



### **School of Character Kitemark Award Feedback Report**

03/06/2021

Dear Cath,

Following an evaluative assessment of your school's character education provision on 18th May 2021 the Association for Character Education confirms 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, particularly Lois Ward, 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.

A truly integrated and whole-school approach to character education can be transformational for a school, if led and implemented through a wise and visionary leadership. This is very much the case for the John Roan School. The assessment found that character education has been a central pillar to enable the school to transition from a place of exceptional challenge, to one that is defined by high quality relationships, and a child-centred ethos. The PRIDE values have always been a part of the school but are now front and centre, and clearly orientate all character-based activity. The decision to build on the school's existing values when leading it through its necessary transformation, and not completely redefine the school's ethos is to be congratulated. It demonstrates a leadership that recognises and celebrates the values that existed, but has allowed them to be *'lived,'* enabling the John Roan School to flourish as a School of Character.

Schools of Character often develop a framework unique to the school to deliver their character education through. This can knit together all the character-based provision across the three zones of 'taught' 'caught' and 'sought.' At the John Roan School this is done through the PRIDE values. This framework is well presented and visible throughout the school. As well as PRIDE representing the

letters of the school's values, they also reinforce the central message of having pride in yourself, your school and your community. Clarity and simplicity are critical when developing a character framework that a whole-school community can understand, adopt and promote. The PRIDE framework achieves this successfully. It provides pupils, teachers, leaders, parents and governors with a common and explicit language around character that can be champion and reinforced at all levels. The assessment found that students of all ages were able to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of character and virtue, particularly in relation to the school's values. When discussing respect a year 7 pupil explained that, *"it is important to respect other people, but it is also important to respect your self and respect the environment too."* The *Character Passports* provide a tangible tool to recognise the demonstration of behaviours aligned to the PRIDE values, and younger pupils found them a strong incentive to engage in the PRIDE programme. They reported that they, *"like the passport because it is a material thing. It used to just be logged on the system. Now I can actually see it,"* and *"the passport allows you to see your achievements. It motivates you to try harder."*

The *Character Passports* were one of many initiatives within the school that rewarded the living of the PRIDE values. Celebrating success and encouraging positive behaviours through a culture of praise and reward was notable throughout the assessment. Once again this was the result of the development of an intentional ethos built on the premise that it can often takes multiple messages of praise to drive behaviour change, compared to the issuing of sanctions. The development of a metrics framework to measure the impact of PRIDE is also to be congratulated, and offers the opportunity to have a quantitative measure around character.

The child-centred ethos at the John Roan school was a theme that emerged when discussing the school's culture, with all members of the school community. Chair of Governors, Anne Hudson, spoke of the need for the school to be student-focused and for pupils to feel cared for. She explained that a priority set by the governing body was for behaviour and conduct to be defined by respect. This was reinforced by students who consistently spoke about teachers adapting and shaping the support they gave pupils around support needs and personality. One pupil commented that, *"teachers really go out their way to help students whose first language isn't English and take into account if you are really outgoing or a bit more introverted. This is why it is such a friendly school."* This considerate and inclusive approach role modelled by teachers is demonstrative of character 'caught,' effectively developing virtue in the students.

The development of a positive culture is the result of a conscious and intentional decision by a school's leadership, which is followed through by a coordinated plan of activity informed by a set of values. Role modelling is an essential part of this. The assessment found that a culture of *"taking*

*responsibility,” permeated across all levels of the school. Pupils reported feeling a sense of personal responsibility as to whether they adopted the PRIDE values into their own life. “PRIDE isn’t something forced upon on us. We are shown that they are values we should aspire to take on board if we want to do well in life. But it is our choice whether we adopt take them on board,”* one student commented. Similarly, the school leadership reported that character education (like SEND) was the responsibility of all the staff. Continuing to reinforce this message will develop a sense of ownership amongst all staff. This will provide the school with the critical mass of support necessary to drive its character programme into its next phase of development.

A child-centred education can only be delivered if barriers are identified and removed for children that experience disadvantage. The assessment found this to be a key strategic priority. Examples include the offer of free 1-1 music tuition for all pupils and the engagement of external organisations who further build on the school’s extra-curricular offer for pupil premium students. The John Roan School has a dedicated commitment to providing all pupils with the opportunity to actively develop their character through a broad enrichment programme. It is one thing to teach the meaning of PRIDE and another to provide an environment where these values can be tested, developed and lived outside of the classroom.

As the school moves forward with the implementation and evolution of its PRIDE character programme there are a number of opportunities to reflect upon;

- i) **Extend the embedding of PRIDE and character into the core curriculum.** Effective CPD can empower teachers to take ownership of identifying opportunities to integrate character and virtue into their subject.
- ii) **Having dedicated CPD to deepen staffs’ philosophical understanding of what good character is** and why it is critical for the flourishing of the individual and wider society, will better enable leadership responsibility to be shared across the staff team for the implementation of PRIDE.
- iii) **Formalise the process for staff to reflect on their own character.** This can be done through remodelling existing appraisal processes and introducing 360 degree feedback which includes the demonstrating of the school’s values.
- iv) **Have a clear short, medium and long term vision,** underpinned by a clear plan, for the ongoing development of PRIDE.
- v) **Reward and incentivisation is strong.** The next step is to broaden the message to students that the goal is for virtuous behaviour to be a habitual action that is the result of who they are, and not just an act intended to receive reward/praise. Despite reward being

necessary and often a good way to automatically develop virtuous behaviour, being explicit that *doing the right thing for the right reason* will reinforce the notion that *good character is about doing the right thing, even when no one is looking*.

- vi) **Pupils reported that PRIDE was a strong feature in assemblies but less explicit in Form/Tutor time.** There is the potential to reflect on whether there is greater opportunity to use Form/Tutor time to implement more character based initiatives.

Congratulations once again on the development of a highly effective character programme which will inevitably ensure students and staff can continue to flourish. Wishing you and the rest of the John Roan School community all the best on your journey of embedding character further into the fabric of the school.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T Haigh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Haigh

CEO, Association for Character Education