



Ms Carly Moran - Headteacher
Orchard Park High School
Orchard Way
Croydon
Surrey CR0 7NJ

Association for Character Education Quality Mark (January 2024)

Dear Carly,

Following an evaluative visit to Orchard Park High School on 9th January 2024 by Mr Gary Lewis, Chair of the Association for Character Education, the Association can confirm that your school has met the high standards required to be awarded the ***ACE School of Character 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. The leadership and commitment provided by you and your senior leadership team and specifically Victoria Ongley, has been instrumental in ensuring that character development is an integral part of the school's determined drive to raise standards of academic achievement and student well-being in equal measure.

All stakeholders, including students, have been consulted on the school's clear focus on a bedrock of values and these are widely understood and lived throughout the community. 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 strategic planning and careful attention to detail to ensure that character activities are seamlessly blended across both curriculum activities and the huge range of opportunities provided by "Character Clubs" is excellent. 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. The extensive evidence portfolio provided to the assessor before the visit highlights 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.

- Students spoke very confidently about their experiences of character activity and they were 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. The confidence with which students used the schools well developed language of character was impressive and in turn, enabled them to link development of their own character traits with the well-being of the school community. Consequently, relationships across the school were universally positive, respectful and help create a sense of security which enables both students and staff to flourish in equal measure.
- 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. Teachers clearly respect and understand the values led direction of the Headteacher and senior team and they trust the support and help they receive. Some members of staff who were initially sceptical that the character programme was simply another “add on or short-lived project”, were now wholeheartedly behind the scheme, stating with utter confidence the impact it has had on student behaviour and attitudes to learning. This in turn is ensuring a “critical mass” of committed staff who will be determined to continue to grow and develop the provision.
- The language of character is evolving rapidly and this is supported by the school’s extensive rewards system linked to character development. Students of all ages actively support the reward of character credits and they value them very highly. The extra curricula programme or “character clubs” is exemplary and together with the well-developed and focused house system provides opportunities for students of all aptitudes and abilities to experience growth in an extensive array of experiences.
- The assessor was significantly impressed with the maturity and competence of the students he interviewed. Students were able to articulate with confidence and enthusiasm 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.
- 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 subject areas where curriculum leaders have planned character activities alongside their normal subject programmes of study. 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 governors provide excellent and well-informed support and challenge in equal measure. They understand that a fully integrated and successful character programme involves input from all 3 key stakeholders – namely, students, teachers and parents. The assessor was impressed with the committed and enthusiastic approach from the governor interviewed and this bodes well for the future in ensuring that character and academic excellence are given equal prominence.

The assessor was delighted to visit a school which has a clear and detailed plan focusing on common sense and detailed research in equal measure. An obvious commitment to ensure that character development in its widest sense is at the core of the school’s activities is equally reassuring. 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 assessor 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 assessor 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.
- The school should embark on a programme to engage the parent body with the school’s character provision and aims. High quality and consistently regular communication using the school’s character language will ensure sustained commitment and understanding from parents and the wider community. This will greatly benefit the school and be a significant step towards achieving the QM+ Character Award.
- It would fit the training aims of the school if the Jubilee Centre CPD programme is included as part of the staff induction process

Regards



Mr Gary Lewis

(on behalf of the Association for Character Education)

12th January 2024