDCo, who suggested that these children would benefit from an intervention aimed to develop kindness and peer acceptance. Relationships between the children were challenging and peer conflicts arose frequently. Quantitative data supported these claims, as peer acceptance scores were significantly higher in the control condition compared to the experimental condition prior to the intervention. This suggests higher levels of social acceptance in the control condition at baseline. This difference may have skewed the outcomes of the study and future research might consider selecting the conditions at random. This could help to explain why findings were not similar to those found in Layous et al's (2012) study who randomly allocated participants to both conditions.

A strength of this research is the use of a control group. Gorard (2013) suggests that this design is more convincing in testing a causal claim. The use of pre and post-tests compared to post-test only enabled the change in both groups to be

compared. Again, with the caveat of confounding variables, this process of data collection contributes to a more robust design. The use of mixed methods in this research, including questionnaires, observations, an interview and a focus group was invaluable when providing thorough answers to the research questions. Interpreting one type of data without the other would have led to bias conclusions and Shaffer and Serlin (2004) have identified that a focus on one kind of data at the expense of another limits the richness of the data. Whilst the use of mixed methods exposed some discrepancies in the findings, these required close attention and exploration that led to a more robust interpretation of the results. Slonim-Nevo and Nevo (2009) state that the variation in methods enables researchers to investigate the phenomena in a more complete manner, whilst offering a diversity of viewpoints and exposing wider bodies of knowledge.

### **5.5 Implications for Theory and Educational Psychology Practice**

Due to issues with intervention fidelity and a limited sample of children yielding qualitative support for the effectiveness of the intervention, this research can neither support nor refute neo-Aristotelian principles of virtue development. Findings revealed that CE practices were not fully implemented during the intervention, so findings relating to the efficacy of CE cannot be confidently concluded. Taken together with existing research, consistent and sustained implementation of CE practices may be required to yield improvements in virtue development. Interestingly, this research demonstrated that children aged between 8 and 9 years old found it challenging to identify examples of kindness. This study highlighted that it cannot be assumed that children have a complete understanding of what it means

to be kind. Providing children with explicit feedback on their actions and labelling their actions helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of virtuous actions.

The correlational relationship between kindness and both peer acceptance and well-being offers support for practices aiming to promote the development of virtues in schools. This study supports that each child differs in their journey to developing autonomous virtuous actions and childhood experiences and development can impact this. Neo-Aristotelian principles suggest that some children will require extended habituation and external reinforcements to support their development and EPs are well-placed to conduct comprehensive assessments of need within individual casework that consider a range of factors and advise the most effective strategies.

It is difficult to draw robust conclusions either against or in support of positive psychology interventions based on the current findings. Whilst qualitative data did suggest improvements in well-being, full implementation of the intervention including the display of three acts of kindness per week would be required to draw conclusions that either support or refute the efficacy of positive psychology interventions and particularly those with a focus on kindness. Further larger-scale studies into the effects of kindness with child participants in school are required to contribute to the dearth of existing research.

This intervention targets several areas in which EPs are typically involved, including peer relationships, developing prosocial behaviours and class cohesiveness. A strengths-based approach harnessing key contributors to a flourishing child, rather than a deficit model which focuses on ameliorating the negative factors, provides a refreshing approach to supporting children with needs in the above areas. This research indicates a relationship between kindness and peer acceptance which offers support for implementing creative ways to harness kindness in our work. 'Character Coaching' is a workshop being delivered to teaching and support staff by EPs in the Local Authority in which this research took place. This highlights the kind of support that EPs can provide to help teaching staff and in turn parents, to cultivate character strengths in children.

The correlational relationship between children's school kindness scores and both well-being and peer acceptance may offer preliminary support for the role of positive psychology activities integrated within a whole-school approach. Ciarrochi et al. (2016) states that it is not enough to employ interventions that merely promote positive feelings. They suggest that positive psychology interventions should acknowledge the influence of contextual and situational influences. This draws parallels with the principles of CE and specifically the importance of a curriculum which emphasises the 'caught' and 'sought' aspects. This is characterised by a school community that promotes character development in their ethos. They provide a range of opportunities for students to form personal habits and utilise their virtues in a flexible and adaptable way that helps them to reach their full potential (Jubilee Centre, 2017). Although a whole-school approach was beyond the scope of this

research, Ciarrochi et al.'s (2016) views are echoed by research which states that successful character education programmes are embedded within the school's ethos (Berkowitz and Bier's, 2007). Future wide scale research should employ an integrated approach which encompasses whole-school kindness initiatives and regular celebrations of kindness. Similarly, The Power of Kindness Project indicates that simply encouraging children to carry out acts of kindness as an isolated intervention is not enough to yield positive outcomes for virtue development. Unfortunately, key neo-Aristotelian CE practices including the use of the 'Coaching Questions' to encourage critical reflection and class discussion were not implemented during the intervention. These features are present in all UK character education programmes to help students understand the meaning behind their actions and their impact on others (Arthur et al., 2015; Clifford, 2013; Davison et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Proctor et al., 2011; White and Shin, 2016; White and Warfa, 2011). The role of coaching features in the non-statutory government guidance for schools titled '*Character Education: Framework Guidance*' (DfE, 2019) to help the practical implementation of CE to enhance virtue development in light of the new Ofsted Inspected Framework (Education Inspection Framework, 2019). Future wider scale intervention research should look to employ all teachers as kindness role models that use *coaching* rather than *teaching* to develop virtues by encouraging critical reflection and discussion. Efforts should focus on supporting teachers to enhance and develop their practice.

The challenge in drawing robust conclusions from the research is in part due to the lack of fidelity to the intervention. This research aimed to overcome several barriers

to delivering effective CE which were discussed in section 2.9, however the success in doing so was mixed. Implementation issues did not appear to stem from a lack of interest or willingness from the class teachers, as they shared their eagerness to develop good character in children. Previous research has indicated that some teachers believe CE does not belong in school which has led to ineffective practice (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006; Purpel, 2005). However, teachers in this study valued CE and felt that moral development had greater importance than academic outcomes. Inadequate training in CE has been identified as another barrier to delivering such interventions (Brunn, 2014; Siegal, 2009). Findings suggested that teachers lacked a full understanding of CE techniques and their use, so it appears that this barrier was not overcome. Teachers did not receive extensive training prior to the intervention, and this may have contributed their capacity or motivation to implement the intervention as designed. Brief positive psychology interventions suggest that specialist training is not required, but a thorough understanding of the theory underpinning both positive psychology and neo-Aristotelian CE may have aided implementation. The Normalisation Process Theory and Framework (May and Finch, 2009) has been used mostly in the field of health (Murray et al., 2010) to help understand the intention to employ interventions. 'Coherence' refers to one of the constructs within this theory which suggests that the individual requires a full understanding of the intervention and its principles for it to be successfully employed. This framework could be applied to training evaluations used by EPs, to assess teachers' intention to implement the programme following intervention training. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985 cited in Ajzen, 2011) can also help to predict teachers' successful implementation of CE practices, however,

a criticism of this theory is the assumption that the person has the resources to perform the desired behaviour regardless of the intention. In this research, factors such as access to support staff and the unpredictability of a typical school week, should be accounted for when considering conducting intervention research within a school setting.

Future implementation of both CE and positive psychology interventions should consider comprehensive training as a prerequisite, where teachers are provided with ongoing weekly supervision sessions to provide opportunities for practice development and reflection over an extended period of time. Educational psychologists are well placed to facilitate links between theory and practice in school to help practices overcome challenges and developing their professional application and knowledge of CE. The University of Birmingham School affiliated to the Jubilee Centre of Character and Virtues employ CE-based practices throughout the school and teachers are required to undertake regular training to effectively implement the theory-led practices. The knowledge and understanding of positive psychology and neo-Aristotelian CE that I have developed over the course of the project and the insight into teachers' perspectives on their role in CE has placed me in a valuable position to contribute to future developments of teacher training and both positive psychology and CE approaches within the EP service I am on placement.

## **5.6 Concluding Comments**

This research contributes a comprehensive evaluation of both neo-Aristotelian CE and positive psychology principles and the array of factors that contribute to the

effectiveness of their practices. The study demonstrated the value of utilising a mixed methods design in intervention research, as it offers multiple perspectives to help understand the mechanisms contributing to the success or failure of a programme. Self-reported kindness did not increase following the intervention, and whilst teachers and children offered some positive reports in relation to the development of kindness in children, a critique of the qualitative methods alongside issues with intervention fidelity indicate that this research provides neither supporting or refuting evidence for neo-Aristotelian CE. Although this exceeds the boundaries of this research, extended implementation integrated within a whole school, alongside consistent employment of CE practices may contribute to greater impacts

Whilst children reported positive improvements in their relationships, this was not reflected in the questionnaire findings related to peer acceptance. Future research should to seek to include a greater sample size when collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to provide extended findings and help to establish their validity. A positive relationship between kindness and peer acceptance offers a promising argument for implementing practices that aim to foster kindness in children to support their development of positive relationships.

It was surprising that this positive psychology intervention did not foster robust effects on well-being and as such, focus turned to the fidelity of the intervention. It could be assumed that at least three positive activities per week are required to demonstrate significant effects. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of

developing an understanding of moral action that kindness-based positive psychology interventions alone do not offer in existing research. Simply encouraging children to complete and record their kindness is not enough to enhance virtue development. It is important that teachers implement key features of neo-Aristotelian CE such as critical reflection and class discussion over an extended period of time to ensure effective moral development in children. These findings are reflected in the governments framework guidance of character education (DfE, 2019) where emphasis is placed on the role coaching to enhance virtue development. Future CE intervention research should focus on comprehensive teacher training to ensure effective implementation of these practices. This would be required to reveal the true effects of combining CE and positive education practices. The reported improvement in emotional self-regulation should be noted, but it is difficult to establish whether behaviour management techniques or the intervention itself account for these improvements and indeed whether these claims are valid given the small number of children in the focus group.

The inclusion of children's views presented as a key strength in the research, as children provided some important findings relating to the outcomes of the project, its implementation and suggested improvements. Children offer a valuable insight into their experiences within EP assessment and the endeavours to gather children's perceptions are embedded into much of EPs' practice. The same efforts should be taken forward into research wherever possible to ensure children have a voice with regards to their education.

A critique of this study was provided and it is suggested that future research could include more comprehensive teacher training in CE and positive psychology, an increased sample size across several schools, additional child focus groups, more creative methods of gathering child perceptions, the inclusion of parent participants and the use of multiple researchers. Whilst this study helps contribute to the dearth of kindness intervention studies in children, further research that considers the noted improvements above could help to establish the power of kindness.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Studies Included in the Systematic Literature Review of Character Education Research in the UK

Authors, (Date) and Title	Country and Setting	CE Intervention (Duration)	Participant (Age)	Design	Data Collection	Predominant findings
<p><b>Francis et al. (2018)</b> Evaluating the pilot Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project: a study among 11- to 13-year-old students</p>	<p>UK Secondary School</p>	<p>The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project (6 weeks)</p>	<p>86 children (11-13)</p>	<p>Pilot experiment (treatment, no control)</p>	<p>Pre and post data collection: NCV scales: virtue development, KINCV Scales: Knowledge of Virtues, Control Measures of Personality, Empathy, Happiness, Self-Esteem, Attitudes towards Faith</p>	<p>Significant increase in 'Knowledge of Virtues' scores (<math>p &lt; .001</math>).  No significant increase in development of virtues, or other variables although small significant decrease in gratitude scale (<math>p &lt; .05</math>).</p>
<p><b>White and Shin (2016)</b> School-wide mediated prosocial development: Applying a sociocultural understanding to inclusive practice and character education</p>	<p>UK, East Anglia 5 primary schools</p>	<p>The Building Schools of Character (BSC) Programme (6 months)</p>	<p>1011 pupils (7-11) 45 school staff 123 parents</p>	<p>Mixed methods multiple case study</p>	<p>Pre and post data collection: Structured Classroom Observations  Semi-structured interviews  Analysis of behaviour, truancy and absenteeism data</p>	<p>Number of disruptive incidents (<math>p &lt; .0002</math>) and office referrals (<math>p &lt; .0001</math>) significantly decreased. Significant increase in time devoted to content delivery and relationship building. Decreased time spent on reactive behaviour management (<math>p &lt; .0001</math>). Effect sizes suggest large effect Significantly increased on-task interactions and significantly decreased disruptive behaviours during group learning (<math>p &lt; .0001</math>).</p>

						Strong relationship between these variable ( $p < .0001$ ) Reports from teachers, pupils suggest a transformation of behaviour management and increase self-regulation and learner engagement.
<p><b>Arthur, Harrison and Davison (2015)</b> Levels of virtue literacy in Catholic, Church of England and non-faith schools in England: a research report Also reported in</p> <p><b>Davison et al. (2016)</b> How to assess children's virtue literacy: methodological lessons learnt from the Knightly Virtues programme</p>	UK 47 classes in 19 primary schools (faith and non-faith)	The Knightly Virtues Programme (>5 weeks)	1089 children (9-11) (622 experimental and 467 control)	Mixed methods quasi-experimental (treatment – control)	Pre and post data collection: Control variable: reading and writing comprehension NC level Pre and Post Assessment of virtue knowledge, understanding and virtue application  Post-Intervention: Group and individual semi-structured interviews  Document Analysis of 124 programme pupil journals	Non-significant improvement in knowledge and understanding of virtues compared to the control ( $p = .1$ ), application of virtue concepts in modern day stories ( $p = .09$ ) and historical stories ( $p = .3$ ), Highly significant increase for concepts in personal, social and cultural contexts ( $p < .001$ ).  Faith schools scored 6% higher at baseline and 7% higher post-test than non-faith.  Interviews with teachers, parents and pupils suggest improved behaviour. Pupils in one school retained the knowledge and understanding of the virtue language for more than six months after taking part in the programme.
<p><b>Clifford (2013)</b> Moral and spiritual education as an intrinsic part of the curriculum</p>	UK, Plymouth  1 rural primary school	The Virtues Project (not stated)	80 children (5-11)	Snap-shot case study (1 week data collection)	Observation of assembly and targeted lessons Semi-structured interviews of 3 teachers and 6 children	Positive associations indicated between the moral and spiritual programme at the school and outcomes, such as the pupil's ability to resolve conflict and self-regulating

					Document analysis of documents related to virtues programme	behaviour as well as examples of empathy and altruism.
<b>Proctor et al. (2011)</b> Strengths Gym: The impact of a character strengths-based intervention on the life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents	UK, Cheshire and Channel Islands  2 secondary schools	Strengths Gym (6 months)	319 adolescent students aged (12–14) (218 experimental, 101 control)	Quasi-experimental treatment-control design	Pre and post data collection: Life satisfaction (SLSS Huebner) Positive and negative affect (PANAS, Watson 1988) Self-esteem- Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE)	Experimental group experienced significantly increased life satisfaction compared to control ( $p=.045$ ) Marginal effect for PA ( $p=.084$ ), and no effect for SE ( $p=.22$ ) or NA ( $p=.11$ ). No sig different between groups at baseline
<b>White and Warfa (2011)</b> Building Schools of Character: A Case-Study Investigation of Character Education's Impact on School Climate, Pupil Behaviour, and Curriculum Delivery	UK, East Anglia  primary school	The Building Schools of Character (BSC) Programme (6 months)	234 children aged 5-11	Mixed methods single case pilot study (action research)	Pre and post data collection: Structured Classroom Observations  Semi-structured interviews  Analysis of behaviour, truancy and absenteeism data	Number of disruptive incidents ( $d=5.66$ ) and office referrals ( $d=1.96$ ) significantly decreased. Effect sizes suggest large effect. Significant increase in time devoted to content delivery (29% to 66%) and relationship building (5% to 16%). Decreased time spent on reactive behaviour management (66% to 18%). Significantly increased on-task interactions (28% vs 49%) and significantly decreased disruptive behaviours during group learning (72% vs 51%). Strong relationship between these variables ( $p<.0001$ ) Reports from teachers, pupils suggest improved behaviour, relationships and engagement in learning.

## Appendix 2: Studies Included in the Review of ‘Acts of Kindness’ Interventions

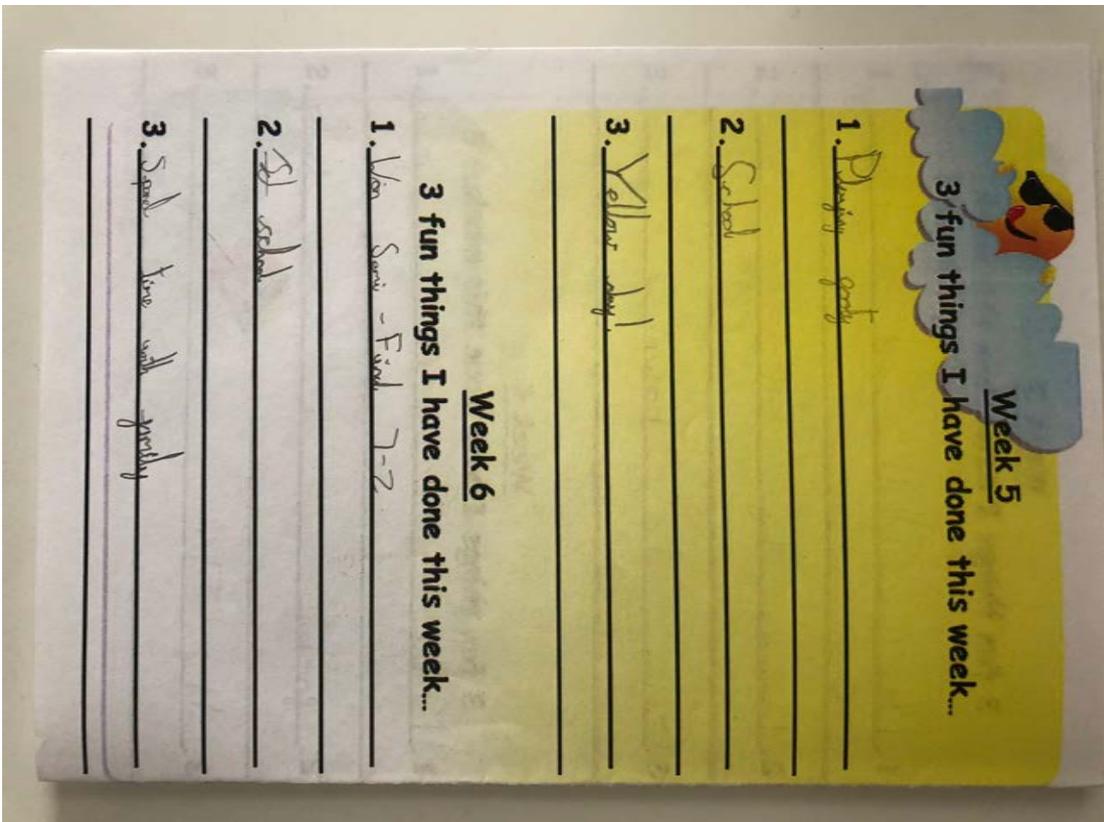
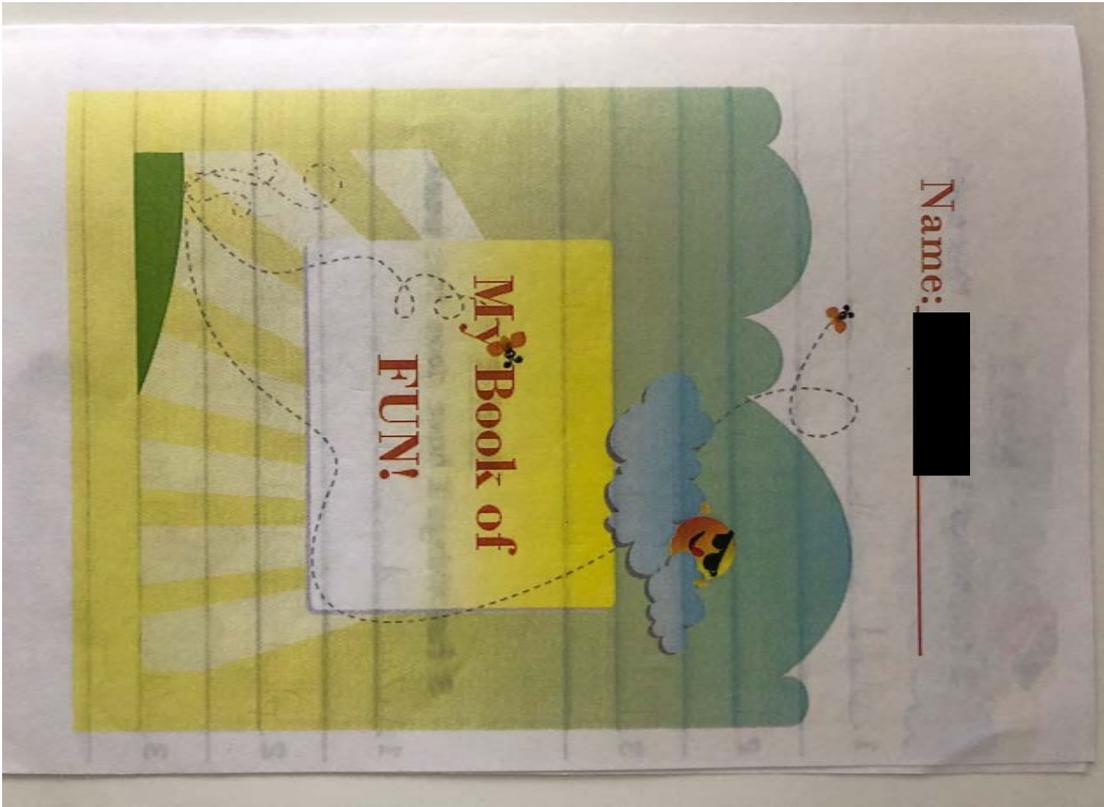
Authors	Participants	Location	Study Design	Duration and Follow up	Measures	Outcomes
<b>Alden and Trew (2013)</b>	Socially anxious undergraduates aged 19 years (N= 142)	Canada	Randomly assigned to either: (1) perform 3 acts of kindness (AK) on two days per week, (2) reduce negative affect (behavioural experiments) or (3) a neutral control (record 3 life events).	4 weeks  No follow-up included.	Questionnaires measured: social interaction anxiety, positive and negative affect, relationship satisfaction, social goals and depressive symptoms.	‘Positive affect’ and ‘relationship satisfaction’ outcomes increased in AK condition only and were sustained over the 4 weeks. Socially anxious ppts displayed decreased avoidance motivation in the AK condition.
<b>Buchanan and Bardi (2010)</b>	Adults aged 18-60 years (N= 86)	UK	Randomly assigned to (1) perform AK or (2) acts of novelty on a daily basis (3) no treatment control.	10 days  No follow-up included.	Questionnaires measured life satisfaction.	Performing acts of kindness and acts of novelty, both resulted in an increase in life satisfaction compared to the control condition.
<b>Chancellor et al. (2017)</b>	Employees in corporate workplace (N=111)	Spain	Randomly assigned to either (1) practice 5 AK (Givers), (2) receive 5 AK (Receivers) per week or (3) no treatment control	4 weeks  2 month follow up.	Questionnaires measures competence, autonomy, depressive symptoms, life and job satisfaction and happiness.	‘Givers’ and ‘Receivers’ mutually benefited in well-being in both the short-term and the long-term compared to the control condition. Practicing kind acts had a contagious effect to others.
<b>Layous, Lee, Choi and Lyubomirsky (2013)</b>	American (N=250) and S.Korean (N=270) college students	USA/ Korea	Randomly assigned to (1) express gratitude, (2) perform AK, or (3) neutral activity (listed things that had happened in the day).	6 weeks  Study included a one-month follow-up	Questionnaires measured life satisfaction and positive and negative emotions to give an overall well-being composite.	Well-being increased in both AK and gratitude groups compared to the control in US ppts. Well-being increased in AK but not in

						gratitude group in Korean ppts compared to control.
<b>Layous, Nelson, Oberle et al. (2012)</b>	Children aged 9-11 years across 19 classes (N=415)	Canada (school-based)	Randomly assigned to (1) perform either 3 AK or (2) a neutral task (visit 3 places) per week.	4 weeks  No follow up included	Questionnaires measured life satisfaction, subjective happiness and peer acceptance.	Students in both conditions improved in well-being and the AK group experienced significant increases in peer acceptance compared to the comparison group.
<b>Lyburosky, Tkach and Sheldon (2004)</b>	Unknown	USA	Assigned to perform 5 AK, either all 5 in 1 day per week or 5 acts spread over the week or no treatment control.	6 weeks  No follow up	Questionnaires measured happiness.	Control participants experienced a reduction in happiness whilst ppts committing acts of kindness showed significant increases in well-being. This increase was only evident among those who completed their AK in one day rather than spread over the week.
<b>Mongrain, Chin and Shapira (2011)</b>	Adults aged 17 to 72 years (M = 33.63 (N= 719)	Canada	Randomly assigned to either (1) perform AK or (2) control (writing early memory).	1 week  Follow up at 1, 3 and 6 months.	Questionnaires measured happiness, depressive symptoms, self-esteem and close relationships.	AK group showed sustained gains in happiness and self-esteem over 6 months and a decrease in depressive symptoms short term, compared to the control condition.
<b>Nelson, Porta, Bao, Lee, Choi and Lyubomirsky (2015)</b>	American (N=104) and Korean (N=114) undergraduate students	USA/ Korea	Randomly assigned to receive or not receive autonomy support and to either (1) perform 5 AK in one day per week or	6 weeks  No follow-up included.	Questionnaires measured life satisfaction, subjective happiness, positive and negative emotions and need satisfaction.	Performing kind acts whilst receiving autonomy support increased well-being significantly more than when not receiving support.

			(2) control (focus on academic work).			Performing acts of kindness was associated with significantly increased improvements in positive emotions compared to the control in S. Korean, but not in US students.
<b>Nelson, Layous, Cole, Lyubomirsky (2016)</b>	Adults aged 17 - 67 years (N=473)	USA	Randomly assigned to perform 3 AK in one day to either (1) themselves (2) humanity/the world or (3) to others each week (4) neutral control	4 weeks  2 week follow-up	Questionnaires measured psychological flourishing (emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being) and positive and negative emotions.	Psychological flourishing, improved in the prosocial behaviour groups compared to the self-focused kindness and control. Lasting effects were shown at follow up.
<b>O'Connell, O'Shea and Gallagher (2016)</b>	Adults aged 18-66 years (N=225)	USA	Randomly assigned to either perform (1) 'relationship-focussed positive psychology activity (PPA)', (2) 'self-focused PPA' or (3) no treatment control every other day	1 week  6 week follow up	Questionnaire measured subjective happiness	Relationship satisfaction and improvements in existing friendships increased in the 'relationship-focussed PPA group' compared to 'self-focussed' and control at 6 week follow up.
<b>Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui and Frerickson (2006) Study 2.</b>	(N=119) Japanese undergraduate students Mean age 18.79 (71 in the intervention group and 48 in the control group)	Japan	Participants were asked to (1) keep track of each and every act of kindness they performed and to report the daily number of these acts for a 1 week intervention period or (2) control group	1 week  1 month follow up	Questionnaire measured subjective happiness	Ppts in the AK intervention experienced significant increases in subjective happiness compared to the no treatment control at follow up.

<p><b>Ouweneel, Le Blanc and Schaufeli (2014)</b></p>	<p>Study 1 (N=99) undergraduate students Mean age 21.26</p> <p>Study 2 (N=49) undergraduate students Mean age 20.88</p>	<p>Netherlands</p>	<p><i>Study 1: Gratitude</i> Randomly assigned to either (1) thoughts of gratitude or (2) control (write down people you met and experiences you had)</p> <p><i>Study 2: Kindness</i> Randomly assigned to perform either (1) 5 AK or (2) control (describe their day) everyday</p>	<p>1 week</p> <p>Follow-up one month after the intervention.</p>	<p>Questionnaires measured job-related affective well-being work engagement.</p>	<p>Positive emotions increased in both the gratitude and kindness intervention, but academic engagement also increased in kindness group compared to the control.</p>
<p><b>Trew and Alden (2015)</b></p>	<p>(N=146) Socially anxious undergraduate students</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p>Randomly assigned to either (1) perform 3 acts of kindness a day on 2 days each week or (2) alternative anxiety treatment (exposure only, EO) or (3) control (record life details)</p>	<p>4 weeks</p> <p>No follow-up included.</p>	<p>Questionnaires measured social interaction anxiety, daily anxiety, social goals and positive and negative emotions.</p>	<p>Positive affect did not significantly increase in either the AK or EP group but both groups reduced avoidance goals overtime compared to the control.</p>

Appendix 3: The Control Task - 'My Book of Fun'





Week 1

3 fun things I have done this week...

1. Played football.

2. Learned about Italy

3. Did some stunts with my brother

Week 2

3 fun things I have done this week...

1. Saw dogs

2. Played football and won 17-0

3. Watching a MOVIE.

Week 3

3 fun things I have done this week...

1. Played football but we lost 1-0

2. Languages class

3. Going to town.

Week 4

3 fun things I have done this week...

1. Maths

2. football

3. watching TV.



## Appendix 4: The Power of Kindness Project Teacher Manual



# THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

## Teacher Manual



### The Power of Kindness

At the top of many parents' wishes is for their children to be kind, happy and well-liked. Many teachers, when asked which positive character traits they would like to see cultivated in children favoured moral virtues, such as respect and kindness. It can be assumed that there will be few people who seriously doubt that kindness is a good thing! Kindness can be considered as a character strength or virtue and psychological theories suggest that using character strengths or virtues can increase well-being. So as kindness increases, happiness should too! Improving good character has been linked to better academic achievement and improved behavioural outcomes, so a project aimed to increase kindness in the classroom could be step in the right direction.

### The Project

The Power of Kindness Project is whole-class 6-week intervention based on simple psychological approaches that help children to develop kindness and subsequently, positive feelings and better relationships with their peers. The project aims to achieve this by simply encouraging children to intentionally undertake three random acts of kindness each week and write them down! It's as simple as 1, 2, 3.

- 1 Be kind**  
Children are encouraged to make a deliberate effort to be kind to others.
- 2 Record it**  
Children are given three slips each week to record their name and their random act of kindness; these are presented on the Tree of Kindness display.
- 3 Share your strengths**  
Children are encouraged to share their random acts of kindness verbally with the class. Not only does this increase self-esteem, but also provides them with the chance to reflect on how it made them feel, how it made the other person feel and why they did it.

### The Power of Coaching Kindness

Here's where you come in... The Power of Kindness Project values the important role of teachers, not only in academic education, but also in *character education*. Character education describes any deliberate intervention that aims to help young people to develop virtues or positive personal strengths. To help this development, you take the role of the coach. Coaching involves asking very specific open questions to help children understand kindness more fully. *The role of coaching is to*

*ask, not to tell.* These questions should focus on noticing what is happening around us, how we and others think and feel, and reflecting on how our thoughts and actions shape who we are. Children can be coaches too!

## The Core Coaching Questions

Why did you do it?

What did you do?

How did you feel and what did you think?

What do you think the other person thought and felt?

## Coaching Tools

There are a few simple things you can do to coach kindness in your classroom. It's up to you which tools to use and when, to fit with the workings of your classroom, but **daily coaching is key!** Some tools have been identified as 'Coachable Moments'.★ These are important moments throughout the day where coaching can occur in situ, for example spotting a kind act and asking the child how they feel. Please see the '*Coaching Tool Box*' *handout* for guidance. For research purposes, it will be useful to record roughly how often each tool is used per week.

## Is it always right to be kind?

We all know the saying 'being cruel to be kind' and there are some instances where being kind, in the sense we know it, may not actually be all that helpful! The Power of Kindness Project not only aims to help children to develop their kindness, but also their ability to make judgements about when they should be kind. For example, a child may perceive their parent to be unkind by not letting them stay up playing on their video game all night, but we know parents are doing this for their child's own benefit. Talking about these instances help develop children as critical thinkers, which help them develop their understanding of kindness at a higher level.

## Getting Started

This project is developed to place limited demand on your time and resources, so little is needed to get started.

- **Display of Kindness:** It is important for children to be reminded of all their strengths and the kind acts they have shown to one another. A classroom display can be a great way of doing this, perhaps in the shape of a 'Kindness Tree'. Children's slips can be displayed as the leaves of the tree to ensure every kind act is seen.
- **Initial Session:** Encourage a class discussion about kindness- what is it? Why should we be kind? Children could be encouraged to work in pairs or a small group to role play an act of

kindness. The Core Coaching Questions and coaching tools, such as Spotting Kindness and Critical Thinkers could be introduced here (session delivered by Trainee EP)

- **Kindness Slips:** Children will be provided with slips to record their three random acts of kindness each week.
- **Class helpers.** It might be helpful to assign roles to children to help display the random acts of kindness each day. A class of 30 should produce 90 slips between them each week, that's 18 per day. Class helpers will help speed up this process!
- **An accessible intervention.** Just like with everyday learning tasks, some children will require adjustments and support to ensure they can access the project. Literacy difficulties should not present as a barrier to children displaying and sharing their kindness, as children can draw pictures if they prefer.

## Appendix 5: Coaching Toolbox

Coaching Tools 		Times used per week					
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
<b>Class Discussion</b> 	Talking develops a better understanding of when and how to use their strength of kindness. Use the <i>Core Coaching Questions</i> to guide the discussion. The kindness slips can be used to start the discussion.						
<b>Kindness Pairs</b> 	Encourage children to share their acts of kindness in pairs using the <i>Core Coaching Questions</i> . Children begin to coach each other!						
<b>Critical Thinkers</b> 	These questions may help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it mean to be cruel to be kind?</li> <li>• Can you ever be too kind?</li> <li>• Can you give some examples?</li> </ul>						
<b>★ Spotting Kindness</b> 	These questions may help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has anyone caught a peer being kind today?</li> <li>• What did you see?</li> </ul>						
<b>★ Meaningful Praise</b> 	Replace non-specific phrases, such as 'well done' with explicit identifications of something they have done. This helps them to recognise and understand kindness. Encourage children to reflect on consequences of their kindness to increase their motivation continue kindness. <i>e.g. How do you think they felt after you let them go first?</i>						
<b>★ Guidance</b>	These questions may help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could we do in this situation?</li> </ul>						

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could we use our strength of kindness?</li> <li>• Would it help to be kind?</li> </ul>						
<p>★ <b>Correction</b></p> 	<p>Notice when a child says or does something that which doesn't contribute to the good of themselves or others.</p> <p>Help children to understand the impact of what they are doing and to see how being kind can contribute to the good. <i>E.g. what effect do you think you might be having? What could you do instead?</i></p>						
<p>★ <b>Role</b></p>  <p><b>Modelling</b></p>	<p>Children not only learn from their peers, but also the adults around them. Children will benefit from hearing about why your acts of kindness are important and how they can achieve them. You can use your own experiences and anecdotes to encourage dialogue about kindness.</p>						

## Appendix 6: The Power of Kindness Introductory Session Resources

### Appendix 6.1 Researcher's Session Plan

# Introductory Session

## Researcher's Plan

**Start by getting into a circle and asking everyone to say their names.**

**Introduction:** I'm here to talk to you today because your class has been chosen to take part in a project called The Power of Kindness Project. You are the only class in the school that has been asked to take part. So today we going to have some discussion about what kindness means and take part in a couple of activities.

**Pass the Smile:** So, before we start were going to have a quick game of pass the smile, so I want you to do your cheesiest grin and pass it on to the person sat next you. This will make them smile and they should then pass this smile onto the next person.

**Discussion:** (Use 'Spock' to monitor who is talking)

- What does kindness mean?
- What are examples of random acts of kindness?
- Why are people kind to each other?
- Can you think of someone in your life who has done something kind for you?

**Video:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bz\\_g8yUSgU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bz_g8yUSgU)

- When the man helped the lady across the road, why do you think he started to do kind things for people?
- What did you notice about the man when he started doing kind things?

**Kindness Superhero:**

- Can you think of any superheroes that are kind?
- What powers could they have they can show kindness?
- What sort of things would they be able to do?

**Freeze Frame Activity:** in groups I would like you to create a freeze frame that represents kindness. A freeze frame is a still image, so I would like you to work together to think how you could show kindness in your groups in a frozen image. You can choose your groups, but I want you to show kindness as you're doing this. What could you do if someone is left out etc. Please get into groups of 5, hopefully we will have time to show them all.

**Video:** 'Pass on the kindness': see if you can notice what is going on in the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwelE8yyYOU>

**Pass on the Kindness:** just like the 'pass the smile' at the start of the session, when someone does something kind for you, see if you can pass it on. Or maybe you could be the start of the chain.

### **The Project**

- Over the next 6 weeks. You will be asked to write down when you display an act of kindness. You must write down 3 per week. When you've written them down, these will be displayed on the Kindness Tree in the classroom.
- When you write down your kind act, think about how you felt and how the person receiving the kind act will have felt. Think about why you displayed this kindness.
- You will also be spotting kindness in each other.
- You will have the chance to share the kind things you have done
- They are not things that will cost you money. Being kind is free.

**Examples of Kindness on the board:** Go around the circle and ask for one example of kindness they can do

Appendix 6.2 Presentation Slides

Slide 1



THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

Slide 2



THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

**Video:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bz\\_g8yU\\_SgU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bz_g8yU_SgU)

Slide 3



## THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

What super powers would they have?

Slide 4



## THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

**Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw1E8yyYOU>



## THE POWER OF KINDNESS PROJECT

- Give someone a hug
- Pick up litter
- Smile at people
- Share your snack
- Let somebody go first
- Give a compliment
- Ask someone if they'd like to play
- Help a friend with their work
- Bake a cake to cheer someone up
- Bring someone flowers
- Hold open the door for someone
- Give old toys to the charity shop

# The Core Coaching Questions

**What did you do and why did you do it?**

**How did you feel and what did you think?**

**What do you think the other person thought and felt?**

## Appendix 7: Examples of Children's Kind Acts

The following quotations were copied verbatim from the leaves displayed on the Tree of Kindness Display.

<i>"I said thank you to my Nan when I had a sleep over"</i>
<i>"My brother was crying and my mum could not get up because she was lying on the sofa and I went and picked him up and he stopped crying"</i>
<i>"I helped a Year 3 because they were crying"</i>
<i>"This week, I sat next to XXX because she was sitting on her own at lunch time"</i>
<i>"I helped my sister clean out her gerbil"</i>
<i>"I played with XXX when they had nobody to play with"</i>
<i>"When we were in the library, I let someone have my library book"</i>
<i>"I did XXX's shoelaces"</i>
<i>"I cheered XXX on when she did breaststroke at swimming"</i>

**Appendix 8: Images of the Tree of Kindness Display**



**Appendix 9: Kindness Scale from the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-YS) (Park and Peterson, 2004; Park and Peterson, 2006)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>How much does the statement describe what you are like?</b>				
	<b>Not like me at all</b>	<b>Not like me</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Like me</b>	<b>Very much like me</b>
When my friends are upset, I listen to them and comfort them.	1	2	3	4	5
When I hear about people who are sick or poor, I worry about them.	1	2	3	4	5
I care about others when they have problems	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely help others.	1	2	3	4	5
If I am busy, I don't stop to help others who need it.	1	2	3	4	5
I am always kind to other people.	1	2	3	4	5
When I see people who need help, I do as much as I can.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't help others if they don't ask.	1	2	3	4	5
I often do nice things for others without being asked	1	2	3	4	5

**Appendix 10: School Kindness Scale (Binfet, Gadermann and Schonert-Reichl, 2016)**

Please read each sentence and decide how much you agree with it.

There are no right or wrong answers and your teachers will not see your responses. Please be as honest as you can.

Statement	How much do you agree?				
	Disagree A Lot	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Agree A Lot
	1	2	3	4	5
Kindness happens regularly in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Kindness happens regularly in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
My teacher is kind.	1	2	3	4	5
At my school, I am encouraged to be kind.	1	2	3	4	5
The adults in my school show us how to be kind	1	2	3	4	5

**Appendix 11: How I Feel About Myself and School Questionnaire (McLellan et al., 2012; McLellan and Steward, 2015)**

Think about the statements below. They are about the different feelings you may have. Using the scale please indicate how you feel about yourself for each. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as you can.

		<b>Not Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
1	I feel good about myself			
2	I feel healthy			
3	I feel I am doing well			
4	I feel miserable			
5	I feel I have lots of energy			
6	I feel cared for			
7	I feel valued			
8	I feel worried			
9	I feel I can deal with problems			
10	I feel bored			
11	I feel noticed			
12	I feel people are friendly			
13	I feel there is lots to look forward to			
14	I feel safe			
15	I feel confident			
16	I feel a lot of things are a real effort			

17	I feel I enjoy things			
18	I feel lonely			
19	I feel excited by lots of things			
20	I feel happy			
21	I feel I'm treated fairly			

**Appendix 12: Like To Play (LITOP) (Frederickson and Furnham, 1999, 2004)**

**Friendship Survey**

Below is a list of all the children in your class. You will be asked how much you like to play with them. Please circle one face per child.

<b>How much do you like to play with them?</b>				
	Not very much 	Don't mind 	Very much 	Don't Know ?
<b>Child's Name</b>				
				?
				?
				?
				?
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				?

### Appendix 13: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

The assumption of sphericity was tested using Mauchly's Test. The test indicated that values for peer acceptance scores were significant for the main effect of time, so an adjusted significance value was used. Both the Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt epsilon values are less than .75 so the Greenhouse Geisser correction was used (Girden, 1992). This gave a value of  $p = .562$ , so the main effect for time is not significant.

#### Mauchly's Test of Sphericity<sup>a</sup>

Measure: PeerAcceptance

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon <sup>b</sup>		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
time	.471	37.675	2	.000	.654	.677	.500

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

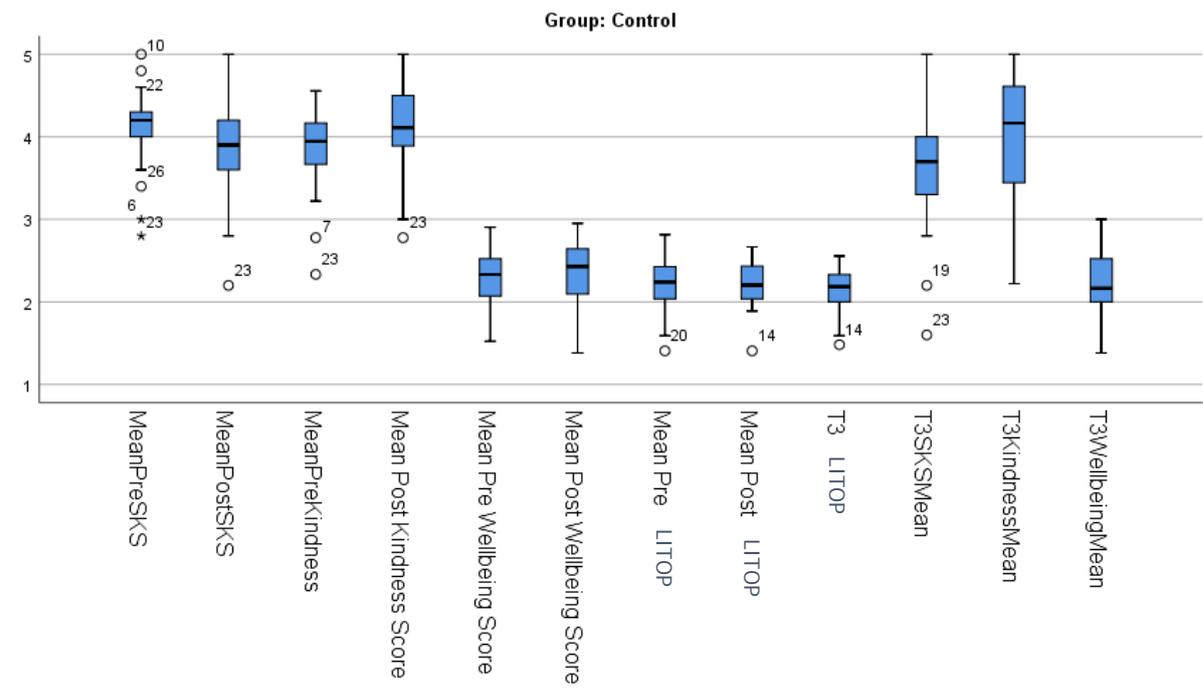
#### Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

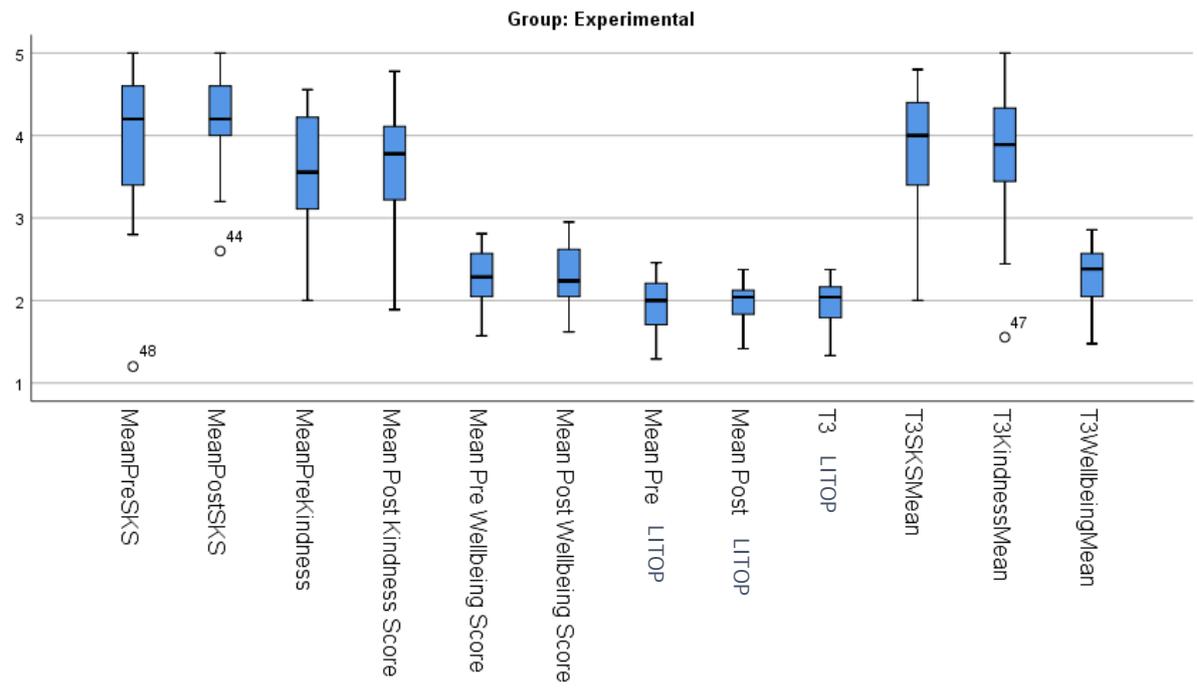
Measure: PeerAcceptance

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
time	Sphericity Assumed	.110	2	.055	3.670	.029
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.110	1.308	.084	3.670	.049
	Huynh-Feldt	.110	1.355	.082	3.670	.047
	Lower-bound	.110	1.000	.110	3.670	.061
time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	.013	2	.007	.440	.645
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.013	1.308	.010	.440	.562
	Huynh-Feldt	.013	1.355	.010	.440	.569
	Lower-bound	.013	1.000	.013	.440	.510
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	1.535	102	.015		
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.535	66.698	.023		
	Huynh-Feldt	1.535	69.085	.022		

## Appendix 14: Normal Distribution Analysis – Box Plots

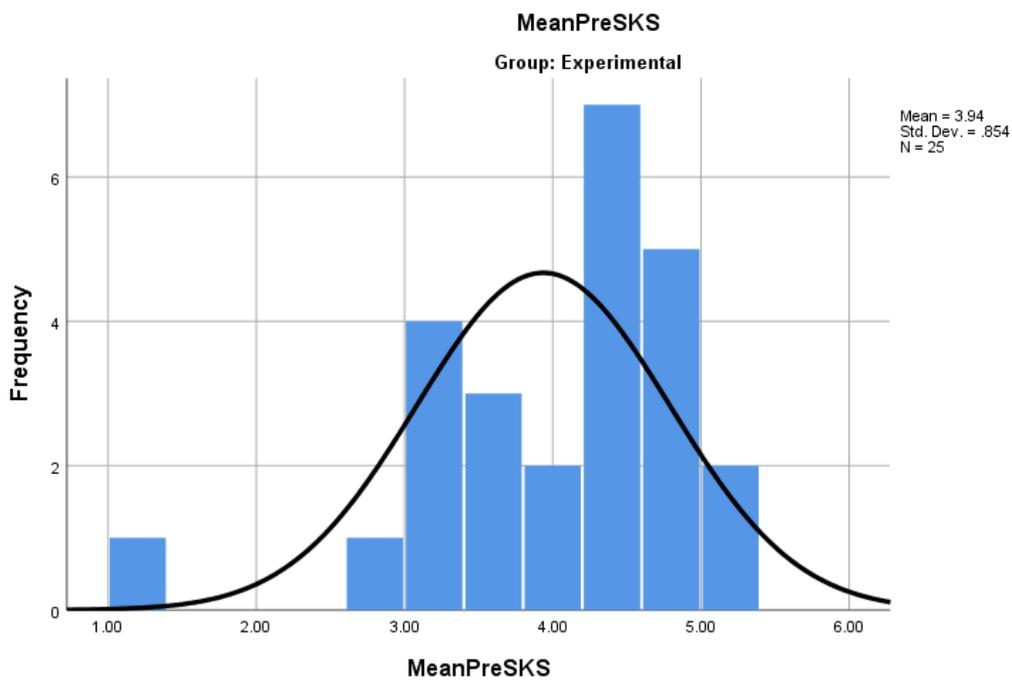
A Shapiro-Wilk tests the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed. For most of the dependant variable data, p values for Shapiro-Wilk tests are greater than .05, so the null hypothesis is retained, and the normal assumption is met; the data are assumed to have come from a normally distributed population. Some of the data did yield p values of less than .05, for example for the Shapiro-Wilk test for the School Kindness scores,  $p < .05$ . However visual interpretation of the School Kindness Scale box plots indicates outliers in the data in both the control and experimental condition which may account for a significant p value of less than .05.





## Appendix 15: Homogeneity of Variance Analysis – Histograms

'School Kindness' p values at time point 2 and 3 are less than .05 so homogeneity can be assumed. The value at time point 1 (pre-intervention) ( $<.05$ ) indicated that this data does not have homogeneity of variance. On closer observation of the histograms there appears to be an outlier in the pre-intervention data for school kindness scores, thus potentially skewing this value.



## Appendix 16: Interview Schedules

### Appendix 16.1 Teacher Interview Schedule

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to take part in The Power of Kindness Project and for talking to me now. I will be audio recording this interview using this Dictaphone so that I can capture everything accurately and so that I can analyse it afterwards. Straight after this interview, I will transfer the recording to an encrypted memory stick and delete it from the Dictaphone. You can choose to withdraw your data at any point during the intervention, or one month after the end of the intervention. The interview will focus on your role in the Project.

Issue/topic	Possible question	Possible follow-up questions (prompt)	Probes
<b>Teacher role in character education</b>	What do you think your role was in helping the children to develop kindness during the programme?	How did you help to develop kindness in the children in your class? Which coaching tools?	
	What coaching tools did you find most useful?	Were there any that weren't as useful, or you used less?	Why do you think that is?
	Is there any coaching tools or teaching practices that you would take forward in your teaching?	How will they be used?	
<b>Outcomes of the programme</b>	Did you notice any developments in the way children talked about and reflected on their kind acts?	Can you give any examples?	
	Did you notice any other changes in your class over the 6 week programme?	Can you give any examples?	Why do you think this is?
<b>Implementation of the programme</b>	Were there any barriers or challenges to delivering the programme?	Why do you think this is? How do you think they could be overcome?	
	What did you enjoy most about the programme?	Why?	

<b>Opinion of character education</b>	Do you think teaching good character has a place in school?	Do you think character education can be successful in school?	Why?
<b>Further programme developments</b>	Do you have any suggestions as to how the project could be improved?	That would either help the children to develop kindness? Or Support the role of the teacher better?	

### *Appendix 16.2 Child Focus Group Schedule*

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to take part in The Power of Kindness Project and for talking to me now. I will be audio recording this chat using this Dictaphone so that I can capture everything accurately and so that I can analyse it afterwards. If you want to leave the group at any point, you can. Just let me know so I can tell your teacher. You don't have to give a reason. I'm now going to ask you some questions about The Power of Kindness Project.

<b>Issue/topic</b>	<b>Possible question</b>	<b>Possible follow-up questions (prompt)</b>	<b>Probes</b>
<b>The Programme</b>	You've been taking part in The Power of Kindness Project in school this half term. Can you tell me a bit about it?	Were there any parts that you liked? Were there any parts that you didn't like?	Why?
	How has your teacher helped you during this project?	Can you give any examples?	
	What does 'being kind' mean?	Why is it important to be kind? Can you ever be too kind?	Examples?

<b>Understanding of Kindness</b>	Can you tell me about your acts of kindness?	What happened? How did it feel?	
<b>Outcomes</b>	Has this programme helped you?	Have you learnt anything?	In school? At home?
	How did it feel to take part in the Project?		
<b>Programme Development</b>	Can you think of anything that would make The Power of Kindness Project better?	How could we make that happen in school?	

## **Appendix 17: Information Sheets**

### *Appendix 17.1 Information Sheet for Parents - Kindness Intervention Group*

#### **The Power of Kindness Project**

##### **Background Information**

This information sheet has been given to you because we are seeking your permission for your child to take part in a research project run by a postgraduate research student (Sophie Quinn) at The University of Birmingham. Before you decide whether you would like your child to take part, please read this information so that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. If you would like further information or would like to ask any questions about the information below, do not hesitate to ask (contact details are provided at the end of this information).

##### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of a whole-class intervention called 'The Power of Kindness Project'. The project aims to improve well-being, and peer relationships through encouraging the development of kindness in children. Children are asked to record when they complete a kind act, so that it can be displayed in the classroom. Research has shown that simply asking children to make a record of their acts of kindness can increase well-being and increase peer relationships. Children will also receive 'coaching' from their class teacher throughout the usual school day to help their understanding and practice of kindness.

##### **Does my child have to take part?**

As the programme is running as part of the school curriculum, all children in your child's class will take part in the programme. However, as part of the research all children will be asked to complete three short questionnaires, which measure their well-being, peer relationships and kindness which will help to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Your child will only complete these questionnaires if you want them to. If you choose for your child **not** to take part in the research, you will be asked to indicate this on an attached consent form and give this to school. If your child does not take part in the questionnaires, they will take part in an alternative task decided by their teacher (e.g. reading a book).

##### **What will happen if I give permission for my child to take part?**

If you chose for your child to participate in this research, your child will be asked to complete three short questionnaires in class before and after the 6-week intervention. Children will also be asked to complete the same questionnaire again 6 weeks later. The research will take place in the Autumn term. Consent will be required from both parent and child to ensure they can take part in the research.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We hope that your child will enjoy sharing their kind acts with their class and receiving kind acts from their peers. We also hope that as a class, there will be improved relationships between the children, as their practice of kindness develops. If your child takes part in the questionnaires, this will allow the effects of the intervention to be evaluated.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

There are minimal risks to your child taking part. The intervention aims to encourage positive behaviour and there will be no disruptions to normal lessons. The questionnaire measuring peer acceptance asks children to confidentially rate how much they like playing with each child in their class. Children will not have sight of their peer's responses at any time and will be asked not to under any circumstances discuss their responses with any other children in school to prevent the risk of peer conflict. Completing the well-being and peer relationships measure may yield some unwanted feelings, but children will be reminded that they do not need to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with and will be encouraged to speak to a teacher if they need to, following the questionnaire. Children who indicate low scores on the well-being or peer relationships questionnaire will be shared with school and further support will be given. Examples of items asked on the well-being questionnaire include how much you child feels 'healthy', 'stressed', 'lonely' and 'cared for'.

### **If I change my mind, can I withdraw my child from the study?**

Yes. If you wish to withdraw your child's questionnaire data, you have two weeks from the end of each data collection period to inform the class teacher, who will inform me. Any data already collected will be destroyed and no further data will be collected. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing your child.

### **Will my child's information be kept confidential in this study?**

Yes. The researcher complies with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) in terms of handling, processing and destroying all participants' data. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed, having been stored securely over the interim. Any paper copies of data (such as completed questionnaires) will be stored securely at XXX Educational Psychology service. Any digital copies of data will be stored securely on an encrypted memory stick.

### **What will happen with the results of the research study?**

A summary of the key findings will be shared with you and your child in an information sheet. This information will also be shared with the school. In addition, the results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher's thesis for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The study may also be written as a journal article and submitted for publication to a relevant professional journal. The work may be presented at conferences. Your child's name (and the name of the school and all other research participants) will remain anonymous in the report. Some information about your child may be included: their age, their sex, their Special Educational Needs and whether they are entitled to Free School Meals or not.

### **Who is organising the research?**

The research is organised by the University of Birmingham and XXX Educational Psychology Service.

### **Who should I contact if there is a problem?**

No risks should arise for your child, or for any of the children as a result of participating in this research. However, if a problem were to arise, then the researcher, (Sophie Quinn) or the researcher supervisor (Julia Howe) can be contacted between 9-5pm Monday-Friday. Contact details are at the end of this information leaflet.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Science Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham.

### **What do I do next?**

If you are willing for your child to participate in this study, no further action needs to be taken. If you would not like your child to participate, please indicate this on the consent form and return this to school.

### **Contact details for further information:**

***Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.***

### **The Power of Kindness Project**

#### **Background Information**

This information leaflet has been given to you because we are seeking your permission for your child to take part in research run by a postgraduate research student (Sophie Quinn) at The University of Birmingham. Before you decide whether you would like your child to take part, please read this information so that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. If you would like further information or would like to ask any questions about the information below, do not hesitate to ask (contact details are provided at the end of this information).

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of a whole-class intervention called 'The Power of Kindness Project'. The project aims to improve well-being, and peer relationships through encouraging the development of kindness in children. In order to investigate the impact of the project, your child's class will not receive the intervention in this research and instead take part in a simple novel task. This will help to identify what impact The Power of Kindness Project has.

#### **What will be child be asked to do as part of this research?**

As your child has been asked to participate in the 'simple novel task' group, this means that your child will be asked to write down three new things they have done or places they have been that week. This simple novel task has been shown to improve well-being in children in previous research. As the 'simple novel task' intervention is running as part of the school curriculum, all children in your child's class will take part.

However, as part of the research all children will be asked to complete three short questionnaires, which measure their well-being, peer relationships and kindness, which will help to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Your child will only complete these questionnaires if you want them to. If you choose for your child **not** to take part in the research, you will be asked to indicate this on an attached consent form and give this to school. If your child does not take part in the questionnaires, they will take part in an alternative task decided by their teacher (e.g. reading a book).

#### **What will happen if I give permission for my child to take part?**

If you chose for your child to participate in this research, your child will be asked to complete three short questionnaires at three separate times over the duration of the

research period. The research will take place in the Autumn term. Consent will be required from both parent and child to ensure they can take part in the research.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Your child's responses to the questionnaires will be valuable in understanding the impacts of the project. It is also a possibility that children within this group will experience increased feelings of well-being by simply writing down the new things they have done or places they have visited. If the outcomes of the project are positive, it may be that your child's class can take part in the project too after the research is complete. This will be decided by the school.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

There are minimal risks to your child taking part. The intervention aims to encourage positive behaviour and there will be no disruptions to normal lessons. The questionnaire measuring peer acceptance asks children to confidentially rate how much they like playing with each child in their class. Children will not have sight of their peer's responses at any time and will be asked not to under any circumstances discuss their responses with any other children in school to prevent the risk of peer conflict. Completing the well-being and peer relationships measure may yield some unwanted feelings, but children will be reminded that they do not need to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with and will be encouraged to speak to a teacher if they need to following the questionnaire. Children who have low scores on the well-being or peer relationships questionnaire will be shared with school and further support will be given. Examples of items asked on the well-being questionnaire include how much you child feels 'healthy', 'stressed', 'lonely' and 'cared for'.

### **If I change my mind, can I withdraw my child from the study?**

Yes. If you wish to withdraw your child's questionnaire data, you have two weeks from the end of each data collection period to inform the class teacher, who will inform me. Any data already collected will be destroyed and no further data will be collected. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing your child.

### **Will my child's information be kept confidential in this study?**

Yes. The researcher complies with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) in terms of handling, processing and destroying all participants' data. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed, having been stored securely over the interim.

Any paper copies of data (such as completed questionnaires) will be stored securely at XXX Educational Psychology service. Any digital copies of data will be stored securely on an encrypted memory stick.

### **What will happen with the results of the research study?**

A summary of the key findings will be shared with you and your child in an information sheet. This information will also be shared with the school. In addition, the results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher's thesis for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The study may also be written as a journal article and submitted for publication to a relevant professional journal. The work may be presented at conferences. Your child's name (and the name of the school and all other research participants) will remain anonymous in the report. Some information about your child may be included: their age, their sex, their Special Educational Needs and whether they are entitled to Free School Meals or not.

### **Who is organising the research?**

The research is organised by the University of Birmingham and XXX Educational Psychology Service.

### **Who should I contact if there is a problem?**

No risks should arise for your, or for any of the children as a result of participating in this research. However, if a problem were to arise, then the researcher, (Sophie Quinn) or the researcher supervisor (Julia Howe) can be contacted between 9-5pm Monday-Friday. Contact details are at the end of this information leaflet.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Science Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham.

### **What do I do next?**

If you are willing for your child to participate in this study, no further action needs to be taken. If you would not like your child to participate, please indicate this on the consent form and return this to school.

### **Contact details for further information:**

***Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.***

## *Appendix 17.3 Information Sheet for Teacher in Kindness Intervention Group*

### **The Power of Kindness Project**

#### **Background Information**

This information sheet has been given to you to give you some information about a research project run by a postgraduate research student (Sophie Quinn) at The University of Birmingham. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, please read this information so that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. If you would like further information or would like to ask any questions about the information below, do not hesitate to ask (contact details are provided at the end of this information).

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of a whole-class intervention called 'The Power of Kindness Project'. The project aims to improve well-being, and peer relationships through encouraging the development of kindness in children. Children are asked to record when they complete a kind act, so that it can be displayed in the classroom. Research has shown that by simply asking children to make a record of their acts of kindness can increase well-being and increase peer relationships. Please read the brief 'Teacher's Manual' attached to find out more about your role in the project.

#### **What will happen if I choose to take part?**

As the kindness project is running as part of the school curriculum, the project will continue for 6 weeks in the Autumn term. Your class will be asked to complete some short questionnaires before and after the intervention and 6 weeks following the intervention. If you chose to take part in the research, you will be asked to take part in a 45-minute interview with the researcher about your experiences of running the project. The research may also observe the project running in a short classroom observation.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We hope that your class will enjoy sharing their kind acts with their each other and receiving kind acts from their peers. We also hope that as a class, there will be improved relationships between the children, as their practice of kindness develops. We also hope that the project will have positive impacts on you and your teaching practice.

#### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

There are minimal risks to you and the children taking part. The intervention aims to encourage positive behaviour and there will be minimal disruptions to normal lessons as

the project is aimed to run as part of the school day. As part of the project, children will complete questionnaires asking them about their feelings and who they like to play with. The questionnaire measuring peer acceptance asks children to confidentially rate how much they like playing with each child in their class. Children will not have sight of their peer's responses at any time and will be asked not to under any circumstances discuss their responses with any other children in school to prevent the risk of peer conflict. Completing the well-being and peer relationships measure may yield some unwanted feelings, but children will be reminded that they do not need to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with and will be encouraged to speak to an adult if they need to following the questionnaire. Children who indicate low scores on the well-being or peer relationships questionnaire will be shared with the school and these pupils will be provided with further support. Examples of items asked on the well-being questionnaire include how much you child feels 'healthy', 'stressed', 'lonely' and 'cared for'.

### **If I change my mind, can I withdraw from the study?**

As the kindness project is running as part of the school curriculum, the project will continue for the 6 weeks. If however, you would change your mind and would not like to take part in the interview, you may withdraw up to two weeks after the interview. Any data already collected will be destroyed and no further data will be collected. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing.

### **Will my information be kept confidential in this study?**

Yes. The researcher complies with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) in terms of handling, processing and destroying all participants' data. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed, having been stored securely over the interim.

Any paper copies of data (such as completed questionnaires) will be stored securely at XXX Educational Psychology service. Any digital copies of data will be stored securely on an encrypted memory stick.

### **What will happen with the results of the research study?**

A summary of the key findings will be shared with you and your child in an information sheet. This information will also be shared with the school. In addition, the results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher's thesis for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The study may also be written as a journal article and submitted for publication to a relevant professional journal. The work may be presented at conferences. Your name (and the name of the school and all other research participants) will remain anonymous in the report. Some information about the children may be

included: their age, their sex, their Special Educational Needs and whether they are entitled to Free School Meals or not.

**Who is organising the research?**

The research is organised by the University of Birmingham and XXX Educational Psychology Service.

**Who should I contact if there is a problem?**

No risks should arise for you as the teacher, or for any of the children as a result of participating in this research. However, if a problem were to arise, then the researcher, (Sophie Quinn) or the researcher supervisor (Julia Howe) can be contacted between 9-5pm Monday-Friday. Contact details are at the end of this information leaflet.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This research project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Science Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham.

**What do I do next?**

If you are willing to participate in this study, no further action needs to be taken. If you would not like to participate, please indicate this on the consent form.

**Contact details for further information:**

***Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.***

## *Appendix 17.4 Information Sheet for Teacher in Control Group*

### **The Power of Kindness Project**

#### **Background Information**

This information sheet has been given to you to give you some information about a research project run by a postgraduate research student (Sophie Quinn) at The University of Birmingham. Please read this sheet so that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. If you would like further information or would like to ask any questions about the information below, do not hesitate to ask (contact details are provided at the end of this information).

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of a whole-class intervention called 'The Power of Kindness Project'. The project aims to improve well-being, and peer relationships through encouraging the development of kindness in children. In order to investigate the impact of the project, your class will not receive the intervention in this research and instead take part in a simple novel task. This will help to identify what impact The Power of Kindness Project has.

#### **What will you be asked to do as part of this research?**

As your class has been asked to participate in the 'simple novel task' group, this means that your class will be asked to write down three new things they have done or places they have been that week in a log book provided. This simple task has been shown to improve well-being in children in previous research. Children will be asked to record their three new things or visited places weekly for 6 weeks in the Autumn term.

As part of the research all children will be asked to complete three short questionnaires, which measure their well-being, peer relationships and kindness, which will help to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Children will be asked to complete these at the start and at the end of the intervention, and 6 weeks following the intervention. We will not be gathering any information from you in this research, information will only be gathered from your class.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Your class's responses on the questionnaires will be valuable in understanding the impacts of the project. It is also a possibility that children within this group will experience increased feelings of well-being by simply writing down the new things they have done or places they have visited. If the outcomes of the project are positive, it may be that your class can take part in the project too after the research is complete. This will be decided by the school.

#### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

There are minimal risks to you and the children taking part. As part of the project, children will complete questionnaires asking them about their feelings and who they like to play with. The questionnaire measuring peer acceptance asks children to confidentially rate

how much they like playing with each child in their class. Children will not have sight of their peer's responses at any time and will be asked not to under any circumstances discuss their responses with any other children in school to prevent the risk of peer conflict. Completing the well-being and peer relationships measure may yield some unwanted feelings, but children will be reminded that they do not need to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with and will be encouraged to speak to a teacher if they need to following the questionnaire. Children who indicate low scores on the well-being or peer relationships questionnaire will be shared with school and further support will be given. Examples of items asked on the well-being questionnaire include how much you child feels 'healthy', 'stressed', 'lonely' and 'cared for'.

### **What will happen with the results of the research study?**

A summary of the key findings will be shared with you in an information sheet. This information will also be shared with the children and their parents. In addition, the results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher's thesis for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The study may also be written as a journal article and submitted for publication to a relevant professional journal. The work may be presented at conferences. Your name (and the name of the school and all other research participants) will remain anonymous at all times. Some information about your school will be included: your position within the school, the school's OFSTED rating and brief description of it i.e. mainstream, primary, three form entry.

### **Who is organising the research?**

The research is organised by the University of Birmingham and XXX Educational Psychology Service.

### **Who should I contact if there is a problem?**

No risks should arise for you as the teacher, or for any of the children as a result of participating in this research. However, if a problem were to arise, then the researcher, (Sophie Quinn) or the researcher supervisor (Julia Howe) can be contacted between 9-5pm Monday-Friday. Contact details are at the end of this information leaflet.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Science Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham.

### **Contact details for further information:**

***Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.***

## Appendix 18: Consent Forms

### Appendix 18.1 Consent Form for Parents – Participation in Questionnaires

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

This is an opt out consent form. If you do not wish for your child to participate in completing the questionnaires as part of this research, return the form to school with the underneath box ticked and the details filled in at the bottom. If you consent for your child to participate, take no further action. Do, however, keep this sheet as a record of my details, should you wish to get in contact. Thank you.

1. I **do not** want my child to take part in this study

Your name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours Sincerely,

Sophie Quinn

*Appendix 18.2 Consent Form for Teacher in Kindness Intervention Group*

**Consent Form for Interview: The Power of Kindness Project**

The aim of the interview is to gather your views about the implementation of The Power of Kindness Project. If you're happy to take part in the interview, please complete the consent form below and give this to the researcher. If you have any questions, please contact me via the information at the bottom of this form. Please note that an audio recording will be made of the interview using a Dictaphone.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understood the information sheet.

**YES / NO**

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

**YES / NO**

I agree that my voice will be recorded throughout the interview.

**YES / NO**

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time. If, after the study, I want to withdraw my data, I have two weeks to inform the researcher. I know that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing data.

**YES / NO**

I agree that the results of the study will be written in a report for the researcher's university thesis and may later be published in an academic journal. I understand that my name or the name of the school will not be included in these reports.

**YES / NO**

I agree for the data I provide to be stored securely by the researcher for ten years.

**YES / NO**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours Sincerely,  
Sophie Quinn

*Appendix 18.3 Consent Form for Children – Participation in Questionnaires*

Hello,

My name is Sophie.

- ❖ I would like you to be part of a project I am doing a project for my university!
- ❖ If it is okay with you, you will be asked to fill in some short questionnaires. These will ask you some questions about you and who you like to play with.
- ❖ It is fine if you don't want to take part in my project. Just tell your teacher at any time.
- ❖ If you are not sure if you want to take part in the project you can ask your teachers any questions. You can also ask me! Your teacher can help you to get in touch with me.

If you **do not** want to take part in the project, please can you write your name at the bottom of the page and give it to your teacher? If you do want to take part, there is nothing you need to do!

Thank you!

-----

I **do not** want to take part in this project

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix 18.4 Consent Form for Parents – Participation in Child Focus Group*

**The Power of Kindness Project**

As you know, your child's class has been taking part in The Power of Kindness Project this term. In addition to the programme, as part of the research, your child has been randomly selected to take part in a focus group with up to six other children in their class. The aim of the focus group is to gather the children's views about their participation in The Power of Kindness Project. If you are happy for your child to take part in the focus group, please complete the consent form below and give this to your child's class teacher. If you have any questions, please contact me via the information at the bottom of this form or ask your child's class teacher who can get in touch with me. Please note that an audio recording will be made of each interview using a Dictaphone.

**Consent Form (to be returned by Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October)**

**Parent/Guardian Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understood the 'focus group' information sheet.

**YES / NO**

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

**YES / NO**

I agree for my child to take part in this focus group with up to five other children from the class and Sophie Quinn, the researcher.

**YES / NO**

I agree that my child's voice will be recorded throughout the focus group interview.

**YES / NO**

I understand that my child's participation is voluntary. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time. If, after the study, I want to withdraw my child's data, I have one month to inform the researcher. I know that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing data.

**YES / NO**

I agree that the results of the study will be written in a report for the researcher's university thesis and may later be published in an academic journal. I understand that my child's name or the name of their school or teachers will not be included in these reports.

**YES / NO**

I agree for the data I provide to be stored securely by the researcher for ten years.

**YES / NO**

Parent/ Guardian's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix 18.5 Consent Form for Children – Participation in Focus Group*

Hi,

As part of The Power of Kindness Project, you have been randomly chosen to take part in a group with up to six other children in your class.

We will meet once and I will ask you questions about what you liked and didn't like about The Power of Kindness Project.

If it's ok with you, I will record what you and your friends say in the group using a voice recorder.

Please could you read the statements below and tick whether you understand and agree with them. If you do, please write your name at the bottom and give this to your teacher.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Understand</b>	<b>Agree</b>
I am happy to answer some questions in a small group.		
I am happy for Sophie to record what I am saying so she can listen to it later.		
I don't have to help Sophie with my project, I can stop at any time and I won't get in trouble.		

I understand everything above and I agree to it.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

## **Appendix 19: Feedback to Participants**

### *Appendix 19.1 Feedback to Teachers*

Dear ----- and -----,

I am writing to express my sincere thanks to you both for allowing me to conduct my research in your school in the Autumn Term of 2019. I thoroughly enjoyed working in both classes and I wanted to share the outcomes of the research with you.

#### Information Shared in the Teacher Interview and Child Focus Group

---, ----- and four children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project were interviewed after the intervention. Information shared in the interviews suggested that the project had positive impacts on prosocial behaviours, emotional well-being and children's ability to identify examples of kindness.

Children and teachers reported that the intervention had a positive effect on their social interactions and friendships. Instances of name calling, and arguments have reduced, and children are listening better in class. Teachers shared that some parents have noticed a positive change and their children are happier to come to school.

Both teachers and children shared that at the beginning of the project, children found it difficult to identify examples of kindness they had done. This improved over the duration of the project and this is an important step in the development of kindness in children. Findings suggest that the improvements were most evident towards the end of the project demonstrating that the development of kindness takes time and children benefit from support to recognise examples of kindness.

#### Questionnaire Results

Children in both classes completed questionnaires measuring kindness, peer relationships and well-being before the intervention, after the intervention and six weeks later. The scores of children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project were compared to children who took part in a different activity designed to improve well-being.

Results showed that whilst well-being scores improved in both classes following the intervention, this result was not statistically significant. Questionnaire results also found improvements in kindness in The Power of Kindness six weeks after the intervention ended,

but again this result was not statistically significant. Also, according to the questionnaire scores, children's ratings of peer acceptance were not affected by the intervention.

Interestingly, questionnaire results suggest that prior to the intervention, children in --- class who did not take part in the kindness intervention, had higher levels of peer acceptance than --- class suggesting relationships between the children are better in -- class. Results also, suggested that children who reported higher levels of kindness were more socially accepted by their peers. Finally, children with higher levels of well-being reported higher levels of kindness in school.

The value of teaching good character in school was highlighted by both teachers and the outcomes of this research offer some promising preliminary findings.

Kind regards,

Sophie Quinn

Trainee Educational Psychologist

## *Appendix 19.2 Feedback to Parents*

Dear parent/carer,

Thank you to for consenting for your child to take part in my research in the Autumn Term of 2019 and a special thank you to your child for taking part. The research evaluated the impact of The Power of Kindness Project which ran in Class ---- for six weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed working in both classes and I wanted to share the outcomes of the research with you.

### Information Shared in the Teacher Interview and Child Focus Group

---, ----- and four children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project were interviewed after the intervention. Information shared in the interviews suggested that the project had positive impacts on prosocial behaviours, emotional well-being and children's ability to identify examples of kindness.

Children and teachers reported that the intervention had a positive effect on their social interactions and friendships. Instances of name calling, and arguments have reduced, and children are listening better in class. Teachers shared that some parents have noticed a positive change and their children are happier to come to school.

Both teachers and children shared that at the beginning of the project, children found it difficult to identify examples of kindness they had done. This improved over the duration of the project and this is an important step in the development of kindness in children. Findings suggest that the improvements were most evident towards the end of the project demonstrating that the development of kindness takes time and children benefit from support to recognise examples of kindness.

### Questionnaire Results

Children in both classes completed questionnaires measuring kindness, peer relationships and well-being before the intervention, after the intervention and six weeks later. The scores of children who took part in The Power of Kindness Project were compared to children who took part in a different activity designed to improve well-being.

Results showed that whilst well-being scores improved in both classes following the intervention, this result was not statistically significant. Questionnaire results also found improvements in kindness in The Power of Kindness six weeks after the intervention ended,

but again this result was not statistically significant. Also, according to the questionnaire scores, children's ratings of peer acceptance were not affected by the intervention.

Interestingly, questionnaire results suggest that prior to the intervention, children in --- class who did not take part in the kindness intervention, had higher levels of peer acceptance than --- class suggesting relationships between the children are better in -- class. Results also, suggested that children who reported higher levels of kindness were more socially accepted by their peers. Finally, children with higher levels of well-being reported higher levels of kindness in school.

The value of teaching good character in school was highlighted by both teachers and the outcomes of this research offer some promising preliminary findings.

Kind regards,

Sophie Quinn

Trainee Educational Psychologist

## Appendix 20: Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Output

### Appendix 20.1 Kindness (VIA-YS) Scores

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
T1 Mean Kindness	Control	3.8651	.50181	28
	Experimental	3.6356	.70164	25
	Total	3.7568	.60938	53
T2 Mean Kindness	Control	4.0913	.63509	28
	Experimental	3.6089	.77388	25
	Total	3.8637	.73820	53
T3 Mean Kindness	Control	4.0079	.79489	28
	Experimental	3.8311	.79809	25
	Total	3.9245	.79372	53

### Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: Kindness

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	.764	2	.382	1.498	.228	.029
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.764	1.975	.387	1.498	.229	.029
	Huynh-Feldt	.764	2.000	.382	1.498	.228	.029
	Lower-bound	.764	1.000	.764	1.498	.227	.029
time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	.705	2	.352	1.381	.256	.026
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.705	1.975	.357	1.381	.256	.026
	Huynh-Feldt	.705	2.000	.352	1.381	.256	.026
	Lower-bound	.705	1.000	.705	1.381	.245	.026
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	26.021	102	.255			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	26.021	100.703	.258			
	Huynh-Feldt	26.021	102.000	.255			
	Lower-bound	26.021	51.000	.510			

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: Kindness

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2337.006	1	2337.006	2374.065	.000	.979
Group	3.477	1	3.477	3.532	.066	.065
Error	50.204	51	.984			

### Appendix 20.2 School Kindness Scores (SKS)

#### Descriptive Statistics

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
T1 Mean School Kindness	Control	4.0929	.00000	28
	Experimental	3.9360	.00000	25
	Total	4.0189	.07905	53
T2 Mean School Kindness	Control	3.8786	.00000	28
	Experimental	4.1520	.00000	25
	Total	4.0075	.13780	53
T2 Mean School Kindness	Control	3.6500	.73359	28
	Experimental	3.8000	.75056	25
	Total	3.7208	.73833	53

### Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: School Kindness

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	2.959	2	1.480	8.070	.001	.137
	Greenhouse-Geisser	2.959	1.000	2.959	8.070	.006	.137
	Huynh-Feldt	2.959	1.020	2.901	8.070	.006	.137
	Lower-bound	2.959	1.000	2.959	8.070	.006	.137
time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	1.297	2	.648	3.537	.033	.065
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.297	1.000	1.297	3.537	.066	.065
	Huynh-Feldt	1.297	1.020	1.271	3.537	.065	.065
	Lower-bound	1.297	1.000	1.297	3.537	.066	.065
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	18.700	102	.183			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	18.700	51.000	.367			
	Huynh-Feldt	18.700	52.020	.359			
	Lower-bound	18.700	51.000	.367			

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: School Kindness

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2433.241	1	2433.241	13272.222	.000	.996
Group	.313	1	.313	1.706	.197	.032
Error	9.350	51	.183			

Appendix 20.2.1 School Kindness Scores - Paired Samples T-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair					Lower	Upper			
1	School Kindness T1 – T2	-.21600	.71629	.14326	-.51167	.07967	-1.508	24	.145
2	School Kindness T2 – T3	.35200	.75780	.15156	.03919	.66481	2.323	24	.029
3	School Kindness T1 – T3	.13600	.73648	.14730	-.16800	.44000	.923	24	.365

a. Group = Experimental

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair					Lower	Upper			
1	School Kindness T1 – T2	.21429	.51331	.09701	.01524	.41333	2.209	27	.036
2	School Kindness T2 – T3	.22857	.44126	.08339	.05747	.39967	2.741	27	.011
3	School Kindness T1 – T3	.44286	.52875	.09992	.23783	.64789	4.432	27	.000

a. Group = Control

Appendix 20.3 Well-Being Scores (HIFAMAS)

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
T1 Mean Well-Being	Control	2.3010	.30998	28
	Experimental	2.2838	.33797	25
	Total	2.2929	.32045	53
T2 Mean Well-Being	Control	2.3486	.40511	28
	Experimental	2.3143	.38978	25
	Total	2.3324	.39450	53
T3 Mean Well-Being	Control	2.2143	.42245	28
	Experimental	2.3067	.36759	25
	Total	2.2579	.39648	53

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: Well-Being

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	.134	2	.067	1.333	.268	.025
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.134	1.996	.067	1.333	.268	.025
	Huynh-Feldt	.134	2.000	.067	1.333	.268	.025
	Lower-bound	.134	1.000	.134	1.333	.254	.025
time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	.125	2	.062	1.247	.292	.024
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.125	1.996	.063	1.247	.292	.024
	Huynh-Feldt	.125	2.000	.062	1.247	.292	.024
	Lower-bound	.125	1.000	.125	1.247	.269	.024
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	5.108	102	.050			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	5.108	101.772	.050			
	Huynh-Feldt	5.108	102.000	.050			
	Lower-bound	5.108	51.000	.100			

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: Well-being

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	834.617	1	834.617	2600.702	.000	.981
Group	.007	1	.007	.023	.880	.000
Error	16.367	51	.321			

Appendix 20.4 Peer Acceptance Scores (LITOP)

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
T1 Peer Acceptance	Control	.3347	.17933	28
	Experimental	.2817	.16150	25
	Total	.3097	.17161	53
T2 Peer Acceptance	Control	.4193	.16067	28
	Experimental	.3233	.11924	25
	Total	.3740	.14935	53
T3 Peer Acceptance	Control	.3836	.14334	28
	Experimental	.3200	.13909	25
	Total	.3536	.14361	53

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: Peer Acceptance

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
time	Sphericity Assumed	.110	2	.055	3.670	.029
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.110	1.308	.084	3.670	.049
	Huynh-Feldt	.110	1.355	.082	3.670	.047
	Lower-bound	.110	1.000	.110	3.670	.061
time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	.013	2	.007	.440	.645
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.013	1.308	.010	.440	.562
	Huynh-Feldt	.013	1.355	.010	.440	.569
	Lower-bound	.013	1.000	.013	.440	.510
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	1.535	102	.015		
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.535	66.698	.023		
	Huynh-Feldt	1.535	69.085	.022		
	Lower-bound	1.535	51.000	.030		

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: Peer Acceptance

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	18.729	1	18.729	473.784	.000
Group	.199	1	.199	5.032	.029
Error	2.016	51	.040		

### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
T1 Mean Peer Acceptance	Equal variances assumed	.034	.855	-2.967	51	.005	-.27066	.09123	-.45381	-.08751
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.978	50.868	.004	-.27066	.09089	-.45314	-.08818

Appendix 20.5 Pearson's Correlation Output

		<b>Correlations</b>			
		Peer Acceptanc e	Kindness	Well-being	School Kindness
Peer Acceptance	Pearson Correlation	1	.412**	.192	.299*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.167	.030
	N	53	53	53	53
Kindness	Pearson Correlation	.412**	1	.188	.227
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.178	.101
	N	53	53	53	53
Well-being	Pearson Correlation	.192	.188	1	.463**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.167	.178		.000
	N	53	53	53	53
School Kindness	Pearson Correlation	.299*	.227	.463**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.101	.000	
	N	53	53	53	53

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Appendix 21: Coded Teacher Interview Transcript Example

Transcript	Final Themes	Final Sub-Themes
<p><b>I: So what do you think your role was in helping the children to develop kindness during the project?</b></p> <p>T1: I think one thing I did was point out when they were being kind without realising, so sometimes they would do things, if someone couldn't tie their shoe laces and I would make a point of 'oh that was really kind, thank you for doing that, that's something you could write about for our kindness tree'. But I think sometimes it has been hard to do that.</p> <p>T2: I think it was about reinforcing that the things they do are kind, so like if they come in at lunch time and sharpen the pencils for us, that is kind erm you know helping somebody at swimming or letting somebody in the line before them, is kind and I don't think they actually realise it is kind. I think it stems from home life though as well sometimes, where they do things but they are not saying 'that's kind of you, that's nice of you'.</p> <p>T1: Yeah. They are not realising what they are doing as kind.</p> <p>T2: holding a door for somebody and things like that, because when they went to do it, they struggled to write things down and as Miss XXX said, I would then go and remind them, well 'who held that door open? who's done this who's done that? So it is noticing things and reminding them.</p> <p><b>I: From the coaching tools that I shared with you at the start of the project, (e.g. the class discussion, spotting kindness) which ones from those did you find most useful?</b></p> <p>T1: I can't remember off the top of my head what they are.</p>	<p>Coaching</p> <p>Coaching</p> <p>Barriers to implementing Character Education</p> <p>Development of Virtue Literacy</p> <p>Coaching</p>	<p>Identifying Kind Acts</p> <p>Identifying Kind Acts</p> <p>Challenging Backgrounds</p> <p>Development of Virtue Knowledge</p> <p>Identifying Kind Acts</p>

<p><b>I: ok. How did you find holding the discussion with the class about their kind acts?</b></p> <p>T2: it was good but it was getting them to realise what they had done is kind, you know because some of them just do it anyway, they do it daily but because no-one is saying to them, thank you, that's kind, or thank you, that's nice.</p> <p>T1: even just saying thank you</p> <p>T2: yeah exactly, they are probably not used to getting this at home, its hard because they don't realise they are doing something nice.</p> <p>T1: I do think thought they are better, they have got better, I mean just with the discussion in general but I have noticed in PSHE that they have being better at listening to each other, I have noticed that over the last two weeks that it has been better. So maybe not directly linked, but it has had an impact on their interactions.</p> <p>T2: and they have said 'last term our behaviour was terrible' and they realise that they have been different this term</p> <p>T1: so many parents have commented on it at parents evening last week that they have seen a positive change.</p> <p>T2: (laughs) and it makes us feel like, yes we see it, its good that other people are seeing it too and not just people in school but the parents at home and they can pick up on it too.</p> <p>T1: that their children are happier aswell</p> <p><b>I: were there any other key things that came out of the parents evening discussions in terms of what they have noticed about their children this term?</b></p>	<p>Intervention Fidelity</p> <p>Barriers to implanting Character Education</p> <p>Development of Virtue Literacy</p> <p>Delayed Impacts</p> <p>Impact on Social Interactions</p>	<p>Challenging Backgrounds</p> <p>Development of Virtue Knowledge</p> <p>Improved Social interactions</p> <p>Improved Behaviour</p>
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<p>T1: a lot of them were that they are happier, they wanted to come to school. They weren't coming home and saying that, like the name calling. Like one of them said about name calling, that last term there was a lot of name calling but this term they're coming home and they haven't said about any name calling, which I suppose is linked to kindness</p> <p>T2: yeah, and you know the fact that they are not going home and being angry or upset and you know some of the children would take it out on their peers or parents and they would have to come in and you know what the parents are saying is, what they're telling us is being dealt with. Everything is school is being dealt with. Whereas before, they would get different communications, they are getting it all now.</p> <p>T1: We're kind of pre-warning them. And if something has happened its dealt with and because its been dealt with and the children know it has been dealt with that they are not going home and saying well this has happened, or this has happened and no one has done anything.</p> <p>I: yeah and there is coaching going on there with the discussions you are having with the children about the right and wrong behaviours they are showing</p> <p>T1: it's just getting them now to do it with us and there is one child in particular that will tell XXX one thing and me one thing and then a learning mentor a completely different thing.</p> <p>T2: but the good thing is, we catch up at lunch time and we tell each other everything that has gone on, so you know its kind of it works.</p> <p>T1: even if it's an email, 'they've just said this has happened, did it?' yeah sorry that's my fault!</p> <p><b>I: did you notice any developments in the way that children spoke about or wrote</b></p>	<p>Impact on Well-being</p> <p>Impact on Social Interactions</p> <p>Impact on Well-being</p> <p>Coaching</p>	<p>Reduced Peer Conflict</p> <p>Engaging in Discussion</p>
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<p><b>about their kindness, over the course of the project?</b></p> <p>T2: so I did most of the leaves, and I think that they kind of like got better towards the end, you know what I mean, you know, because I think they were thinking more and they would have other children who would say 'did you do this, and I did this and oo yeah I did that' and I think they were having a bit more of a discussion about it. Like 'I helped my mum get a nappy for my baby sister' and things more like that. Because at the start I don't think they realised that was a kind thing to do going to get a nappy for their baby sister.</p>	<p>Development of Virtue Literacy</p> <p>Coaching</p> <p>Development of Virtue Literacy</p>	<p>Development of Virtue Knowledge</p> <p>Learning from Peers</p> <p>Development of Virtue Knowledge</p> <p>Development of Virtue Language</p>
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## Appendix 22: List of Initial Codes Generated in Thematic Analysis of Child Focus Group and Teacher Interview

The table below details the codes that were generated in the initial phases of the thematic analysis and whether they were present in both the teacher interview and child focus group transcripts or not.

Code	Teacher Interview Transcript	Pupil Focus Group Transcript
1. Teacher naming kind acts	/	/
2. Children not able to recognise own kind acts	/	/
3. Teachers reminding children to record kind act	/	
4. Hard to implement	/	
5. Kindness not reinforced at home	/	
6. Children found it hard to remember kind act	/	/
7. Intervention fidelity	/	/
8. Intervention was positive	/	/
9. Kindness came naturally to come children	/	
10. Language of kindness improved	/	/
11. Improved listening	/	/
12. Improvements later in the intervention	/	
13. Improvements not directly linked	/	
14. Improvements in their interactions	/	/
15. Children have noticed differences in behaviour	/	/
16. Parents have noticed a positive change	/	
17. Parents happy with the teacher	/	
18. School staff have noticed change in behaviour	/	
19. Parents have noticed their children are happier	/	
20. Children want to come to school	/	
21. Less reports of name calling	/	
22. Fewer negative emotions at home	/	
23. Conflicts are resolved in school	/	
24. Discussions with children to guide behaviour	/	
25. Communication between teachers	/	
26. Spotting kindness in peers	/	/
27. boundaries	/	
28. consistency	/	
29. good relationship between teachers	/	
30. improved humour	/	
31. poor behaviour impacted implementation	/	
32. timing of intervention	/	
33. teacher value character education	/	
34. developing good character takes time	/	
35. mature children respond to character education better	/	
36. teachers explaining kindness	/	

37. motivation to be kind	/	/
38. increase number of targeted teaching sessions	/	
39. improve programme by using reflective questioning	/	
40. improve programme by learning from their peers	/	/
41. Teachers modelling kindness	/	
42. Intervention features		/
43. Negative experience of Peer Acceptance Measure		/
44. Examples of kindness		/
45. Being too kind can be negative		/
46. Improved kindness		/
47. Less bullying		/
48. Improved emotional regulation		/
49. Should write down kind acts more imminently		/
50. Putting kind acts on the wall felt like bragging		/
51. Improved friendships		/
52. Children are calmer		/