



Helping Children Learn Values Through Activities.



Earlier documents being 'The importance of Values' and 'The Value of activities' discuss as they say "what's on the tin" and make a valid case for remembering to use the language of values in everyday life at home and at school. Also the importance of using activities as learning experiences to increase knowledge, resilience and develop skills.

Both of which are of equal importance. It is no good teaching a child to have a wealth of knowledge if they have so little resilience they can't function in the working world. Likewise someone with huge resilience but unable to use this to function as a result of a lack of knowledge or skills.

In this document I encourage the reader to consider the marriage value of this way of thinking and look at the opportunity providing activities create for children to experience and learn values.

In the document 'The importance of values' I explained how we considered values and chose 5 to be our corporate values these being

- Courage
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Kindness.

In 'The value of activities' I put forward the idea that activities could be measured by considering what attributes were present and what elements were present within each attribute that added value and made it measurable.

Using this method it is possible to look at individual activities and consider to what degree our corporate values are present whilst undertaking these activities? How do these activities give us the opportunity to demonstrate and expose children to how we live by them and how they can experience them and then also begin to live by them? – If we can focus on being good people the right actions will follow, effortlessly – Aristotle.

Throughout my years of working in care and education I have visited many children experiencing difficulties as a result of neglect, violence and abuse including sexual abuse which are a direct result of parents perhaps for generations having poor values, limited exposure to adult role models and poor education, perpetuating poverty. As a result restricted life opportunities resulting in lives which have such a limited scope of reference.

Children placed in mainstream 'residential care with or without education' often does little to increase the child's scope of reference and an equation is played out whereby professionals often teach children about a subject in the classroom or key workers office but limited opportunity to experience and live by what is taught.

I can recall debating in the 1990s that it was regularly discussed how important it was to teach children about the importance of having good self esteem but little recognition that this in itself was not enough. As parents and carers, teachers or instructors, we need to put strategies in place that actually raise a child's self esteem in a very pragmatic way. In short, it's no good just talking about it, we need to make it happen for real.

In a similar way teaching children the language of values in isolation may increase their cognitive understanding of values. However, unless they can experience these first hand by having this demonstrated by adult role models and put in situations where they experience what it is like to live by them and have them established and embedded as a new normal, we may be hitting the target but missing the point.

“Your character is developed through habituation. If you do a virtuous thing over and over again, eventually it will become part of your character”, Aristotle.

Using the same structure I established to measure the value of an activity to a child’s development, we can also measure the opportunity an activity gives to demonstrate and encourage a child to develop an understanding of values and experience living with them by exposure to the need and opportunity.

If we again consider our corporate values as an attribute of an activity and think about what elements make up this value for it to become an attribute of an activity.
For example, to demonstrate

Courage- this must include the following- Demonstrate resilience, out of their comfort zone, being challenged and it will be clear there will be negative consequences if unsuccessful.

Integrity- trustworthy, honesty, expect reliability, to know right from wrong.

Respect- consideration of others, humility, positive interaction with others, the need to set a positive example.

Responsibility- reliable, make decisions, act independently, ability to meet targets or expectations.

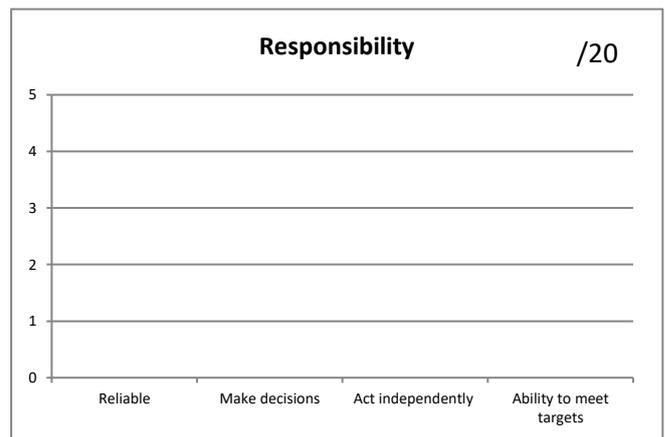
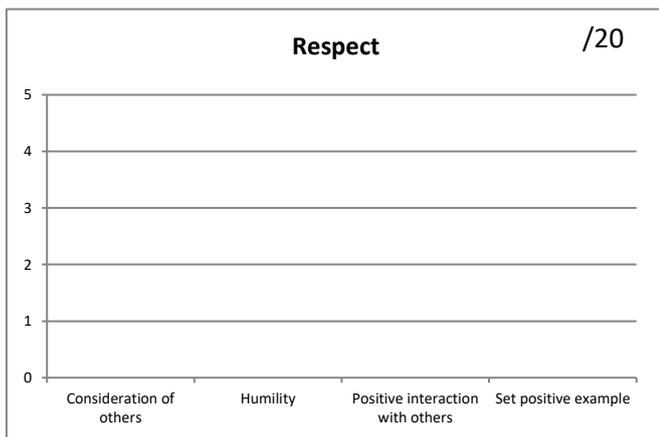
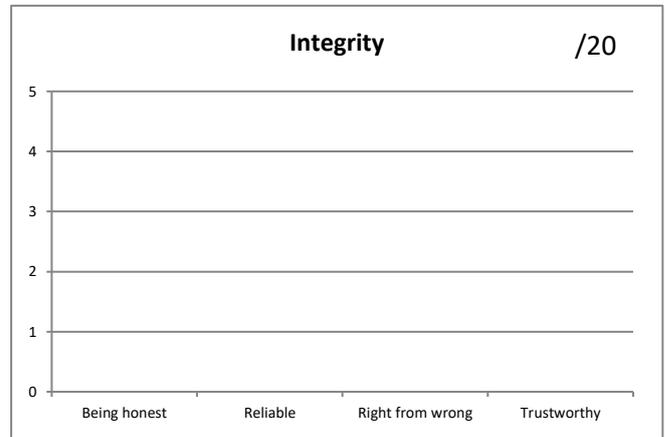
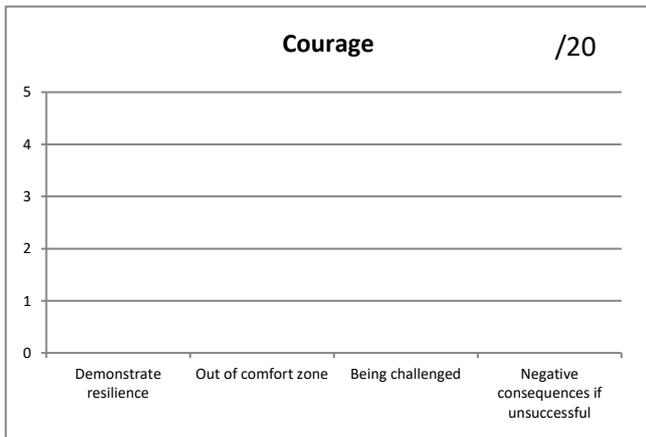
Kindness- show care for others or animals, insightful for others, without expectations, not for immediate reward.

The formula above demonstrates a very straight forward thinking process.

1/ Decide on your organisations values.

2/ Consider very carefully what elements must be present to make up/define a value.

3/ Put this thinking in a framework to measure the very extensive activities we undertake against this formula we have determined.



By adding the values together you arrive at a total, which to conclude the value of the attributes, fits into a range as follows.

$0 - 4 = 1$
$5 - 9 = 2$
$10 - 14 = 3$
$15 - 19 = 4$
$20 = 5$

It must be remembered we are not assessing the level of learning a child has experienced as a result of completing an activity but the 'potential' an activity has to expose a child to these learning opportunities. It is the activities that are being assessed as part of understanding the quality of our work and to appreciate what we should value.

In terms of assessing a child's progress with learning and improving their values, our other systems which consider this over time, a worthwhile period of time and not just the time of a particular activity, give greater depth to consider.

The following are an assessment of many of the activities we provide and it is clear from the onset not all are a given to be present. As I started to consider this subject I was genuinely of the view that our activities would all be of similar significance in terms of giving us the opportunity to help children learn values. This is clearly not the case and whilst we can make an argument that for example whilst undertaking a game of football we may have a situation that develops which allows the adult role model leaders to demonstrate kindness, this is not part of the assessment. Good leaders will always demonstrate good values as good leaders do. The point of this exercise is to consider what is on the agenda of the activity to be demonstrated. In the case of football, being kind may not be a stipulated requirement, but good sportsmanship should be.

Therefore I am of the view that we need to be proportionate in our evaluation. We must not get stuck in the thinking that activities are only worthwhile if they give us the opportunity to teach all values. We must recognise that if an activity gives us the opportunity to demonstrate and help a child learn one value that this is hugely significant in itself. The following gives us much to consider.

If we start with the example above 'A structured game of football'. Here we can see the following.

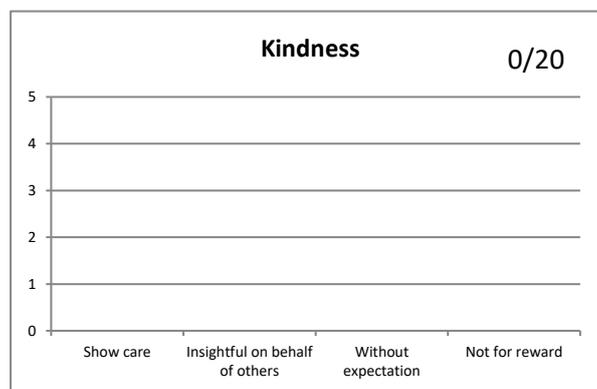
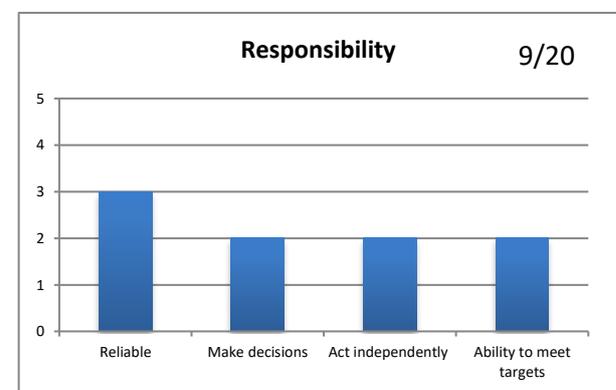
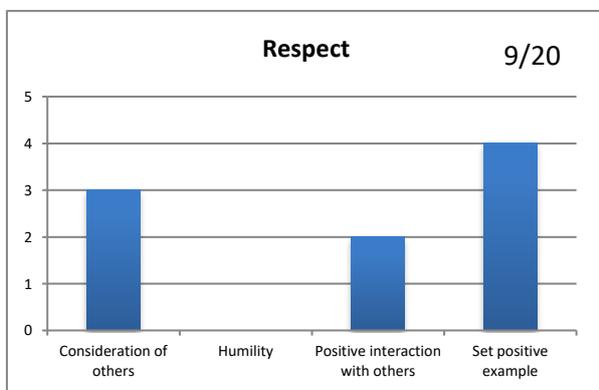
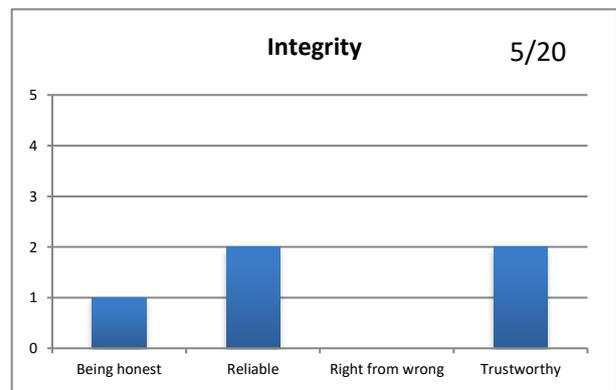
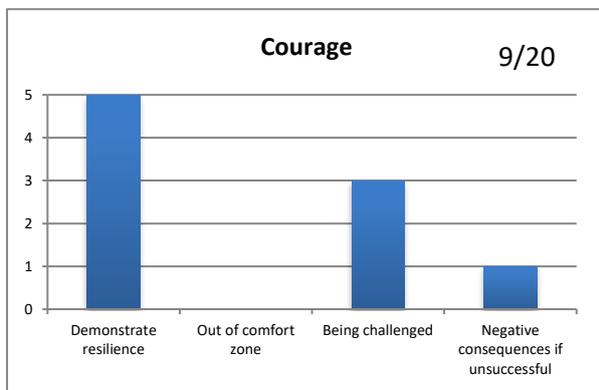
Courage - The game of football does require a high level of resilience however most children have had a game of football with or without structure so it is not out of their comfort zone. Negative consequences are restricted to a slight degree of ridicule if you miss a goal or flunk a pass but that should be the limit. Being challenged is present in a moderate way also.

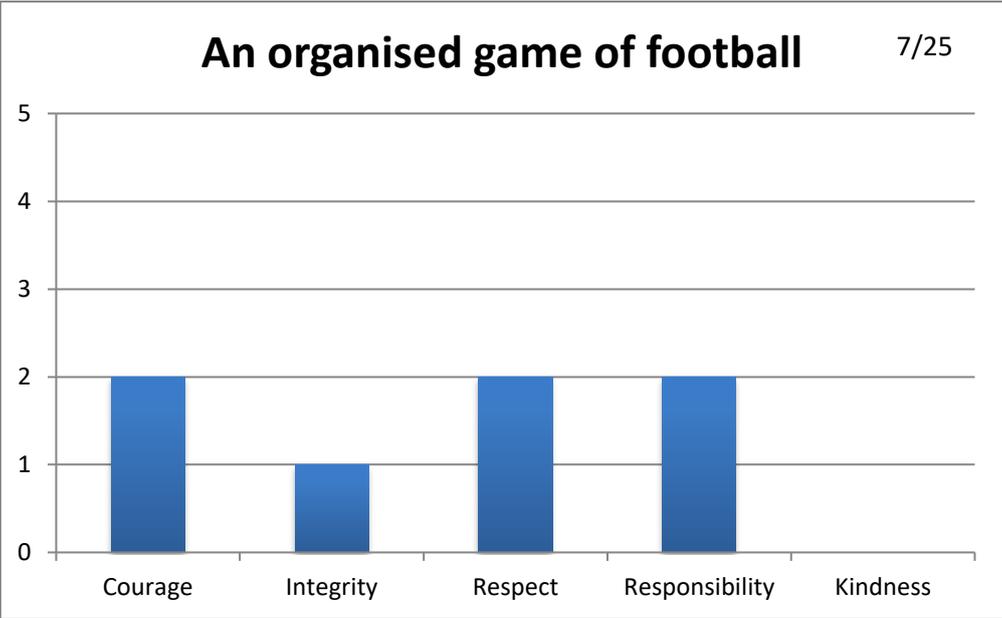
Integrity - Remembering that this assessment is not about how it may be delivered which is variable depending on who's leading the game but what's on the agenda, therefore being honest isn't relevant, being reliable to your team mates is, knowing right from wrong not really a prerequisite, being trustworthy in the same way that reliable is helpful to live up to team mates expectations.

Respect - Consideration of others is present but limited to not wanting to let your team mates down and trying to predict their next move. Humility is not a prerequisite. It is hoped there is positive interaction with others but this is dependent on helping your team to win. In a similar way setting a good example may be present but not a requirement.

Responsibility - Is evident as successful team mates will need to be reliable and trustworthy in completing the moves, kicks and passes but restricted to this level. The need to act independently is limited to small decisions on the football pitch and ability to meet targets is at a micro level such as getting the ball, passing or scoring.

Kindness - May be presented by individuals at anytime due to good leadership and opportunity but it's not on the agenda. What's on the agenda is to play well and win.





School Sports Day

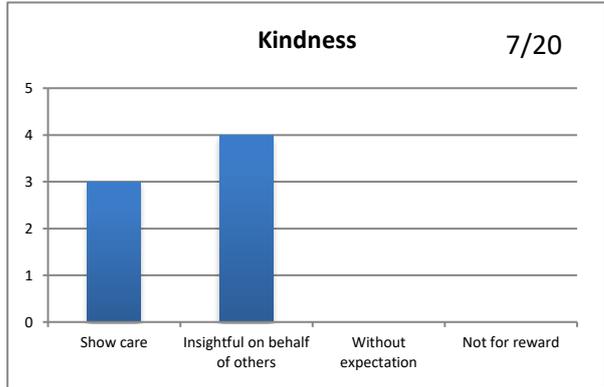
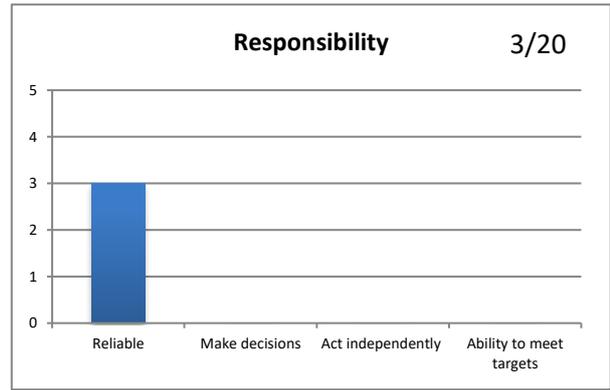
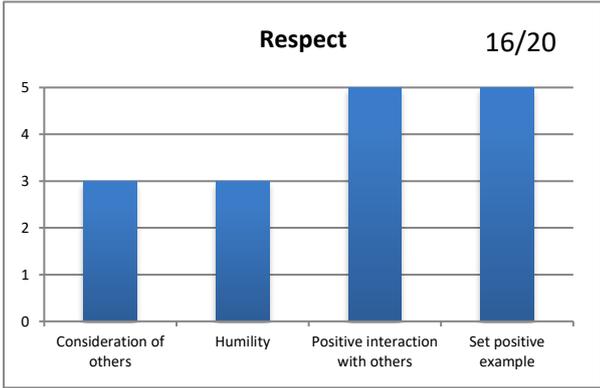
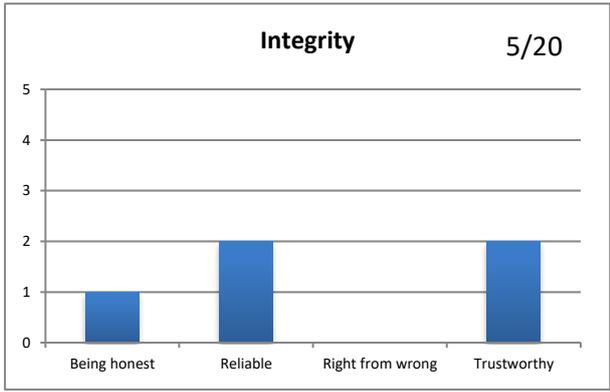
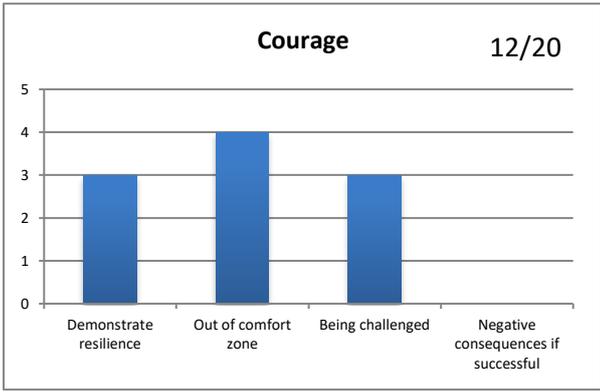
This is the day the whole school comes together for a most worthwhile experience during the summer term and is full of positive interactions. It is our own mini Olympics and one where a variety of different sports are played out over the course of the day with a home cooked picnic lunch in the middle.

The fact that athletic sport is the focus means there is a degree of resilience required. We are taking children out of their comfort zone by being all together at the same time, something that only happens a few times a year. They are being challenged with this experience which means courage is relevant.

There are elements of needing to be honest and reliable and trustworthy to team mates in team sports so integrity is evident but not in a big way.

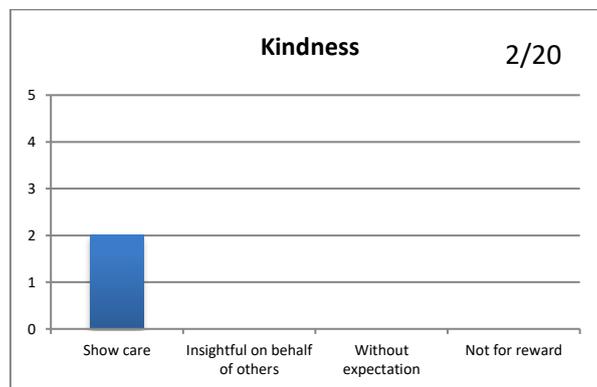
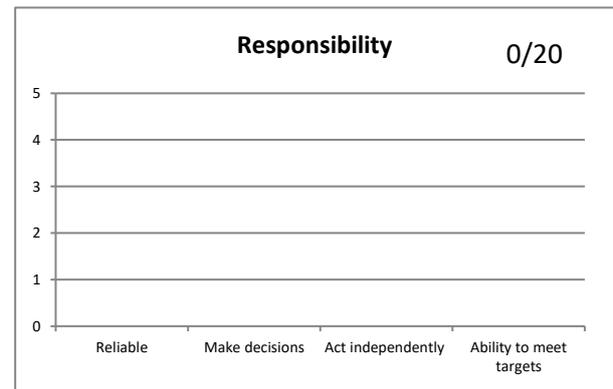
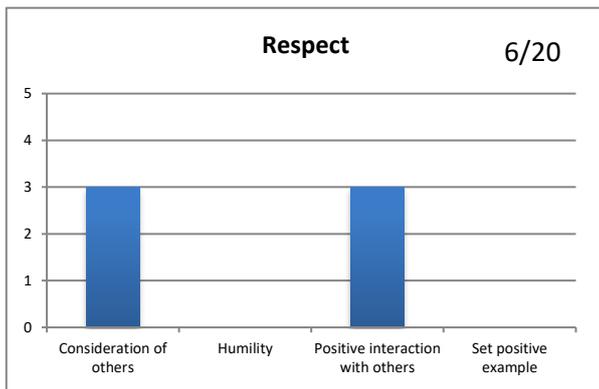
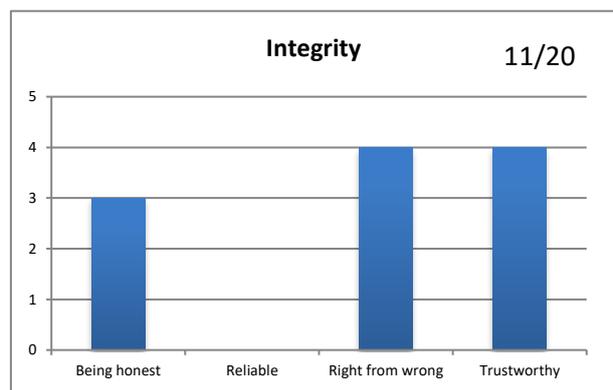
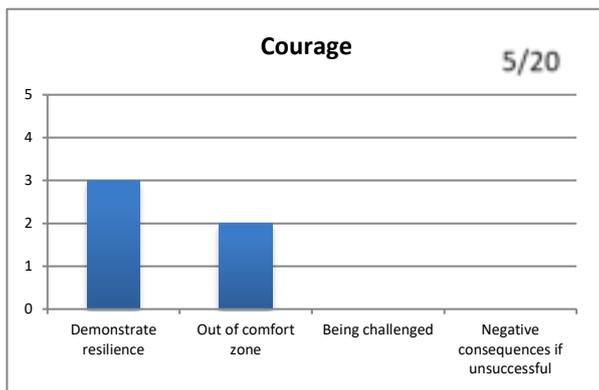
Respect is clearly evident as there is a lot of positive encouragement and humility promoting good sportsmanship and how to lose with dignity. As said, positive interactions with others and setting a good example. Responsibility and Kindness less so.

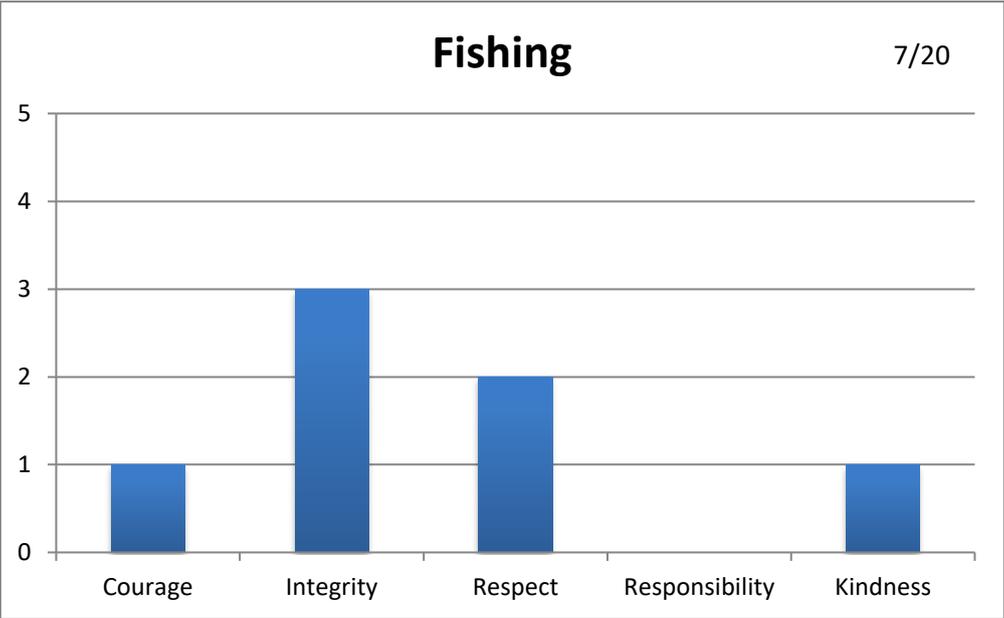




'Fishing'

Whilst it may be thought that fishing is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate good values, respect for the countryside and all that goes with it. When you measure it against our frame work it simply doesn't register in the way I had expected. It is still a high value activity for all the reasons I have set out earlier and one I would promote as its ability to calm children is amazing. It is about encouraging virtues such as patience and consideration for the environment, but it's not a great example of teaching our corporate values.





Visiting London to see The Household Cavalry Barracks and the Nelson Mandela Exhibition.

These visits are highly valued and bring much in terms of inspiring children to want to but in to their education. In terms of promoting and teaching about our corporate values,

Courage is relevant as it is at best a long hard day requiring good resilience. It is very much out of their comfort zone. Whilst there could be negative consequences if they missed the train or got lost these are minimised but still very evident as we make our way through London. Both these trips were definitely challenging in terms of its overall experience being asked questions and needing to demonstrate knowledge.

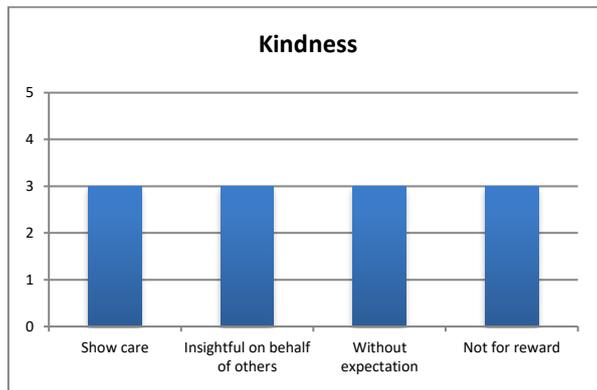
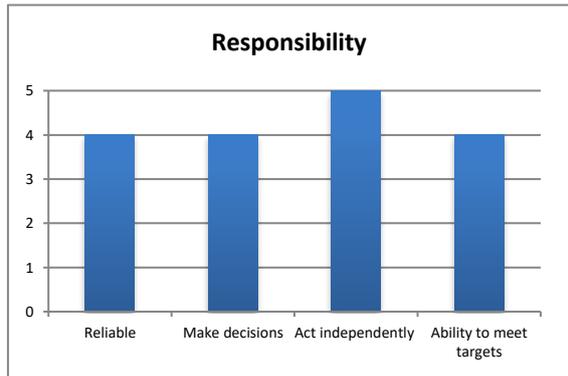
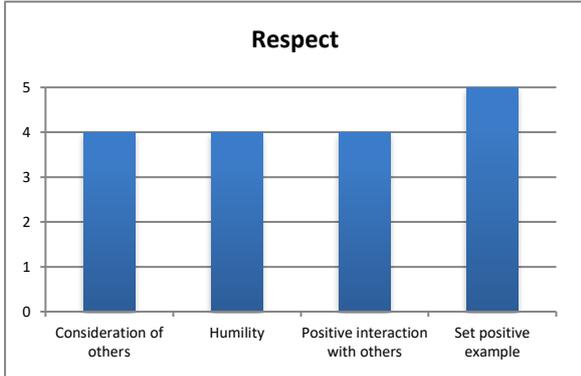
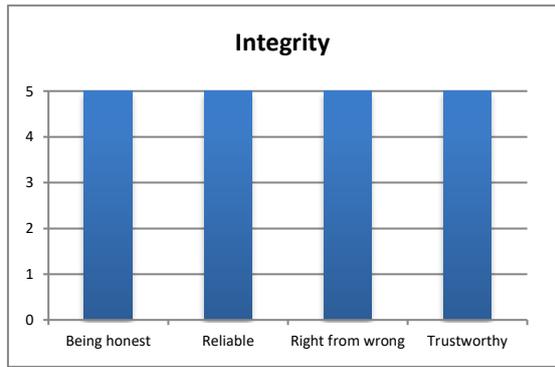
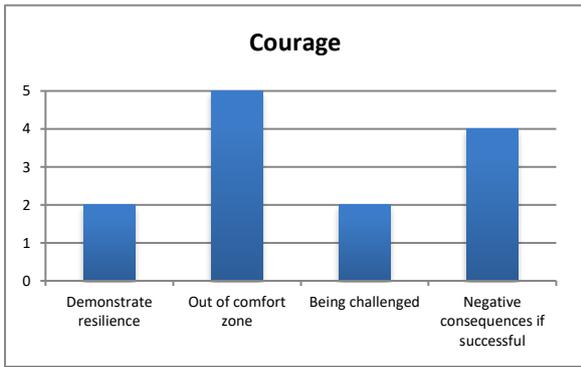
The opportunity to go in the first place is only on the back of meeting a suitability risk assessment and therefore relevant to Integrity.

Undertaking an experience like this as part of a group is only successful if there is plenty of consideration for others. Looking at the life of world leader like a Nelson Mandela is humbling requiring humility. With plenty of positive interactions with others. The visit to the Household Cavalry was a unique experience or a selected couple who both found they were setting an example to others.

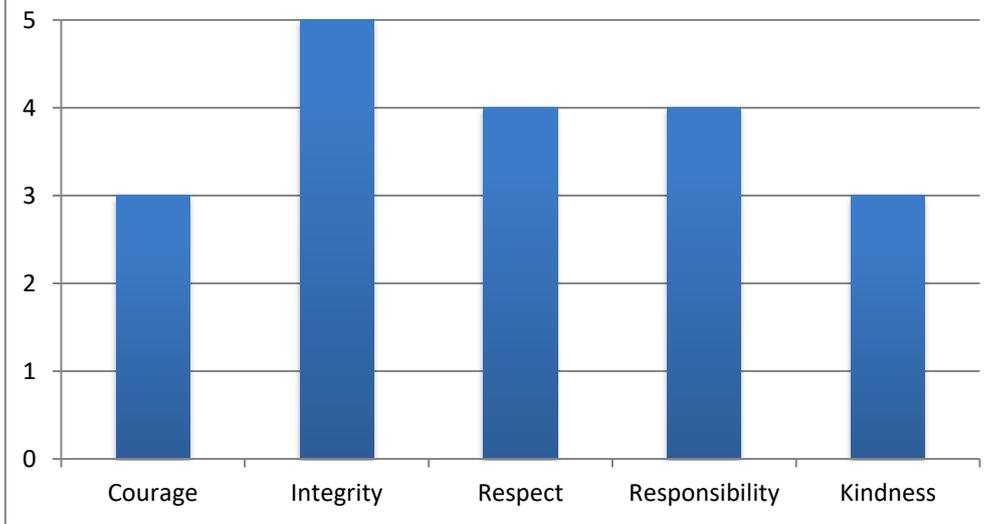
In a similar way Responsibility features as the need to be reliable, make decisions and act independently whilst within a group were experienced throughout the day and getting to the right place at the right time is about meeting targets.

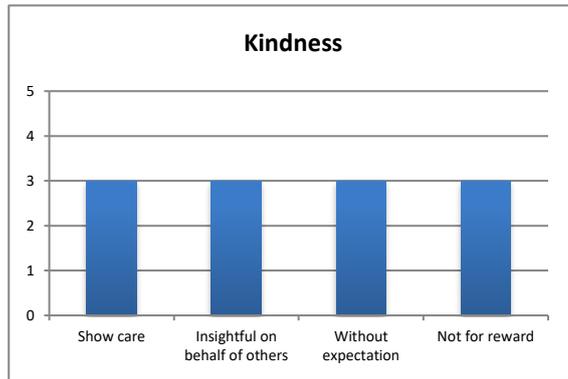
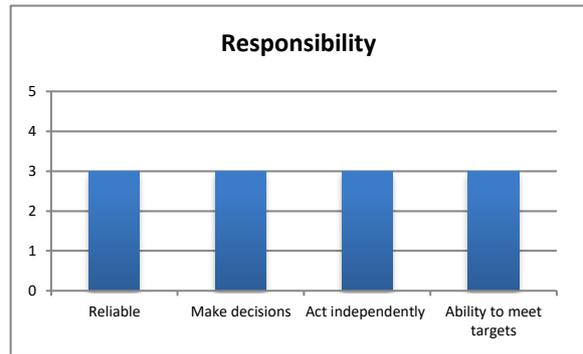
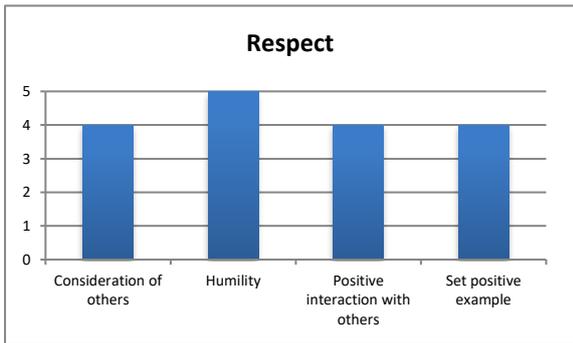
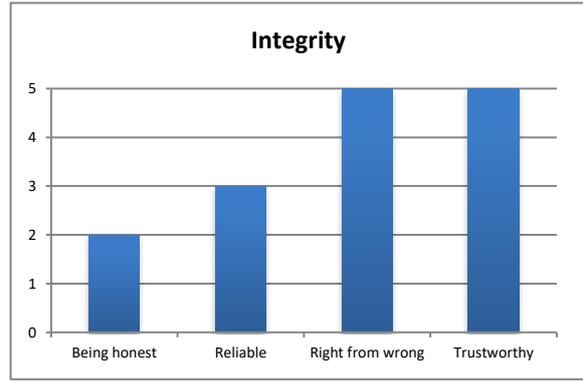
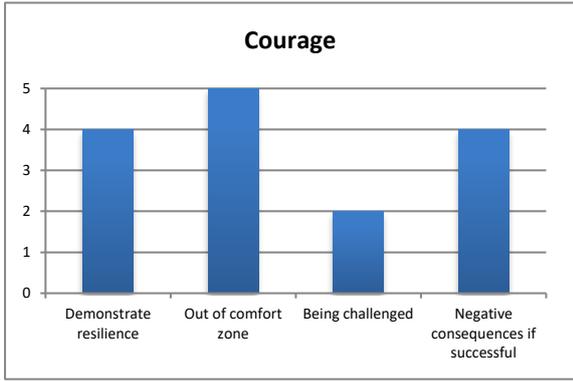
Kindness is also relevant but again less so.

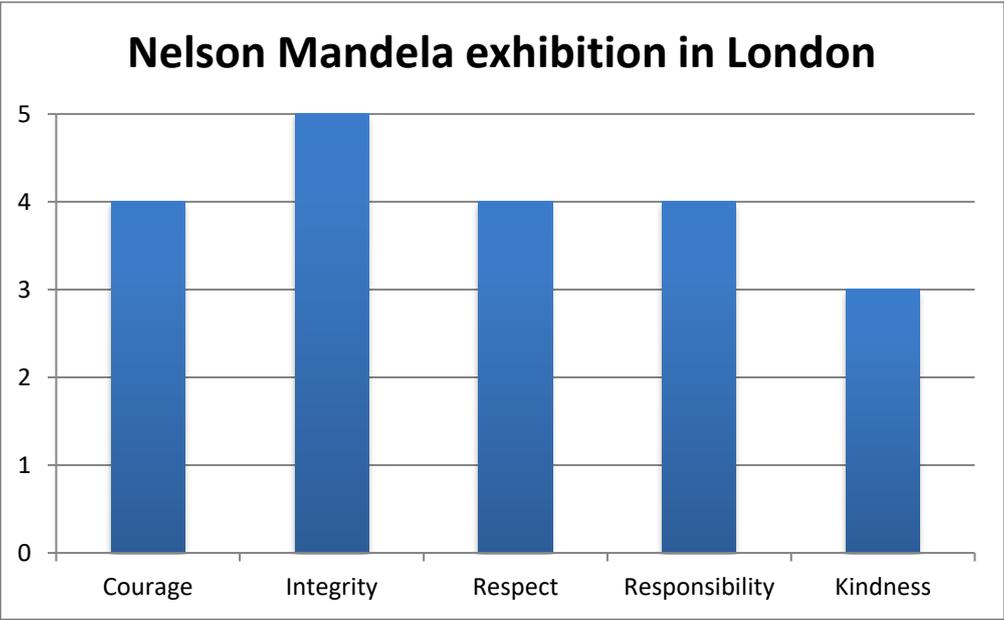




Visit to The Household Cavalry







Driving a tractor independently.'

This activity is not open to every student as they must meet the criteria for our suitability risk assessment prior to learning to drive. For those that are involved it can be extremely rewarding and a significant boost to confidence. This will have followed being successful with small machinery including lawn mowers and the most popular golf buggy which demonstrates the importance of incremental learning.

In terms of being assessed against our Values assessment criteria.

Courage - tractors are not for the faint hearted. Undertaking tasks with machinery involves being bounced around and sometimes for long periods of time. Therefore a reasonably high level of resilience is required. At the time of writing one of our top students who at the age of just nearly 16



years old is in his second year of rolling and harrowing, the spring work required to maintain pasture land. Grass land that is to be grazed by live-stock. He is one of the only students in the country to be given the responsibility of taking a machine worth many thousands of pounds and the power of a 120 horses in the field independently with a 2 way radio to keep in contact with an instructor. The surprise was when he phoned in to ask for the day off because he was tired. Had I had the opportunity to do as he has at that age, wild horses wouldn't have kept me away. We still need to work on resilience.

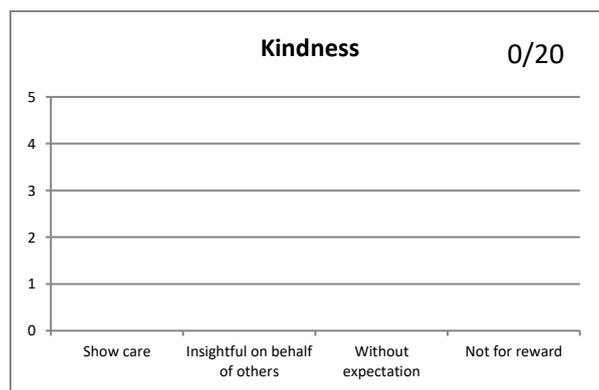
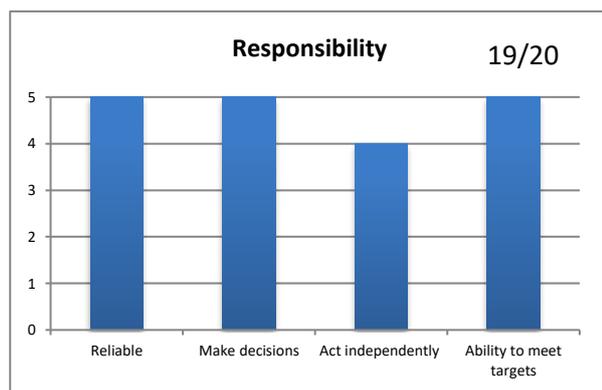
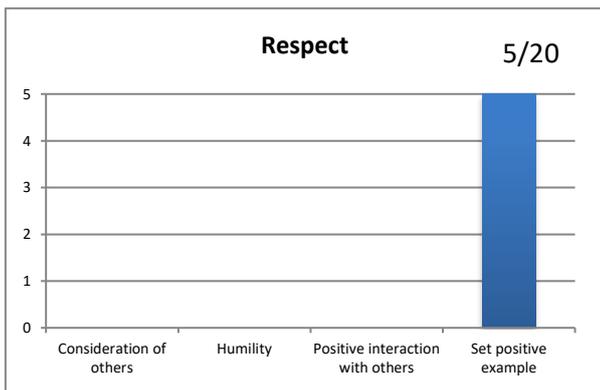
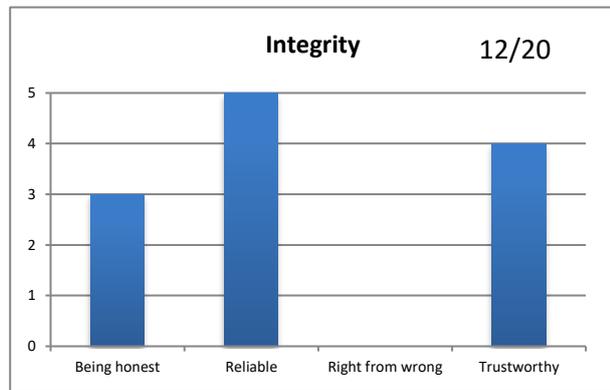
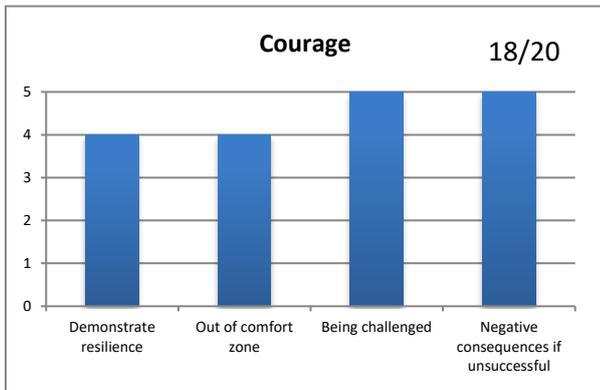
It is definitely a task that takes students out of their comfort zone. It is going to challenge them beyond anything they have experienced at this point in their development and let's be clear, there could be significant and serious consequences if they fail to remember what they have been trained to do. Crashing any vehicle is serious, hitting gates going from field to field could be expensive, avoiding livestock a definite requirement and health and safety paramount importance from start to finish. Therefore there is a high degree of courage.

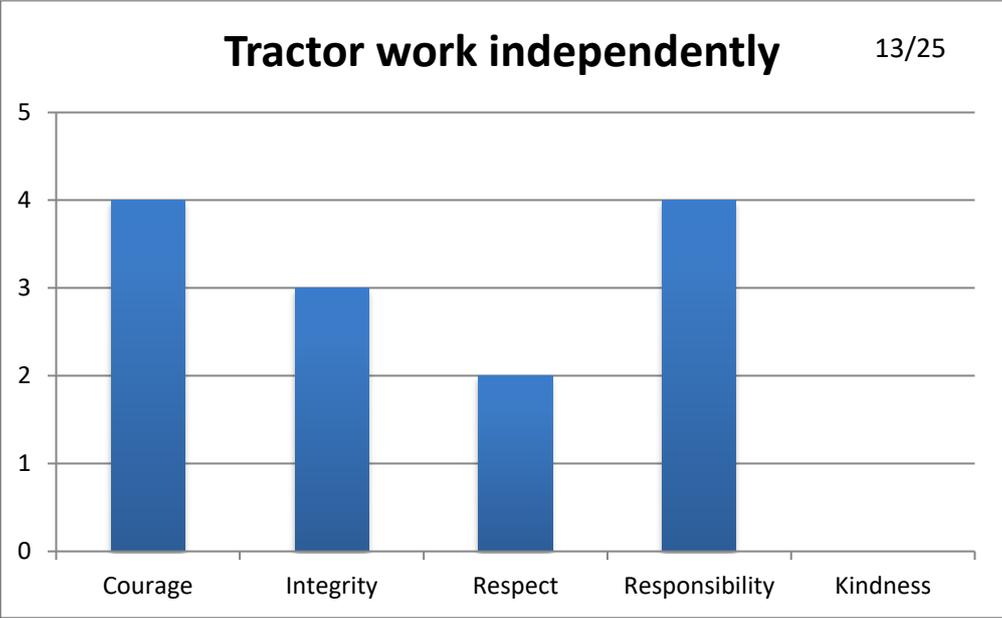
Only after a child has developed a high level of trust and met the criteria for learning to drive a tractor are they allowed to do so. Only if that is successful are they allowed to build up a skill base and then having met the criteria and standard are they allowed to drive independently. None of the above would happen without an understanding that they are going to be honest. They are going to discuss what they have learned and say what they didn't understand and be honest about their ability and confidence to do the task in hand. They must also be reliable and have demonstrated this over time. Whilst there may not be decisions to make which rely on the ability to know right from wrong, stopping for animals to get out of the way and looking out for other wildlife is a factor that requires the driver to think of others and be trustworthy. Therefore integrity is definitely on the agenda.

During the course of this task they have to have continued to demonstrate reliability and make decisions. To stop, go on, get help on the radio, seek advice over the radio, act independently and get the job done. So the ability to meet targets is the ultimate test of competence. We are not going

to burn fuel driving about the countryside unless it's doing the task required. So responsibility is high on the agenda.

This activity which has huge significance to those that undertake it and those that need the task completed is a good example of one that doesn't demonstrate all values but is important for the ones it does as respect is low and kindness is not on the agenda, it is an activity very high in courage, integrity and responsibility.





Working on the Farms and Gardens.

This activity is a key part of the Pear Tree School curriculum and takes the form of Rural Science. It is also an activity undertaken on weekends and holidays outside of school time as animals can't be neglected and plants often need watering.

Most of the children that are referred to our service are from urban backgrounds and being on a farm at their stage of experience and development definitely requires a degree of resilience. Noises and apparently 'smells' are very different. It is definitely out of their comfort zone and they are going to be challenged in a variety of ways that they won't have experienced in any setting.

The basic essence of working on a farm particularly with animals is that of nurturing. Ensuring correct feeding, clean water, and warmth in the form of bedding and shelter (basic requirements for all of us) are the end result of most activities. Whether it is moving bales of hay, or helping to make hay in the fields, the end result is that this is going to be fed to animals. We spend much of the summer working to ensure we have the produce available to keep animals happy and healthy over the winter. Therefore failure to do so has serious negative consequences, directly on the day if failed to provide an animal with its correct food or clean water, or indirectly if we don't make sufficient produce.

Likewise, plants also require nurturing in the form of correct watering and sufficient sunlight if they are to grow successfully. Failure to get it right could result in many hours of work lost as the plant isn't going to complain or object, it just dies.

Therefore, the criteria for courage is very much met.

Being honest about whether you have done as required and requested above is very much an important point and one with immediate consequences to animals and plants if you haven't.

Being reliable when moving about the farm. Closing gates to keep animals safe in the correct fields. Weeding to protect the plants you are nurturing and to ensure animals are looked after and plants are watered is a prerequisite. Knowing that failure to do so is going to have negative consequences is part of the day and at the forefront of people's mind. Being trustworthy to ensure this is done is a key part.

Therefore Integrity is an important value that is on the agenda.

Consideration of others, plants, animals or work colleagues is very important. Humility less so but still required to have positive interactions with others and set positive examples. One of our most able students who had done it all including driving machinery independently was stopped from attending as his arrogance was plentiful and no sign of humility resulting in concerns about his ability to remain safe as he had no consideration for others as his skills increased.

So 'Respect' for nature, plants, animals and work colleagues is a prerequisite.

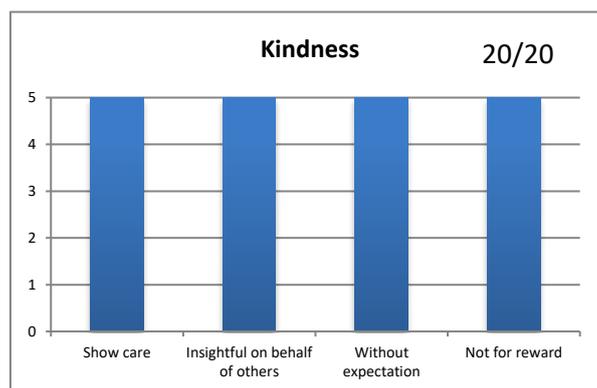
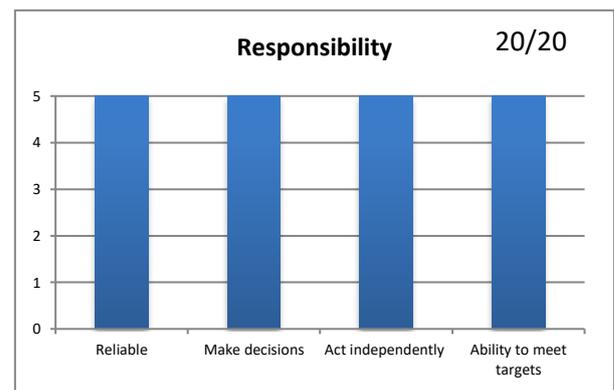
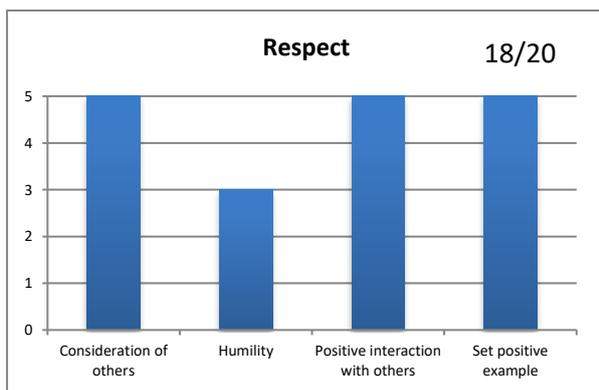
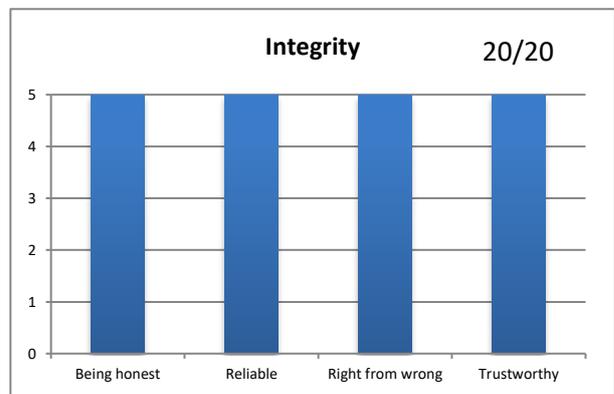
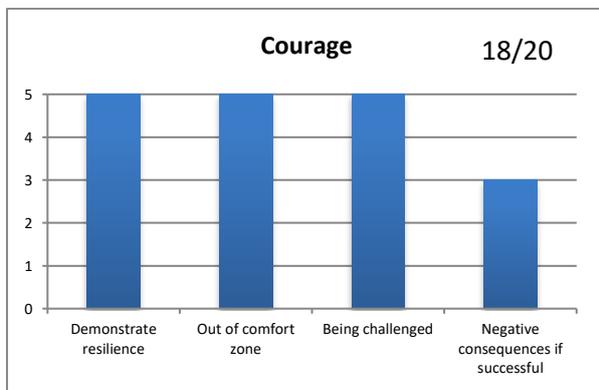
As said, being reliable is hugely important. The more able to contribute and trustworthy, the more opportunity to make decisions and act independently with the safe environment of the farm where help, support and supervision are just around the corner if it goes wrong.

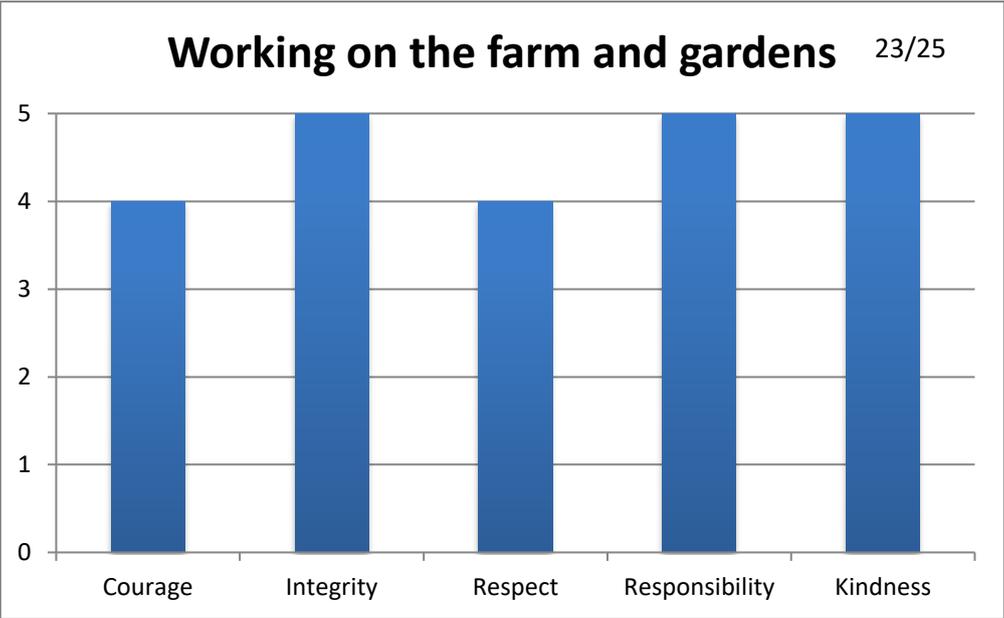
The ability to meet targets, water the plants, feed the pigs, dogs, lambs etc is a real target that must be done. Therefore responsibility is a value that is very much on the agenda.

Nurturing, requires that you show care for others, plants or animals. It requires you to be insightful. To know when the dog needs feeding and the plants look dry due to the hot weather. It requires you to get on without expectation in return or for reward.

Only after a sustained and competent contribution developed over time may a student be offered an incentive allowance (pay book) to reward and motivate and only for weekends and holiday time, never for school time. This also then gives us the opportunity to help that student learn to keep financial records and budget their own money.

Kindness is definitely on the agenda.





Horse riding and working on the yard.



Much of what has been said above in respect of farm work also applies to working on the yard. Feeding dogs and horses is very much what it's all about, along with mucking out which is part of bedding and shelter. Washing horses and seeing to their physical and veterinary needs whether routine or as a result of injury is part of everyday life.

In terms of horse riding, if you've never done this before, just getting on and off is a major effort and achievement. When skill set improves and with greater confidence you will be bounced around and be banged up

and down even on a good day. They will definitely be taken out of their comfort zone and be challenged in many ways. Let's be clear in terms of negative consequences if unsuccessful, falling off is never fun and can be painful if not dangerous. Therefore courage is most definitely on the agenda.

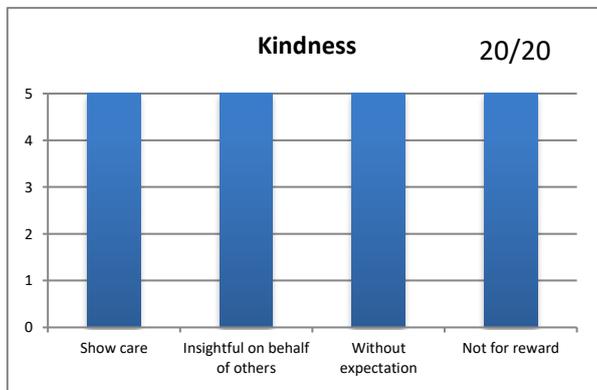
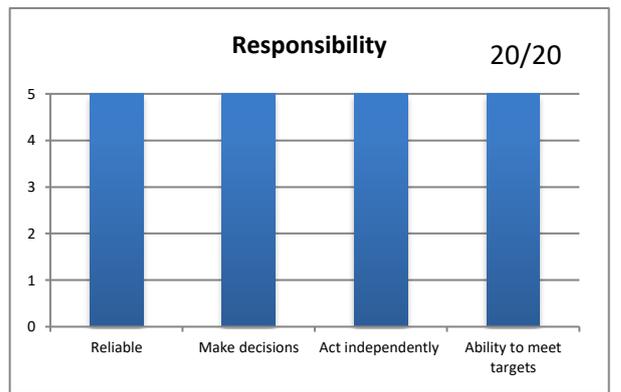
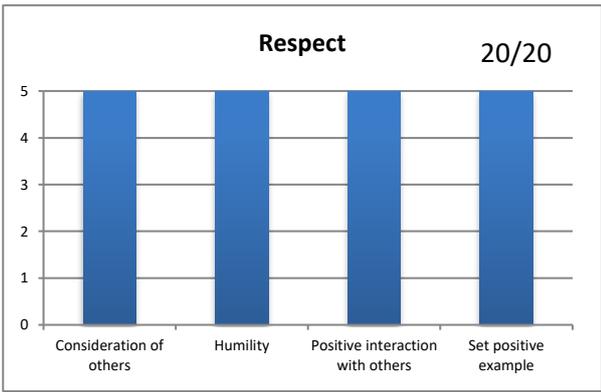
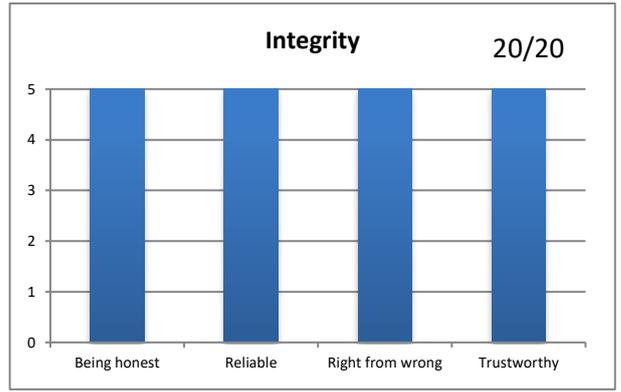
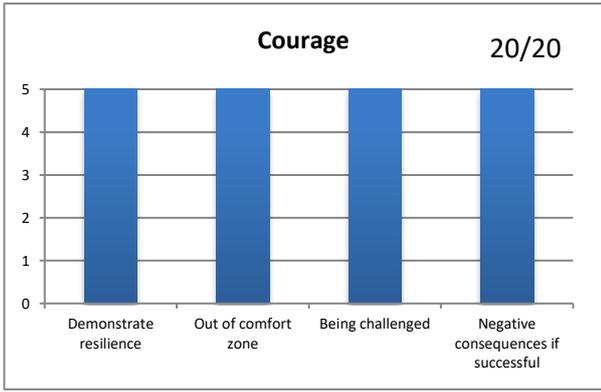
Integrity is hugely important for all of the reasons mentioned above for working on the farm.

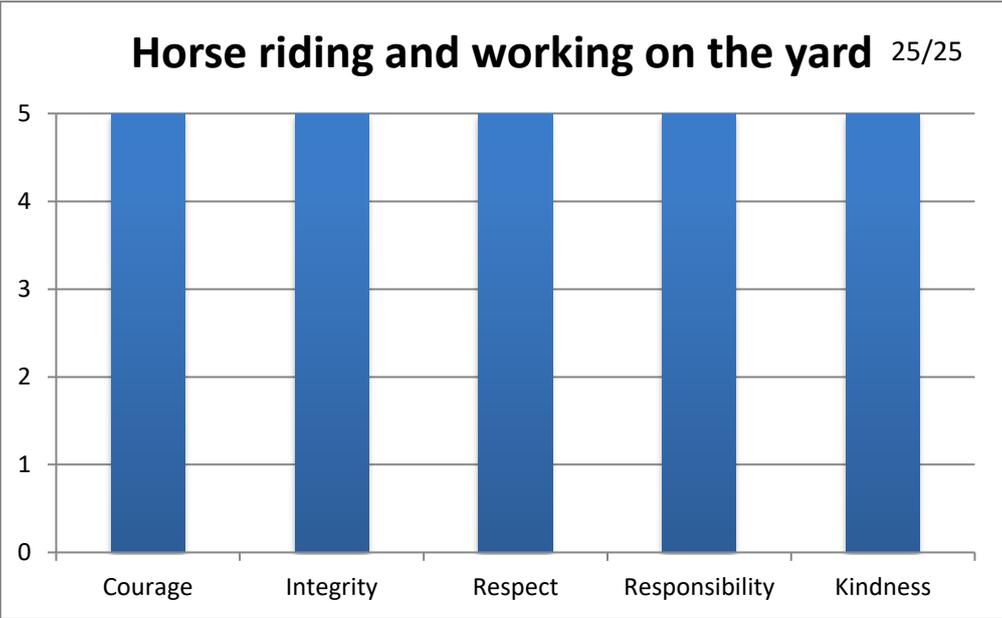
Respect is more significant due to humility and is required working with horses as unlike plants, sheep and even dogs they don't accept your mistakes, body gestures and attitudes are highly relevant to achieving the right outcome safely.



Responsibility is relevant again for all the reasons mentioned above as is kindness.

These are key elements and part of the daily agenda. These two activities sampled demonstrate so much in terms of why they are important to the day to day life of our organisation, whether it be school time or holidays. It demonstrates why there is a definite correlation between undertaking these activities and not undertaking them and duration of placement and standard of outcome. It quite simply gives us the opportunity to bombard our students with ways they can learn values and experience them in real life. Have them demonstrated by competent role models and live with them over a sustained period of time in a way which allows them to become embedded as a new normal.





So what about some of the other activities that are regularly found in mainstream residential care (with or without education). How do they measure up against our now identified framework.

Playing computer games, Xbox or PlayStation and visiting amusement arcades as we have considered in our previous document, they simply don't get off the ground. There is nothing to measure. I don't dispute they are good fun and there is some evidence that high level computer skill sets developed can be used in a variety of employment. However for children with abusive backgrounds or learning difficulties it does nothing to help their recovery or development. Slot machines and penny shove actually promote greed which is of course a vice.

Most computer games give the player a huge sense of control and often that sense of exaggerated reward I talked about in earlier documents. It is no surprise that for children who have been significantly disempowered having a sense of control is very important. So these aren't things to be avoided but recognised as to their limitations and if no balance is offered the dangers these present to damaged and impressionable minds.

As a farmer and landowner functioning within a rural community I was involved with an example which gives me much to think about as to its relevance here. September 2018 saw a young man who decided to ignore all boundaries and drive his car across numerous fields of newly sown corn, damaging crops before they've started to grow. With the unchallenged success of this his modus operandi changed to driving in fields with sheep to see how many he could knock over and kill, as if to score points.

Where does this kind of thinking come from? Well it doesn't take much to realise the connection to many computer games which are of course pure fantasy. The damage death and destruction in this case was very real.

The bridge between fantasy and reality is often fragile. As I experienced first hand one year when we took a group of children to Disney Land Paris. To mix real life and worthwhile education during this holiday I also took them to see Notre Dame Cathedral. One of our children was hysterical as the Hunchback was nowhere to be found.

Thankfully due to sensible gun laws we don't see the kind of school shootings far to regularly experienced in the USA which also mirror the fantasy world of computer games.

Balance, moderation and the avoidance of a preoccupation with violence are really important to remember. Within a therapeutic approach the need to bombard a child with alternative experiences which help them learn skills and values and importantly heal is very apparent.

Inappropriate use of the internet.

If we think about the use of the internet and the consequences for the children in our care in a digital world where there are no boundaries we can actually see how this quickly turns into a negative. Everyday news reports of people misusing social media or developing false identities online to steal and commit fraud are very evident. In these cases we can see our framework being used in a negative pattern as all the elements are relevant but the opposite has been evident. Whilst there are examples of the internet being used everyday in a positive life changing way (our own connect system is a good example) when it is used negatively there is a definite absence of integrity as being honest, reliable, knowing and doing right from wrong, being trustworthy are not present.

Likewise respect, showing consideration for others and humility, having positive interactions and setting a positive example are not evident but the opposite they have not! Responsibility and kindness are simply not on the agenda. Indeed what is so often evident against our corporate values are the opposite ends of the spectrum in these areas. Indeed these examples of the misuse of social media don't display courage; they are often cowardly and/or reckless. They do not show integrity but often hypocritical and deceitful, these are attributes needed to take on false identity and to mislead others. Self adornment isn't being respectful but it is excessive flattery. Images of self harm, neglectful of others needs to say the least. These aren't the actions of someone kind but someone deceitful to buy favours or use bribery. These are not the actions of responsibility but irresponsibility.

In the digital world of little if no boundaries, those who struggle to regulate their behaviour find it hard not to be absorbed by the negative attraction. Children, young people and adults who don't like boundaries, find the digital world open to abuse with very little chance of repercussions.

If we are to think about measuring negative behaviour what better tool than our values assessment. Here we can see that the behaviour I've described above fits very much into this format. A worthwhile exercise is to take a situation and consider it against this to see what behaviour is evident and where it fits on this system.

Deficit Vices		The Golden Mean Values						Excess Vices	
Hypocritical		Integrity						Deceitful	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Selfish		Kind						Buys favour/Bribery	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Cowardly		Courageous						Reckless	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Neglectful		Respectful						Excessive flattery	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Irresponsible		Responsible						Worries	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Sad		Happy						Gullible	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Negligent		Nurturing						Overindulging	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Passive		Assertive						Aggressive	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Dishonest		Honest						Inconsiderate	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Hateful		Friendly						Clingy, Needy	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Insensitive		Empathetic						Overly Sympathetic	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Impatient		Patient						Hesitant	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Critical		Grateful						Overly familiar	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Naïve		Trustworthy						Negligent	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	
Inconsistent		Consistent						Lack of creativity	
5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	

In the above assessment tool you can see that being well balanced in the middle is the ideal and a target to aspire to or achieve. What Aristotle called "The Golden Mean". At either side is the polar opposite of the value we are promoting and a judgment is required to determine where the child we are considering fits on to this scale. These elements of positive in the middle of two negative elements or vices is self explanatory and gives us much to consider if the value of values are lost they are filled by not a vacuum but the vice. Using and being aware of this kind of information and the use of the language of values is so important in terms of being able to articulate a strength or a weakness and by doing so we share a common language and understanding.

Conclusion

The above demonstrates the value of working with nature and nurturing. That means stables, farms and gardens are ideally placed to provide the opportunity for children and young people to learn values and have them reinforced as a regular part of everyday life. It is hoped that these values, once established, become relevant for all aspects of life and improve relationships with people. Indeed it is through these experiences that we hope children learn how to care for others, the art of nurturing and by doing so be able to nurture their own children in later life. This in itself is very much meeting our long term aims.

Whilst we benefit from a resource rich environment where these activities are on tap as it were, in a mainstream setting I hope this works demonstrates the importance of a small garden or green house along with school pets, small animals and perhaps even chickens. City farms are often available but also remember everywhere is eventually surrounded by farms and small farmers are ideally placed to help and often would love to if asked. Nurturing relationships with neighbours can be very advantageous.

In the same way, I hope this encourages professionals to value the significance of allowing horse riding lessons and I hope more importantly the added extra value of spending more time helping and working on stable yards. Stable yards, livery stables and riding schools can be found throughout the country and relationships should be encouraged.

What is also worth remembering is that both the agricultural and equine industries are short staffed and employment opportunities are very real. So as I demonstrated in my previous document, along with learning values (which are a prerequisite for most employers) they are also learning skills that could lead to future employment.

To draw this document to a close, whilst I acknowledge that this has resulted in an increased awareness of the value of the above, I must remind myself that the motivation behind this document was to identify the fact that the opportunity to learn values are embedded into many activities and it is possible to assess what activities promote which values. I must also reinforce the comments made earlier that should an activity promote one or more values, this is significant in itself and therefore the importance and significance of other activities must not be overlooked.

As an unapologetic, non academic, self educated person in my fifties who has just managed to join the dots together, I find it hard to believe this is new thinking. In fact it isn't, my most quoted advocate is Aristotle who has been quoted by others for centuries. Therefore, my obvious conclusion is why isn't the importance of teaching values in detail more prevalent in all schools? As populations grow and society evolves the need for everyone to treat each other with respect and dignity has never been more important.

One of the most rewarding experiences of my career was when I observed an older girl (who had had the most difficult of childhoods prior to living in our homes) saw that a younger child was getting into difficulties, moved up to her in a none threatening way and counselled her. In doing so it was clearly evident that the older girl was modelling the behaviour of the staff team who had looked after her. Undertaking the kind of activities mentioned above that promote the opportunity to experience values is such an advantage but the most important lesson comes from role model leaders who may demonstrate these values in every day living situations consistently over a long period of time.



This leaves me to end by repeating Aristotle's fine words, "If we can focus on being good people, the right actions will follow, effortlessly".