



# *ACE School of* **CHARACTER**

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School has been successful in our application for the **Quality Mark + Award** from ACE (Association for Character Education) for our exceptional character provision. The CEO of ACE, Tom Haigh, spoke to a range of pupils from Years 7-10, staff and a governor and looked at a range of evidence that shows that we are a school where the Wiseman Virtues and good character are at the heart of all that we do. This prestigious award, which is the top award, clearly shows that as a school we focus on developing well-rounded individuals.

Here is the report:



25/05/23

Dear Rob and Anthony,

It was with great privilege that the Association for Character Education was able to award Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School with the *School of Character Quality Mark Plus* on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023. ACE would like to express its congratulations and formally acknowledge the significant dedication and commitment that staff, pupils, governors and parents/carers have demonstrated, in order to meet the high standards of character education, that this award represents.

The assessment highlighted a number of key strengths of the school's character provision including;

- Reflection is an essential aspect of developing good character and Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School has developed immensely effective reflective practices for pupils. Pupils discussed at length how the Transformation Curriculum not only develops key skills outside the classroom, but were able to explicitly link the activities to the development of virtue in their life. This was demonstrative of how the school has empowered pupils to 'explicitly make the link' between enrichment activities and the impact this has had on their character development. During the assessment all pupils who were spoken to were extremely articulate in sharing how they had personally grown in specific virtues throughout the school year. The design of the personal reflection booklet had been a useful tool in helping facilitate this. Plans to include the Jubilee Centre's building block of Character within next year's draft of the Reflection booklet will further deepen pupils' understanding of the need to develop a balance of moral, civic, intellectual and performance-based

virtues (along with practical wisdom) in order to flourish. Enabling pupils to consolidate their reflections along with developing their oracy through an annual speech day, built around the Wiseman Virtues and character, is another example of the multi-faceted nature of the reflective practices in the school. The aim to support all pupils to undertake at least one activity centred-around civic service is also to be applauded.

- During the assessment, staff were able to share how they had meaningfully embedded character and virtues into their schemes of work, and were clear in their understanding that at Cardinal Wiseman “character isn’t a bolt on. Character is everywhere, it is a part of everything that we do.” The weekly briefing slides which were submitted as part of the assessment’s evidence-base represent excellent practice in having a ‘drip feeding’ approach to supporting staff with deepening their understanding of character and ‘keeping the conversation of character going.’
- The purpose of developing character in the school goes beyond enabling the personal achievement and success of the individual. The school’s strong focus on moral virtues ensures its character programme develops pupils with a strong moral compass who strive, ‘to do the right thing for the right reason,’ and become ‘good people.’
- Having a large number of virtues that underpin the school’s ethos and effectively embedding them within a common and shared language, has given the pupils an impressive vernacular when it comes to the language of character. When asked to explain about an assembly which had had an impact on their understanding of character, pupils referenced, “phronesis,” and the importance of, “making good choices.”
- A highly motivated and values-driven staff team reported how they had been encouraged to ensure greater diligence when articulating the reason that character based- merits and awards are given. This was clear when looking through the awards as part of the evidence-base. Pupils also reported how they were sometimes asked to write down themselves why they had received a merit. This approach has ensured that pupils can clearly understand and appreciate how their behaviour and conduct is the demonstration of the virtue they are being recognised for. Staff also shared how the school were moving to ensure that there was a clear distinction between ‘acknowledging’ was is expected in terms of virtuous behaviour and ‘praise,’ for when pupils go above and beyond.
- The school’s physical environment is adorned with the language of virtue and quotes from exemplars and famous people who have demonstrated exceptional character.

As the school continues to develop its character provision it is recommended to reflect on the following areas;

- Continue to develop a character curriculum that is scaffolded so its content develops in line with pupils’ intellectual and emotional maturity, as they journey through the school.
- Continue to build synergy between the character content of assemblies and what is taught in character lessons, to facilitate the reinforcement of key concepts.
- Continue to distil Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School’s story and narrative around its character journey. As the school starts to support other schools on their journey to embed a joined up and coordinated character programme, a collective story around how the school has evolved its character programme and the impact it has had on the pupils, the staff, parents/carers and school-improvement, will support it in this endeavour.

Yours Sincerely



Tom Haigh, ACE, CEO.

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Here is a statement from Mr Swanwick (Headteacher) in regards to our successful application:

*We are truly proud of our wonderful school community and this is reflected in Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School successfully gaining the Quality Mark + Award from the Association for Character Education.*

*We have always been a child-centred school where our Wiseman Virtues and the character of our pupils is at the forefront of all that we do.*

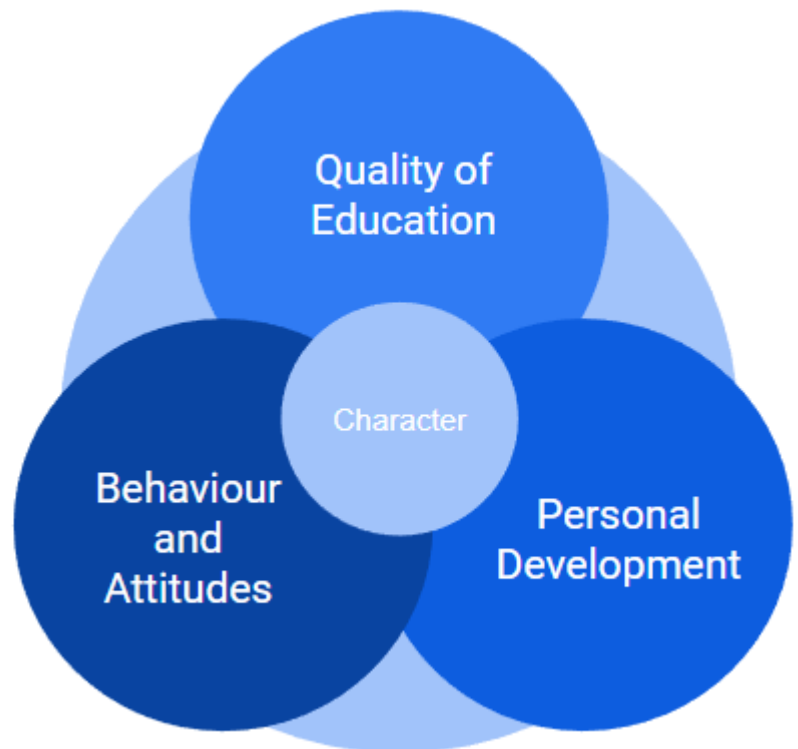
*Being a member of the Association for Character Education and going through the process of applying for the character award enabled us as a whole school community to look in greater depth at our provision for character education. Our whole school community knows that good character is critical for everything: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes and personal development.*

*The inspection was thorough and supportive and the report has provided us with ways in which we can further improve our provision for the pupils we serve.*

*Robert Swanwick  
Headteacher*

How important  
is character?

Character  
education is not  
another thing  
on the plate,  
it is the plate.



Our Character Journey so far states some of the major steps in our character provision at CW.

# Our Character Journey so far ...



- Summer 2015 - School Ethos/Mission was set around the Wiseman Virtues
- Summer 2016 - Awards given linked to Wiseman Virtues
- Summer 2017 - Awards ceremony moves to Holte Suite - AVFC - bigger event
- Autumn 2018 - ME in PE is introduced as a focus on character traits within PE lessons
- Autumn 2019 - Transformation Curriculum starts
- November 2019 - DfE publishes 'Character Education Guidance Framework
- Autumn 2020 - Personal Reflection starts
- October 2020 - Rights Respecting Schools Bronze Award achieved
- Spring 2020 - PSHE long term plan adds character building SoW
- June 2021 - received the Quality Mark Award for Character from ACE (Association of Character Education)
- Sept 2021 - all staff discussed character traits with pupils' linked to their Transformation Curriculum options
- Dec 2021 - end of term rewards assemblies add an additional layer of subject specific character awards
- May 2022 - whole staff CPD regarding mini character projects about the school
- May 2022 - Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award achieved
- July 2022 - new awards given to pupils based on character traits at our annual awards evening.
- July 2022 - Annual Speech Giving Day - all pupils reflecting upon the Wiseman Virtues
- Sept 2022 – Character Lead starts educating staff through weekly briefings about character
- Oct 2022 - CW receives Birmingham Civic Society Award for volunteering and charity work
- Feb 2023 onwards - Live Simply Award - Diocesan Award. Students are learning about and acting upon living more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.
- May 2023 – staff and pupils ensure that pupils know the reason why they receive a merit and how it links to our Wiseman Virtues.
- May 2023 – received the Quality Mark + Award ACE (Association of Character Education)

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## 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
- ✓ Building blocks of character as defined by The Jubilee Centre
- ✓ 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				
<b>Communication Methods</b>	<b>Teamwork</b>	<b>Competition</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Resilience</b>
<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 <b>competing</b> children need to have developed <b>physical</b> literacy at an early age, equipping them with the skills and self-confidence to <b>compete</b>.</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>

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