



Mrs P Lewis
Headteacher
Gloucester Academy
Painswick Road
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Dear Mrs Lewis,

Association for Character Education Kitemark Assessment (October 2022)

Following an evaluative visit to Gloucester Academy on Thursday 6 October 2022 by Tom Haigh, CEO of the Association of Character Education, and Andrew Pettit, Kitemark Assessor for the Association for Character Education, we are very pleased to confirm that your school has met the exacting standards required to be awarded the 'School of Character' Kitemark.

Huge congratulations to you, your students, staff and governors. This award is testament to the values-driven commitment to personal development so evident in your school. It is clear that there is a shared sense of mission at Gloucester Academy and that, through the tireless commitment of school leaders, especially Sophie Exton (Assistant Headteacher) and Lucy Blick (Director of Character) a meaningful and authentic commitment to character education is now well-embedded.

The school has been on a transformational journey in recent years and this is in no small part owing to the sustained and deliberate focus on the three core values of Ambition, Excellence and Pride. It was notable that the core values adopted by the school had been determined through careful consideration of pupils' needs as well as those of the wider community and it is clear that Gloucester Academy's focus on character is helping to build its reputation as the school of choice for local families.

It was evident during our visit that leaders have fostered a strong sense of community as well as one of nurture and support where pupils and staff feel a real sense of purpose and belonging. The school places a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement and this has helped to create a culture of ambition and pride where pupils are determined to be the best version of themselves. There is an enthusiasm and excitement about showing good character which has laid the foundations for an environment where students and staff can really flourish. There are many strengths in the current provision, including:

Identified Strengths

- The school has a well-embedded and well-understood set of character traits (Ambition, Excellence, Pride) and it is clear that these values form part of the pupils' everyday experiences at school.
- The school's daily 'call and response' routine at morning line-up where the three core values are reiterated by the whole school provide a powerful sense of mission, community and belonging.

- The 3 values are reinforced in a systematic way through a well-designed assembly programme and through direct links to the school's rewards system.
- The importance of the 3 values to school life, personal development and future life chances is further reinforced by the school's use of 'Ready for Learning' (RFL) cards which provide daily opportunities for positive demonstrations of character to be recognised.
- The pupils really value and strive to achieve the character badges and show a real sense of pride when receiving commendations.
- The 'Golden Ticket' awarded specifically for showing positive character traits aligned with the 3 core values further reinforces how much value is accorded to 'good' character at GA.
- The Character Education Booklets are highly valued and are effective in providing pupils in all year groups with a means by which to reflect, identify gaps and set personal challenges to help them move forward in developing their character.
- Weekly character lessons provide pupils with scope to further develop their understanding of themselves and what constitutes 'good' character.
- Teaching materials for the character programme are exclusively produced and overseen by the Director of Character and SLT which helps underscore its value.
- The school has selected a small team of staff to teach the character programme which helps achieve a consistently high standard of delivery.
- Pupils and staff at all levels clearly value the school's approach to positive reinforcement and the 3 core values provide a framework for and a shared language with which to address reminders about behaviour.
- The phased implementation of Student Leadership roles and the planned opportunity for peer mentor training means that the school is well-placed to further develop the scope and impact of peer-to-peer role modelling.
- Pupils value the range of enrichment opportunities made available by the school and there are mechanisms in place for tracking pupil involvement in such activities
- Strong emphasis is placed on the importance of role-modelling by staff and this is carried through in a number of ways including weekly staff accolades where staff are recognised for demonstrating one or more of the 3 core values through peer-nominated awards.
- The 3 core values have been embraced by staff and there is enthusiasm and commitment to further developing character across the curriculum.
- Staff feel a sense of 'ownership' with regards character and its importance to school life.
- There is a real pride in the school's culture and this is reflected in the exemplary standards of behaviour and attitudes observed by the assessors throughout their visit.
- Wall displays and other features of the school environment are used in a very effective way to 'signpost' and reinforce the importance of key character traits
- The school has developed a vernacular linked to the concept of mountain climbing which reinforces the importance of each child's personal 'journey' and does so in a way which re-frames concepts such as pastoral intervention ('mountain rescue') in a positive and inclusive way.
- The recent addition of 'Red Point', the school's on-site AP unit and its close alignment with the focus on character in the main school is testament to the school's inclusivity and its stated commitment to helping every child 'climb the mountain'.

It is clear that Gloucester Academy is an ambitious, inclusive, community-focused school and that there is a strong emphasis on pastoral support, pupil welfare and personal development. The school's values of Ambition, Pride and Excellence are increasingly placed at the heart of all activities and by aligning these with the core components of character development such as character lessons, assemblies, enrichment and RFL cards, Gloucester Academy ensures that pupils and staff benefit from an authentic and ambitious commitment to character education which is built in rather than 'bolted on'.

We had the privilege of meeting with a broad cross-section of pupils and staff during our visit and it was clear that they had developed a strong understanding of the three core values of Ambition, Excellence and Pride. Staff are motivated by a focus on 'seeking out success' and there is real scope for character education to be even further strengthened.

The school's cultural routines are underpinned by established strategies such as those outlined by Doug Lemov. This has enabled a clear and deliberate approach to cultivating a culture that is underpinned by strategies that have a proven and accepted record of delivery. There is now the opportunity to assess whether the philosophy of Virtue Ethics can be also used to further develop the moral character of the pupils at Gloucester Academy and a core recommendation is that the school explores how it can embed the development of concepts such as phronesis to enable pupils to make the right decisions, for the right reasons at the right time as a way of complementing the already well defined approach at GA. Resources and training provided by both ACE and the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues could support GA with this.

The assessors would also recommend that consideration is given to the following areas:

Recommended Actions

- Explore the ways in which a focus on character can be built into your annual PD cycle.
- Further develop the character 'taught' component of your provision by developing a means by which character is embedded into teaching across the curriculum.
- Consider the ways in which a focus on character can be further embedded into recruitment and induction processes.
- The evidence-base demonstrated that the school's Character curriculum supports pupils to explore values beyond Pride, Ambition and Excellence. It is recommended that this is pursued further in order to support pupils to have a wider vocabulary of virtue and a deeper understanding of the range of virtues that are required to flourish in life.
- Further develop collaboration with parents so good character is reinforced within the home as well as school. And give some consideration as to whether character can/should be incorporated into pupil reports.
- Build on staff role-modelling by exploring more formalised ways in which staff reflect on their own character such as through a 360 degree evaluation as part of the appraisal process.
- Consider how established features such as the TTRP can be further developed by adopting a deliberate focus on character and moral dilemmas.

Congratulations again to you and your colleagues at Gloucester Academy. We have no doubt that you will continue with your ambitious and authentic commitment to character education and would actively encourage you to share your successes with other schools on a similar journey.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Tom Haigh
CEO



Mr Andrew Pettit
ACE Kitemark Assessor