



Kitemark Assessment Report

20/06/2022

Dear Pete

Following an evaluative assessment of your school's character education provision on the 13th May 2022, the Association for Character Education can confirm that your school has met the exacting standards required to be awarded the ***"School of Character Kitemark Plus Award"***. Please pass on our congratulations to colleagues in your school who have all contributed enormously to this outstanding achievement. Similarly, our sincere congratulations are extended to you, your students and governors, as this award clearly recognises the high quality of learning, mutually respectful relationships and values-driven personal development programme which are prevalent in your school's provision.

The Kitemark Plus award recognises character education programmes which are fully embedded and have developed over time. Phoenix Primary School's Values based Education (VbE) provision has evolved and been fully integrated through a whole-school approach. As a result, character is effectively taught, caught and sought. Dedicated and visionary leadership, over a sustained 6-year period, has placed character and values at the heart of its approach to achieve transformational whole-school improvement. This has resulted in the creation of a values-driven culture where positive relationships can flourish, and pupil behaviour is virtue-led and not sanctions driven. The significant reduction in exclusions being just one metric that can be attributed to this planned and intentional change in culture.

There is no blueprint for how to deliver character education as it should serve and respond to local context. Assessors found this to be case at Phoenix Primary school which undertook extensive stakeholder engagement in identifying its values. Pupil Voice is also strong with student VbE surveys undertaken. Having 24 values, one of which is explored in detail each term through the school-life of the pupil, is a unique approach but one that allows pupils to develop a broad vocabulary and literacy in the language of character. Assessors found that staff, leaders and governors have an in-depth understanding of the challenges that some of its pupils' families face, which has informed its approach to character development. An explicit focus on VbE has provided the school with a philosophy that

has informed CPD, allowing staff to be confident and competent moral educators, as well as teachers of the curriculum. The assessment demonstrated that there is a critical mass of support for this approach to education. All staff were enthusiastic and had 'bought into' a vision for a broader education that goes beyond attainment and encompasses the development of the whole-child. Inclusion provision that is shaped by the language of character and values is prominent and central within the school. Consideration has also been given to the development of cultural capital in order to further levels of social mobility through the careful planning of school trips.

The extent to which values has been woven into the core curriculum, in a way which is both sequenced and scaffolded, is impressive. Assessors were able to witness how the termly value was being explored in lessons across Early Years and Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils within Reception used the language of character when articulating the purpose of the lesson during the assessment, as they discussed the value of Unity. Teachers also provided examples of how moral and ethical dilemmas are used as vehicles to explore the subject curriculum, through the lens of character. Assessors found a deliberate and coordinated approach to exploring the termly value throughout assemblies and curriculum, providing the opportunity for values to be reinforced throughout the school day. Outstanding practice was demonstrated by some teachers, who discussed up and coming curriculum topics with students, to allow pupils the opportunity to identify how and where values could be explored. Empowering pupils to be active agents in the design of their own character education in this way is to be applauded.

Phoenix Primary School has gone beyond solely teaching pupils about good character, but also allows character to be 'caught,' so students actively develop their character through emotional contagion. The school's behaviour policy is exemplary in its focus on *role modelling, developing positive relationships* and ensuring a shared *values-based language* which underpin all interactions in relation to behaviour and attitudes. Staff shared how the school community has been trained and supported in adopting a common values-based language to ensure consistency. Rewards and awards are a significant part of school life, and have been embedded firmly into school routines. These rewards act as a positive and preventative measure to enable virtuous behaviour, reducing the need for a more punitive approach. Communal spaces and classrooms are consistently utilised to showcase rewards and the school's values, with vibrant and engaging pieces of art work. Having the physical environment display values in this way significantly contributes to school enabling character 'caught,' with pupils being able to absorb the language of values without conscious effort.

Extra-curricular based activities are explicitly linked to the school's values. Pupils as young as Early Years were able to articulate the values that they would need to demonstrate during their enrichment provision. Providing such opportunities will help instil habits for children to, 'seek out' activities which

develop and shape their character, as they progress through life. Parent engagement in relation to VbE provision was found to be very strong, with some exceptional practice. Activities such as allowing parents to nominate staff for values-based awards and inviting them to an annual Values Day, helps extend the school's approach to VbE beyond the school gates and into the homes of the pupils. The recent changes to the approach and structure of pupil reports will further contribute to expanding the shared values-based language to parents. Writing a letter directly to pupils which first and foremost highlights their character strengths, before sharing their attainment scores, is unique practice in enabling a child-centred approach to reporting on progress and personal development.

As Phoenix Primary School continues on its journey to develop character and deliver a VbE, ACE recommends;

- Continue to evolve the school's character-based CPD in order to deepen staff's understanding of some of the theory and pedagogy that underpins character education, including Virtue Ethics and the development of phronesis as the purpose of good character.
- Expand the school's use of cultural capital as a means to develop character and enable social mobility. Explore opportunities to embed cultural capital within the school day, as well as through trips.
- Introduce a more formal and standardised framework for supporting staff to reflect and develop their own character to help further their virtuous role modelling potential. Values-based 360 feedback and appraisals are potential vehicles for this.

Yours Sincerely

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The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'T Haigh' and the second is 'M. Wright'. They are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Haigh, ACE, CEO and Matthew Wright, ACE Kitemark Assessor