



**Ms Annie Thomson**  
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**Association for Character Education Quality Mark (March 2023)**

Dear Annie,

Following an evaluative visit to The Marlborough Science Academy on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 by Mr Gary Lewis, Chair of the Association for Character Education, and Camilla Wellman, Character Lead at The Kings High School, Warwick, the Association can confirm that your school has met the standards required to be awarded the ***“Character Education Quality Mark”***.

Congratulations to you, your students, staff and governors as this award clearly recognises the quality of learning and values-driven personal development programme enjoyed by all members of your school community. Led and driven by the Headteacher, the school has had a focus on values and personal development for many years, but the progress the school has made in the evolution and development of its Character Programme over the past 2 years is now gaining pace. All stakeholders, including students, have been consulted on the school’s clear focus on a bedrock of 5 values and these are widely understood and lived throughout the community. This is a school which has clearly focused on the development of the whole child for many years and it is now evident that the character programme which has been evolved over recent months is ensuring that the core values underpin all aspects of the school’s work, including academic expectation and “virtuous behaviour”. Extensive consultation with staff, students and governors has created a school community where all stakeholders understand the collective values which form the core foundation of the school’s moral purpose and strategic direction. In particular, the awarding body wishes to commend you on the following: -

- The leadership provided by the Headteacher and Character Lead, Naomi Walker has been instrumental in raising standards around many aspects of character education. This drive is ably supported by other leaders across the school and it is apparent that there is a clear corporate understanding of the “character” direction the school is taking. Teachers have an evolving understanding of the character culture of the

school and new colleagues are quickly able to adapt to the expectations of the positive culture prevalent in the school community. There is a very well thought out short and medium term “character plan” which provides an excellent framework for ensuring character building blocks are carefully linked together to create a 360 degree experience for students and teachers alike.

- The school has been careful to ensure that other senior and middle leaders responsible for areas such as mental well-being, student leadership and oracy are fully involved in working together as a team to plan character experiences and to create character resources. This is strong feature of the character programme. The assessors were impressed with the determination of the school to ensure that students had a wide exposure to character building opportunities both within and outside of the curriculum. The thoughtfully planned and evolving Character Tutor Programme delivered during registration periods, has been designed to dovetail with well-organised assemblies so that students are immersed in high quality character activities that both reinforce and build upon each other. Students spoke very confidently about their experiences in these sessions and how they were subsequently able to relate “taught character material” to a range of situations and activities in everyday life. Younger students expressed enthusiasm for the character rewards opportunities readily available and it is clear that students understand the importance of developing their own character alongside realising high academic attainment.
- Discussions with staff confirmed their enthusiasm for and commitment to the character programme. Members of staff with recent experience in other schools openly discussed the 360 degree approach taken by this school and its successful impact in creating a values rich provision which is evidently starting to impact both curriculum and pastoral experiences. There is a culture of trust and support at the school which encourages staff to take risks in the clear knowledge that they will receive both training and direction whenever needed. Teachers clearly respect and understand the values led direction of the Headteacher and senior team and they trust the support and help they receive.
- The language of character is evolving rapidly and this is supported by the school’s extensive communication with parents through very comprehensive and regular newsletters. The school actively encourages personal reflection on a regular basis and regularly seeks honest feedback from students.
- Both assessors were significantly impressed with the maturity and competence of the students they interviewed. Students were able to articulate with confidence and enthusiasm regarding the positive impact the character programme was having on their lives now and in the future. The level of maturity and obvious personal reflection exhibited by students of all ages was impressive and reflected positively on their sense of pride in their school and its wider community. They understood that character development and academic achievement were of equal value and their

understanding of the concept of applying “phoresis” in order to make the right decisions in a range of challenging situations was clearly evolving.

- Character training for staff has been an evolving objective in recent months and staff are feeling ever more confident and competent in their delivery of a wide range of character materials. Carefully planned assemblies that are professionally prepared and presented, provide a positive platform for further character links in morning tutorial sessions. Similarly, this value led approach is having a very positive impact on the rewards system and attitudes to learning and general behaviour. Teachers universally adopt a “positive” approach in their interactions with students and this is enabling students to enjoy formative exposure to positive character role models. All of these “character jigsaw pieces” are designed to reinforce each other and provide students with an opportunity to see virtues in action in a wide range of situations.
- The assessors were delighted that both behaviour management policies and reward structures were directly informed by the school’s character programme and virtues focus. Both students and teachers valued the reviewed reward system and its focus on positive reinforcement and its consistent application must be considered a real success. Relationships across the school are relaxed, respectful and always professional. This provides students with a sense of security and support which directly links to their individual flourishing.

The assessors were delighted to visit a school which has a clear plan and an obvious commitment to ensure that character development in its widest sense is at the core of the school’s activities. Teacher confidence and competence is growing in equal measure and the commitment from senior leaders and well-informed governors will undoubtedly ensure the school’s continued progress and success.

However, the school is still at a relatively early phase in its overall “character journey” and the assessors would suggest the following points for consideration over the coming months to ensure further character growth and progress towards Quality Mark Plus standards.

Suggestions for further progress include: -

- Extend the evolving tutor programme to ensure that aspects of character are carefully threaded through **all** subject areas. Character provision can be seen as a cumulative collection of “jigsaw pieces” and real impact results when these pieces are threaded together to create a programme which impacts on both personal and academic development in equal measure.
- The evolution of “teacher character” as reflected in both their professional and personal growth is of crucial importance. The school has an obvious commitment to staff training and the senior leadership should take opportunities to refine and extend the staff’s understanding and experience of all aspects of character provision. The creation of “staff character champions” as part of a wider team of teaching colleagues committed to character across all subject and pastoral areas is likely to be

a positive step in ensuring a critical mass of staff understanding and commitment to character education and its wider impact. Values such as respect and resilience need breaking down into their contributing “virtue skill set”. Such an approach enables teachers to evolve character materials and lesson plans in exactly the same manner they would scaffold normal subject material.

- Schools who make substantial use of the inevitable talent pool they have available within their own staff body make rapid progress in ensuring that character provision has an obvious impact on standards at all levels. Training and development opportunities which ensure that staff understand the importance of developing both moral and performance virtues in equal measure is an absolute necessity. Consequently, the assessors would urge leaders at the school to extend their collaborative working with other schools of character via shared visits and linked working.
- Continue to work with students on their character aspiration and personal confidence so that they have the ability to challenge other students who may have only limited understanding of “good character”. They should understand that the definition of good character is having the ability, wisdom and common sense to make the right decisions for both their personal flourishing and the flourishing of the wider school community.
- It would fit the training aims of the school if the Jubilee Centre CPD programme is included as part of the staff induction process
- In relation to the development of BYOD/Digital technology – material produced by Professor Tom Harrison at the Jubilee Centre will help ensure that the school’s digital literacy programme develops character as the foundation for helping their students to thrive in their online interactions.

Regards



Mr Gary Lewis

Ms Camilla Wellman

(on behalf of the Association for Character Education)

16<sup>th</sup> April 2023