



09/07/26

Dear Annie and Nikki,

It is with great privilege that the Association for Character Education awards The Marlborough Science Academy the *School of Character Quality Mark Plus*. We would like to extend our warmest congratulations and formally recognise the significant dedication and commitment that you, your staff, and your pupils have demonstrated in meeting the high standards of character education that this award represents.

Please find your Quality Mark Plus report below:

Strengths

- Character is not an add-on at the school; it is deeply embedded in every aspect of school life. Leaders, staff and pupils consistently describe character as central to the school's identity, ethos and daily practice. It is evident in relationships, rewards, behaviour conversations, assemblies, tutor time, enrichment opportunities and community engagement. Character is not viewed as a separate initiative but as a lens through which decisions are made and experiences are shaped.
- The Headteacher and senior leaders articulate a compelling moral purpose. Their vision extends beyond academic achievement, with a clear commitment to developing good people as well as successful learners. This work is rooted in a strong sense of responsibility to prepare young people for life beyond school. The school has demonstrated notable courage and conviction by positioning character development as equally important as, and at times more important than, academic outcomes.
- Staff are fully invested in the school's character-led approach and speak with genuine passion and consistency about its impact. They were able to explain how character influences all aspects of their work, including classroom practice, pastoral support, staff induction, open evenings, faculty discussions and restorative approaches. New staff appear to assimilate quickly into the character-rich culture, and many described character development as being as important as, or more important than, academic success.

- Pupils spoke highly of the school's values and provided authentic examples of character in action, including supporting others, volunteering, showing kindness at home, encouraging peers and participating in enrichment opportunities. They clearly recognise that the school places equal value on character development and academic achievement.
- Displays, routines, relationships, staff role-modelling, rewards systems and restorative conversations ensure that pupils experience and reflect upon character every day. The learning walk revealed a vibrant and purposeful character-rich environment, and pupils spoke with pride about their school. They were excellent ambassadors. The striking mural created by pupils this year was particularly impressive, providing a thoughtful and creative interpretation of the school's values through art and serving as a powerful visual representation of the school's culture.
- The school's approach of inviting parents to share examples of 'character caught at home' is a particularly strong feature. It extends the reach of the school's character work beyond the school gates and encourages families to recognise, celebrate and reinforce the values being developed. Pupils were especially proud to share the character awards they had earned during the academic year.
- Pupils described a wide range of opportunities available to them, including Sixth Form enrichment, volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh, sport, work experience, educational visits, student leadership and careers preparation. These experiences provide meaningful opportunities to practise, apply and strengthen character virtues beyond the classroom. Pupils clearly value and appreciate these opportunities.
- There is strong evidence of explicit character education through assemblies, tutor time, weekly values resources, moral dilemma discussions, drop-down days and curriculum delivery. The learning walk highlighted effective examples of virtues being explored and developed through subjects such as English, Art and Classics, demonstrating that character is intentionally woven throughout the curriculum.
- The school has a wealth of highly effective practice that would be valuable to share with others. The Community Hub and M Store, the strength of the values-led culture, and the personal touches such as positive parent panels - featuring written staff comments linked to character values - and handwritten Year 13 reports are particularly noteworthy. These approaches exemplify how character can be brought to life in meaningful ways and could provide inspiration for other schools seeking to strengthen their own character provision.

Areas to be reviewed:

As discussed during the feedback meeting, we would welcome the opportunity to return in 12 months' time to review the school's ongoing character development journey. With an imminent change in leadership, this will provide an important opportunity to evaluate how successfully the school's strong character culture and values-driven ethos have been sustained and further strengthened. Given the central role that character plays in the identity of the school, we are keen to see that it remains at the heart of strategic decision-making, school improvement and the daily experiences of pupils and staff.

- To ensure the long-term sustainability and continued development of your outstanding character provision, you should develop a concise strategic character improvement plan. While character is clearly embedded throughout the school, a formal plan would provide greater clarity around priorities, responsibilities, implementation and impact evaluation. The plan should contain measurable milestones and review points, ensuring that character education remains a visible and integral component of school improvement planning. Particular attention should be given to evidencing how the recent leadership transition has maintained and strengthened the school's character vision, with possible impact measures linked to areas such as attendance, behaviour, belonging, enrichment participation, pupil voice and parental engagement.
- Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the school's values and consistently model positive character traits. The next stage of development is to deepen staff expertise as reflective and confident character educators through a structured programme of professional development. A planned CPD offer should develop understanding of the research, theory and pedagogy underpinning character education, ensuring that both teaching and support staff can articulate and apply these principles effectively within lessons, pastoral interactions, enrichment activities and restorative conversations. Opportunities for staff to reflect on their own character development and role-modelling should also be embedded within induction, coaching and appraisal processes. This would build upon recommendations from the previous review and further strengthen the consistency and depth of character practice across the school.
- The school should now place greater emphasis on developing pupils' and staff's understanding of phronesis (practical wisdom), the golden mean and the complexities of moral decision-making. Whilst pupils and staff speak confidently about the school's values,

understanding of how virtues can sometimes conflict, and how practical wisdom helps individuals make the right decision at the right time for the right reason, is less well developed. The school should therefore strengthen opportunities for pupils to explore moral dilemmas through assemblies, tutor time, PSHE, enrichment and curriculum subjects. Staff should also be encouraged to use the language of practical wisdom within behaviour reflection and restorative conversations. This would enable pupils not only to identify virtues but also to reflect more deeply on how character is developed through leadership, volunteering, enrichment and wider life experiences, helping them understand how these opportunities shape the people they become.

We wish you all the very best as you continue your inspiring work to enable your pupils, staff, and wider school community to flourish through the development of good character.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Clyne', with a small dot at the end.

Chris Clyne (Chair of Trustees of ACE & Quality Mark Lead Assessor)