

ARETE



# The Arete Programme

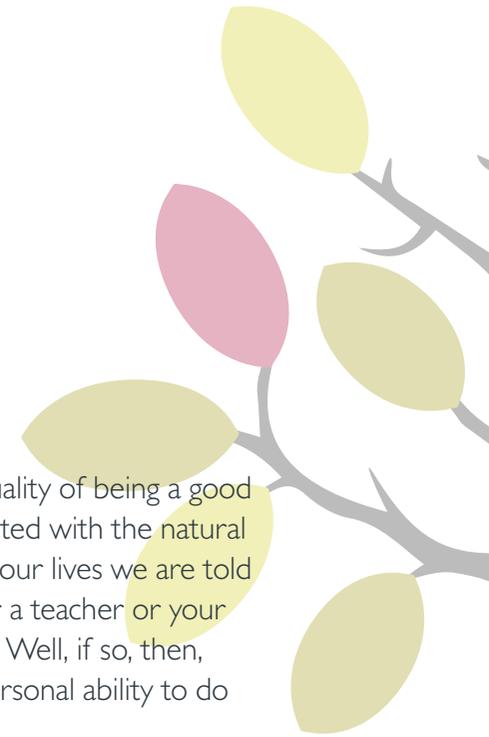
We often hear about personal flourishing and striving for excellence but what exactly is flourishing and how do we know what excellence really is so that we can strive for it? We all want to achieve our best at school and from an early age have been doing tests, assessments and exams, but is this the way to measure our personal flourishing? Eudaimonia is a Greek word that is usually translated as 'human flourishing' and striving for excellence is a way to achieve personal flourishing. The Arete Programme at The Laurels aims at helping you achieve eudaimonia through arete: happiness through excellence.



## But What is Arete?

In the broadest sense it means 'goodness' – the quality of being a good human being, in Greek culture it was often associated with the natural advantages of birth and wealth. At some point in our lives we are told "You're really good at that..." it may be a friend or a teacher or your parents, you might have experienced that already. Well, if so, then, someone has noticed your personal *arete*, your personal ability to do something really well.

However, the Greeks knew that our talents or the circumstances in which we find ourselves were not enough to achieve happiness, rather what we do with what we are given is important. That is where the virtues come in; these are character strengths that we can develop throughout our lives.





## Can I Strive for Personal Arete?

Yes, the Greeks understood *arete* as the excellence of a particular thing; it was used mainly in the context of the specific excellence of a person. Aristotle thought that the specific excellence of a person was their reason, so happiness, which is the goal of life, to which all people aim, is activity in accordance with reason. Aristotle was saying that in order to be happy we had to know how to be happy and then act accordingly. So you can strive for *arete* by thinking about your actions. Aristotle considered that for human beings, *eudaimonia* was activity in accordance with *arete*; activity involving both moral and intellectual *arete*.

This is not only for you. The Arete Programme will help in your personal flourishing and in your social relationships. So it has a personal and a civic aspect. It will help you to bring different parts of your learning and life together to help you be the best you can be.



## The Arete Programme Tree

At the heart of our school shield is the laurel wreath. In the Greco-Roman world the laurel wreath was given to winners of Olympic Games, and worn as a sign of excellence. You could say that just as a tree begins life as a small seed so we too start off learning to walk and talk and then grow and develop in our family, school and community. The Arete Programme is like the laurel tree; it has a main trunk with branches.

The trunk of the programme is the tutorial. You will be given a personal tutor to guide you as you grow in excellence. Your tutor will help you to get to know yourself and to see how, through practice, you can achieve good character strengths. With your tutor you will be able to chart your own path of flourishing and discover what your personal excellence is. Your tutor will also be there for you when you realise that striving for excellence can be a hard path and she will be able to encourage you on the way. Excellence is not achieved overnight so your tutor will help you to persevere in your quest for personal excellence.



## The Academic Branch

The Academic branch looks at developing excellence in your thinking so that you become intellectually virtuous with a real desire to know the truth and the ability to justify what you know and believe. Your teachers will show you what intellectual excellence is in their different subjects and will help you to develop intellectual virtues in order for you to be able to think well. This is far more important than just knowing what you need to pass an exam, and will inspire in you a love of learning that goes far beyond your school or university days. So what are intellectual virtues? They are good habits of the mind, enabling it to be a more proficient instrument of knowledge. They make you more effective in the use of what you know and, to that extent, contribute to the practice of moral virtue. Aristotle stated that there were five intellectual virtues: intelligence (*nous*), science (*episteme*), wisdom (*sophia*), art (*techne*) and prudence (*phronesis*), but nowadays we would also include the following: the virtue of knowledge, the virtue of understanding, the virtue of curiosity and the virtue of practical skill. In the Academic Branch you will learn one of the hardest things in life... the ability to think well!



## The Character Education Branch

You will also have lessons in Character Education so that you can know and see what excellence is, remember Aristotle. These lessons help you to gain an understanding of your emotions and how you can learn to master them instead of them mastering you. You will gain an understanding of what a virtue is, which are the cardinal virtues and how they underpin all the rest. You will begin to see the importance of creating good habits which are the bedrock of a person of good character. You will learn that becoming a virtuous person is to be a person who is in harmony with themselves and others. You will realise that to strive for character excellence is actually half of the battle won. You will explore virtues such as prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, order, diligence, friendship, and many more. It will be an exciting personal journey for you as you realise that knowing the good, loving the good and doing the good is part of arete. You will also discover in this branch that the gift of self is integral to personal flourishing.



## The Philosophy Branch

From Year 7 you will be able to take part in philosophical enquiries – learn like you have never learned before. You will be taken on a journey that not only helps you to think well, but to think about your own thinking. You will become part of an exciting endeavour that started centuries ago and is happening now. Discover ways of understanding yourself and the world around you and contribute to the philosophical conversation. You will soon be hooked on philosophy and experience a certain euphoria when the philosophical penny drops! As you progress through the school you will look at some of the main branches of philosophy and learn about the history of philosophy too. You will soon see that philosophy helps you in all your subjects and with the guidance of your teachers discover philosophical notions in Mathematics, Science, English, Art, Music... you've guessed and all your other subjects!



## The Enrichment Branch

This branch brings together talks by distinguished speakers who through personal endeavour and reflection are striving to achieve personal excellence and visits both local, national and international to lectures, workshops, museums and galleries to help you see arete in action. You will be able to grow in civic excellence by supporting and running projects in the wider community and make links with international charities. You will also be encouraged to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards as a way of challenging yourself to be braver, more resourceful and to take the initiative.

## Conclusion

At The Laurels you will be encouraged not only to strive for the wreath of exam success, but also the wreath of personal success in all that you do.

The words of St Paul to the Corinthians reflect our school's aspirations for you: we wish for you an enduring excellence, a lasting happiness which comes from wishing to do everything well because it is the right thing to do, because it is what people are made for: when we become fully human and we fulfil our destiny.

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we, an imperishable one."

*1 Corinthians 9:24-25*



## The Arete Prize

The Arete Prize will be awarded to those pupils who have shown real excellence in the pursuit of their studies and in their personal flourishing. This will be demonstrated by a consistently high standard of work, commitment to your learning shown in excellent homework and you will have grown in your personal flourishing in an exemplary way.



**THE LAURELS**  
SCHOOL