



School of CHARACTER

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School has been successful in our application for the Kitemark Award from ACE (Association for Character Education). This award clearly shows that as a school we focus on developing well-rounded individuals. Here are a few quotes from the assessors:

“... 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. Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School is clearly a school with strong leadership which is dedicated to its pupils, its staff, and advancing on its journey of becoming an exceptional school of character.”

“... the Wiseman Virtues are about developing a strong inner moral framework which can enable students to make wise choices in order to flourish and become a ‘good person.’”

“Assessors found equality, inclusivity, the promotion of authenticity and a strong sense of community as constant emerging themes when speaking with staff and students.”

It is wonderful to see such recognition for the fabulous work by everyone in our school community.

Below you will find more information including some of the ways in which we develop character, the full report from ACE and a statement from Mr. Swanwick.

Ways in which we develop character at CW

As a Catholic school, we strongly value the development of the whole child. It was pleasing to note that in a recent Mental Health and Wellbeing podcast, one of our Year 9 pupils clearly stated that Cardinal Wiseman *“is not an exam factory.”*

We know that good examination results are important for future success. However, we strive to provide a fully rounded education where our children become great citizens who are prepared effectively in life in modern Britain. With that in mind, the Wiseman Virtues are at the heart of our school. We reflect upon and use these virtues across the school in many ways such as our merit system, rewards events, assemblies, prayer etc.



Transformation Curriculum – this initiative, which started in Sept 2019, allows every child to experience a range of activities beyond the normal curriculum. This bespoke curriculum enables us to:

- Develop pupils’ character - including their confidence, independence and resilience
- Broaden our pupils’ horizons with new opportunities and enriching experiences
- Prepare pupils to be active citizens who contribute positively to society

RRSA (Rights Respecting School Award) – we have already achieved the silver award and are currently working towards the silver award. As part of this award, we deliver sessions every fortnight. The *Unicef UK Rights Respecting Schools Award* supports schools across the UK to embed children’s human rights in their ethos and culture. The Award recognises achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school’s practice to improve wellbeing and help all children and young people realise their potential.

Personal Reflection – at key points throughout the year, all pupils spend a dedicated period of time reflecting upon many aspects of their lives such as:

- ✓ Aspirational targets for the year
- ✓ Merits and behaviour logs (linked to our Wiseman Virtues) in comparison to school average
- ✓ Charity log
- ✓ Commitment to extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities
- ✓ Mental wellbeing and social media wellbeing

Self-reflection is a powerful tool for pupils to consider their successes and how they can improve in the future.

Annual Speech Giving Day - towards the end of the academic year, all pupils are required to plan, prepare and deliver a speech to their peers. Speeches are based around how they have lived out the Wiseman Virtues and links directly to their Personal Reflection document. All speeches are graded by their tutors as Bronze, Silver and Gold.

ME in PE - in the P.E Department, our intent is to develop Physical **Literacy** through the development of **knowledge**, **physical competences** and **character**, giving the pupils improved life chances through a healthier and more active lifestyle.

Character is a key concept in our P.E Curriculum. We have described Character in our curriculum plan as the sum of an individual's qualities and characteristics that differentiate him/her from others. An individual's character is actually an amalgamation of his/her qualities that makes him/her unique and helps him/her stand apart from the rest. Our subject provides many personal challenges for all pupils in our community that are vital for a strong education. In order to succeed both in school and after leaving, resilience and social skills are key. P.E offers the opportunity for all to develop their character that can then lead to success in the workplace and in pupils becoming good citizens in the local community. Life is a combination of personal wins and losses. P.E serves to help pupils strive for success but also to have the character to cope with challenge and loss. Below is a summary of the character sub concepts pertinent to ME in PE.

Character Development				
Communication Methods	Teamwork	Competition	Leadership	Resilience
<i>Communication is a holistic factor in PE that is versatile life skill. The importance of verbal, non-verbal, and physical communication is central in progression in Physical education.</i>	<i>Teamwork as a sub-concept within the social development of the pupils. It is a concept that encompasses the development of a pupil from skill acquisition to competent knowledgeable leader.</i>	<i>Competition is a key strand of the Physical Education Curriculum, it is the way in students display their skills against other opponents in a way to win or lose.</i> <i>Firstly, to enjoy competing children need to have developed physical literacy at an early age, equipping them with the skills and self-confidence to compete.</i>	<i>Leadership is a fundamental concept within social development and it encases the whole pupil allowing them to broaden their communication and analysis skills on others and their own work.</i>	<i>Resilience is the ability to recover from a negative experience and turn it into a positive experience. Resilience is important for sportspeople in order to continually develop both in athletic skill and in character.</i>

Overleaf is a copy of the letter from ACE (the Association for Character Education) regarding their inspection visit of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School in June 2021.

This is followed by a statement from Mr Swanwick – Headteacher

16/06/2021

Dear Robert,

Following an evaluative assessment of your school's character education provision on the 26th May 2021, the Association for Character Education can confirm that your school has met the exacting standards required to be awarded the **"School of Character Kitemark Award"**.

Please pass on our congratulations to colleagues in your school and particularly Anthony Beckett, 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. Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School is clearly a school with strong leadership which is dedicated to its pupils, its staff, and advancing on its journey of becoming an exceptional school of character.

All schools of character need a set of values to orientate and guide their character provision. These values often shape a framework unique to that school to facilitate the delivery of character education that is 'taught,' 'caught,' and sought.' Cardinal Wiseman does this through the Wiseman Virtues. Through ambitious and determined leadership the school has moulded and shaped these virtues to become front and centre of school life. The assessment found that this central pillar to the school's character programme is well rounded with an impressive level of nuance (found in the descriptors). Whereas some character programmes can lean heavily towards performance-based virtues, the Wiseman Virtues are about developing a strong inner moral framework which can enable students to make wise choices in order to flourish and become a 'good person.' This was reiterated by students who discussed, *'the importance of good character is the ability to make right decisions in life.'* The powerful and extensive character displays that adorn a significant proportion of communal space across the school, provide a strong message that virtue is central to the school's ethos. This impressive investment in the school environment to promote a language and understanding of character helps reinforce that character is imperative to school life.

Schools of Character will often experience improvements in a number of areas of school life which are driven by the school's ethos and culture. This includes behaviour, staff turnover, attainment and staff & pupil wellbeing. This was definitely the case for Cardinal Wiseman, where there is strong faith in the leadership that if a school's culture is defined by trust, respect and compassion then the rest will follow. The assessment found this to be the case. Assessors found *equality, inclusivity, the promotion of authenticity* and a strong sense of *community* as constant emerging themes when speaking with staff and students. This *'special culture,'* was identified as the reason many teachers had not wanted to move on, and has no doubt played a significant role in the increase of students as part of their annual intake. This culture has been deliberately and intentionally cultivated through a strong vision and belief in what the school can be, despite being in challenging circumstances a relatively short time ago.

The school has developed strong stand-alone character-based curriculum and activities. The *Transformation Programme* demonstrates the Cardinal Wiseman's strong commitment to developing *student leadership, civic mindedness* and *cultural capital*. There was a clear acknowledgment from the school's leadership that such initiatives are a critical factor in enabling greater levels of social mobility when serving students from communities that experience higher levels of disadvantage. The *Transformation Programme* is a strong example of how character is 'sought,' within the school and will be an important vehicle in enabling students to not just learn about the virtues, but have opportunities to develop them outside the classroom. This is also a strong priority for the Board of Governors who recognise the importance of this approach and the need to connect pupils with a sense of civic duty and personal responsibility. This connected well with the school's strong focus on developing positive attitudes to learning through the *Culture for Learning Programme*. The assessment found that pupils demonstrated a strong personal sense of responsibility to engagement with their learning. This was facilitated through tools such as the *Achievement Card* which is jointly completed by staff and students, helping foster a strong sense of ownership and the adoption of healthy habits conducive to learning. Taking ownership in developing their character more broadly is aided through

the development of high quality resources to facilitate reflection. Finally, the school's focus on rewards is clearly linked to the school's virtues through the merit system and dedicated space is given to celebrate virtuous behaviour at high profile award events. Students expressed the strong incentive that this system provided to demonstrate behaviours reflective of good character. The communication generated to parents when a student receives a merit and the inclusion of parents in award ceremonies is a strong foundation to continue to build parental engagement with the school's character programme.

As the school moves forward on the development of its character programme there are a number of areas for reflection;

- **Integrating character further into the core curriculum.** The evidence-base and conversations with teachers demonstrated that character had been innovatively integrated into Physical Education. The next step is to capacity-build and enable other subject leads to further integrate character and virtue more explicitly into their subject area.
- **Behaviour and attitudes** were extremely good and students felt motivated by the school's strong incentive system. There is now the opportunity to develop a complimentary narrative that true virtuous behaviour is about doing the, 'right thing for the right reason,' and, 'good character is about how you behave when no one is looking.'
- **Furthering the school's Character Education CPD training.** Solidifying staff's understanding of the philosophical underpinnings around character, virtue and flourishing will be an essential starting point in empowering them to take more autonomy in leading on elements of the school's character programme, such as integrating it more into their subject area. This will also help broaden out ownership and responsibility for the continued roll out of the school's character programme. As staffs' confidence and understanding around character increases it will also further build on the school's strong approach of using 1-1 dialogue with students to reflect on behaviours and attitudes from a virtuous perspective.
- **Engaging with Parents and Carers to support the development of character in the home.** This can be one of the more challenging strands of a school's character programme, especially if there isn't a strong culture of parental engagement in school life, but can be transformative when the right approach is initiated. The strong engagement of parents through the school's reward system will provide a solid foundation to build on.
- **Develop a recruitment and selection process which explicitly has the virtues integrated within them** so new staff can be more consciously and intentionally hired based on their ability to role model the school's virtues, as well as their ability to teach their subject area. The use of moral dilemma's devised around the Cardinal Virtues could be one tool used to understand a candidate's virtue and level of prudence-practical wisdom- to make the right decision at the right time, in the right way. Do they just look to follow the rule book or also draw on their internal values when responding challenging situations?
- **Further integrating the Cardinal Virtues into appraisal systems** and developing a space where staff can reflect on their own character and virtue. 360 degree feedback can be a powerful tool in this process when done well.
- **Developing some form of metrics system** that allows the school (and possibly students) to know the extent to which they are developing their character will enable students and staff at all levels to understand the impact that the school's character education is having.

Congratulations once again on achieving the School of Character Kitemark award. We wish you all the best on your ongoing journey of developing character within students at the Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, so they can personally flourish and contribute as active and conscientious citizens.

Kind Regards



Tom Haigh
CEO, Association for Character Education

Below is a statement from Mr Swanwick in regards to our application:

We are truly proud of our wonderful school community. We have always been a child-centred school where the personal development and character of our pupils is at the forefront of all that we do. With this in mind, being part of the Association for Character Education and going through the process of applying for the Kitemark Award enabled us as a whole school community to look in greater depth at our provision for character education. The inspection was thorough and the report has provided us with excellent ways in which we can further improve our provision for the pupils we serve.

*Robert Swanwick
Headteacher*