



ACE School of
CHARACTER

03/07/2025

Dear John, Chris, Emma and Jason,

It was a pleasure to meet you all and to learn about your school's character education provision since your Quality Mark Plus award. ACE would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for The Malling School's ongoing character work and congratulate you on retaining your Quality Mark Plus award status.

Below is a list of strengths that were identified through the renewal process. We hope this provides the opportunity for your school to recognise and celebrate the work you are doing to forge good character in your students.

Strengths

- School leaders spoke with passion and enthusiasm about how the development of character is of high importance to The Malling School. The initiatives that have been introduced and developed are carefully chosen to meet the needs of their students and local community. There is a clear emphasis on the importance of developing positive character traits for all members of the school community.
- The *Malling School Way* is at the heart of the school's ethos and is centred around three core character values of being **Caring, Determined** and **Reflective**. The Malling School Way poem, which makes reference to a number of positive character traits is used as a positive reminder for students about what is expected from them and understanding of the character aspects of The Malling School Way is developed through the Personal Development Curriculum and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). Other new initiatives such as the Collective Read have allowed for character links to be made whilst literacy skills are being developed. Staff and students are expected to strive to show these character traits.
- The school recognise the importance of having a shared language and culture and considerable progress has been made in promoting the use of a shared character language centred around The Malling School Way. A common language is now more evident in both positive and corrective conversations (between staff and pupils, and staff and parents) and students themselves are able to identify and articulate more clearly when the virtues are and

are not being put into practice around school. Videos of the students demonstrating virtues in action are a helpful initiative to support the virtue language development and understanding. The Malling School Way character and academic values are displayed very visibly around school. A more robust reward system has been developed to regularly reward pupils not just for their academic ability but also to celebrate the demonstration of positive character traits. Students can be awarded for good character in a variety of ways including reward assemblies, certificates, badges and postcards home. Staff are also praised for demonstrating virtuous practice and they are aware of the importance of being a good character role model.

- There are a number of character links across The Malling School taught curriculum. Character is embedded in the PSHE and careers curriculum, and the school recognise the importance of explicit character teaching. The development of the period 1 sequence of learning (now including KS5) has provided some good opportunities for discrete teaching with a character focus and the ethics curriculum allows for challenging philosophical ideas to be explored through a religion/worldview lens. The school recognise the importance of preparing students for the wider world beyond school and actively promote good citizenship. Initiatives such as the forestry school provide bespoke teaching and learning for more vulnerable children which also serves to support their character development. Subject leads have identified links to the development of character traits in their subject areas.
- School leaders spoke with enthusiasm about the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities they offer for students. The Malling School take very seriously their commitment to inclusion and wanting to provide trips and enriching activities for all. In addition to the wide range of clubs and wider opportunities such as Duke of Edinburgh, sustainability/eco groups and community action such as litter picking, the school have also designed bespoke enrichment intervention such as one involving barbering which has proved to have a considerable impact on the character of children involved. Student leadership is highly valued, for example, KS5 students have the opportunity to become sixth form mentors to work with identified KS3 pupils who need extra support. Students who have shown a commitment to volunteering and have been acknowledged by a member of the public outside school are awarded a special school leadership badge to showcase them as excellent character role models.
- Leaders are proud of their school's achievements and are keen to share their character journey. Some schools have shown an interest in learning more about The Malling School

way and there is a keen desire from The Malling School leadership team to continue to support and guide other schools to develop their character education practice.

Recommendations:

Based on our discussion these recommendations outline some ways for further development and enhancement of your character provision. Taking note of these will support you in being able to retain your Quality Mark Plus status in future renewals.

- The school are continuing to work on their PBS curriculum and the lead will be designing and delivering some CPD to ensure effective and consistent implementation. As it develops further, be mindful of ensuring links to character are explicit as much of the discussion related to this aspect of school practice was centred around general behaviour pedagogy driven by popular education texts and the character focus at times became a little lost.
- In line with the recommendations for Quality Mark Plus schools, it would be advisable to capitalise on your developing research culture and underpin any future character developments and professional development with the philosophy and theory that underpins character education. It would be very beneficial for you to engage with the Jubilee Centre's Framework for Character Education <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/The-Jubilee-Centre-Framework-for-Character-Education-in-Schools.pdf> to help deepen understanding across the school of what character education is including the building blocks of character and components of virtue. Many highly effective character schools have found this fundamental knowledge to be at the core of their character initiatives. There are numerous ideas in the taught/caught/sought character inventory which also might be of interest and will help to further develop understanding of how your current and future character developments contribute to each of the virtue categories.
- The Jubilee Centre framework also makes reference to the '*integrative virtue*' of '*phronesis*' or '*practical wisdom*'. Making further use of scenario-based/moral dilemmas would be beneficial, explicitly encouraging students to use their practical wisdom to consider which virtue they should draw on so they can do the right thing, at the right time, in the right amount, and for the right reason, as well as considering what we might do in a situation when virtues 'collide'. This approach would build well on your period 1 learning and align well with your focus on positive behaviour and ethics by promoting deep and insightful character specific reflection opportunities and equipping students with the moral will to do

‘the right thing’ alongside the development of the moral skills to know what the ‘right thing’ is . Additionally, a number of ACE schools have found Aristotle’s *Golden Mean* to be very thought provoking when employed with both staff and students so this also might be an interesting concept to explore as part of your future character education developments.

- The school are keen to continue to develop the extra-curricular/enrichment provision as part of the personal development curriculum and further promote inclusion e.g. through compulsory attendance at a club for Year 7s to support their character development outside the classroom setting and provide opportunities for pupils that they may not otherwise be exposed to. The school are also developing their own outdoor leadership programme to supplement the Duke of Edinburgh and continuing to enhance their forest school provision for targeted more vulnerable students.
- Leaders are keen to continue to share their character practice with other schools who are beginning their character journey. We also discussed the importance of capitalising on any networking opportunities to learn from other schools, particularly within the ACE network and regional hubs and other schools who have been awarded Quality Mark Plus (Aylesford School and Springwest Academy might be good links for your school). The ACE website and resource portal are in the process of being updated and will have a wealth of good practice examples to draw on to support your ongoing developments.

Thank you once again for showcasing the significant work The Malling School is doing in terms of character education, and for being a valued partner of the Association for Character Education.

We look forward to continuing to work with you going forward.

Kindest regards,



Julie Taylor, ACE Quality Mark Assessor