



**Mr Ashley Robson
Headmaster
Reading School
Erleigh Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 5LW**

Association for Character Education Kitemark Plus (July 2022)

Dear Ashley,

Following an evaluative visit to Reading School on Tuesday 5th July 2022, by Mr Gary Lewis, Chair of the Association for Character Education, and Ms Carole Black, Deputy Headteacher, Dr Challoners Grammar School, the Association can confirm that your school has met the exacting standards required to be awarded the ***“Character Education Kitemark Plus”***.

Congratulations to you, your students, staff and governors as this award clearly recognises the quality of learning and values-driven personal development and imaginative curriculum programme enjoyed by all members of your school community. The school has always had a focus on character development throughout its long history, but the progress the school has made in the evolution and development of its Character Programme over the past 3 years is very impressive and indicates that a values-led approach is central to the School’s obvious success. In particular, the awarding body wishes to commend you on the following: -

- The leadership provided by the Headmaster and senior team is inspirational and because of the evident deep personal commitment exhibited by the team to a wide, values-led education, they have managed to capture a similar commitment and determination from all staff members. Staff trust the authenticity of the leadership’s plans and the determination the team exhibits in securing a first-class educational experience has resulted in a committed and determined workforce. As a consequence of this commitment, staff are prepared to go “above and beyond” in providing the young men in their care with some outstanding educational experiences, and this coupled with their individual expertise and confidence is resulting in a rich and balanced curriculum provision for all boys in the school.
- The Headmaster has concentrated on building firm foundation stones for the character programme. The team leading character is rich in expertise and knowledge and as such they have formulated a balanced character provision carefully integrated

in the curriculum. The additional and extensive opportunities offered to students outside of the classroom are of the highest standard.

- 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 the school and its successful impact in creating a values rich provision which threads all aspects of the school's "DNA". A careful recruitment programme ensures that only colleagues committed to the wider character programme are appointed and individual teachers were crystal clear in their understanding of the absolute importance of the school's values led approach. This commitment and enthusiasm guarantees a "critical mass" of committed staff and the subsequent sustainability of the character development programme.
- The school continues to evolve its understanding of the wider aspects of Character Education as a consequence of informed leadership focusing on pertinent and relevant "CPD" opportunities for teachers and support staff alike. Teachers have access to very good quality materials which are produced under the expert direction of the leadership team. The extensive and deeper understanding of virtue ethics and philosophy afforded by Ben Miller has provided a deep academic research base to support the excellent pastoral and leadership skills of the rest of the senior team. This combination of academic excellence and high-level practical application is a very successful partnership.
- Both assessors were significantly impressed with the maturity and competence of the students they interviewed. These boys were able to articulate with confidence and a deep understanding the extent of the positive impact the character programme was having on their lives now and in the future. They understood that character development and academic achievement were of equal value and they were very proud of their school.
- The assessors were delighted to review professionally produced materials and communications displayed the site which effectively transmitted the community's virtues. This was further reinforced by a welcoming and character focused website which also provided evidence of regular and detailed communications with parents and the wider community which consistently repeat the language used by the school to reinforce its virtue culture.
- There is little doubt that the extensive and integrated character curriculum provision witnessed represents "outstanding practice". A combination of practical and academic activities related to virtue ethics, philosophy, leadership and collaborative working were providing an outstanding educational experience in the widest possible sense. The Floreat Programme, Future Stories (a combined activity to address social mobility and equality of access), Project Wayfinder and a myriad of other opportunities and provision, including excellent challenge provided by the

extensive sports programmes, has resulted in a comprehensive set of experiences which greatly benefit all students, no matter what their aptitudes and abilities.

- Character training for staff has been a key objective in recent months and staff are feeling ever more confident and competent in their delivery of a wide range of character materials. Excellent assemblies that are professionally and meticulously prepared and presented, provide a positive platform for further character links in extra curricular, tutorial and PSHE sessions which are embedded in the curriculum for *all* year groups. 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. Staff confidence is further enhanced by the professional support and training they receive from both internal and external sources.
- The assessors were delighted that both behaviour management policies and reward structures were directly informed by the school’s character programme and virtues focus. Both students and teachers valued the reviewed reward system and its focus on positive reinforcement and its consistent application must be considered a real success. Relationships across the school are relaxed, respectful and always professional. This provides students with a sense of security and support which directly links to their individual flourishing.

The assessors were delighted to visit a school where character education was placed at the core of ALL activities and provision and this is certainly an example for other schools to witness that such an in-depth approach to character education rather than an additional “bolt on” style can have a significant impact on both academic and personal development standards. Much of what was observed must be considered “exemplary practice”

The assessors are confident that the school’s leaders will continue with their ambitious programme and it is hoped that they will seek to share their successes with other schools on a similar journey.

Regards



Mr Gary Lewis
(on behalf of the Association for Character Education)



Ms Carole Black