

6th July 2026

It was a great pleasure to meet you both and to learn about the inspiring developments with 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 Aylesbury Grammar School's ongoing and transformative character work and congratulate you on retaining your Quality Mark Plus award status.

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

Strengths

- Since the last Quality Mark Plus assessment, the school have continued to prioritise character in all aspects of school life and view character education as being at the heart of the school's success. Character sits profoundly at the heart of the school's strategic plans and underpins key policies, and the school's emphasis on equity, agency and character illustrates that the school has an intelligent and well-developed understanding of virtue development and the positive impact this can have on students' personal aspirations.
- The school's commitment to a fair and inclusive culture for all is a key aspect of the character education strategy, and leaders spoke passionately about their relentless drive to nurture flourishing for all students, irrespective of their background, fully recognising their role in intellectual and emotional character development and equipping students with the necessary character traits to prepare them for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of higher education, employment and ultimately being a good adult citizen who contributes to the greater good.
- Students, staff and parents collaborated in the identification of key character traits that are key to the AGS learner namely ownership, motivation, resilience, innovation and courage. These are clearly defined and well understood across the school community, allowing for a consistent and shared language. As well as these being regularly reinforced in all aspects of school life, the school website also provides very helpful guidance exemplifying how students, teachers and parents can support the development and embodiment of these virtues and each principle is supported by very useful additional information including the

'Learning Matters' newsletter, to develop greater depth of understanding of why these principles are of significance. The school fully understand the importance of 'character caught' and there is a clear emphasis on role modelling virtuous behaviour and positive relationships. Whilst the school has very high performing outcomes, leaders recognise that it is more than just academic success that matters in education – Mark and Gurdeep spoke passionately about the importance of good character when seeking employment and aspire for their boys to develop a good moral compass and the fortitude to stand up for what is ethically the right thing to do. As well as viewing themselves as subject specialists, staff also recognise their role in guiding students in these moral endeavours.

- The AGS curriculum has been intelligently designed to offer students experiences which develop their character, knowledge and understanding and to provide challenges which encourages the boys to learn and achieve outside of their comfort zone. Every lesson and learning activity is seen as an opportunity to develop character and evidence was shared of how character features explicitly through assemblies, personal development sessions, Y6/7 induction activities and examples of how departments have embedded authentic character links within their subject areas promoting real life meaningful examples of why good character is important. The school highly value student and staff feedback and the recent introduction and analysis of bi-annual self-reflections for students with a specific character focus have been instrumental in informing the development and refinement of whole school character initiatives. Digital learning has also been an area of focus and is seen as an important aspect of effective classroom practice, home learning and the development of character and life skills.
- Aylesbury Grammar offers a wealth of inspiring 'character sought' opportunities to develop character beyond the academic curriculum. These are carefully designed to allow autonomy and choice and serve a key role in fostering character and personal development through a wide range of exciting enrichment, leadership, house competitions, volunteering and extra-curricular offerings. Leadership roles in particular are considered to have a significant impact on character development and leaders are regularly reviewing the opportunities available, including widening the range of roles available for younger pupils. Notes from Character Champions' meetings illustrate they take pride in their role, have a positive influence on school life, and are given considerable responsibility including supporting Y6 induction events, peer mentoring and taking the lead in assemblies. Examples of head boy applications very clearly demonstrate the positive impact of the school's character values. The school highly values inviting in guest speakers as role models, including alumni, to inspire students

and share their life lessons. Around 70-90 sixth form students engage with a weekly volunteering placement in either local special or primary schools and are fantastic ambassadors for the school, recognising the importance of giving back to their local community.

- The school have worked hard to develop parental engagement and their understanding of the character vision. Parent newsletters are very informative and easily accessible and the parent working groups have been very popular, one group specifically working on the school's focus on character development. The data from parent surveys are thoroughly analysed and feedback very swiftly feeds into future developments. Governors are very supportive of the school's character education work, have a good understanding and are actively involved in the setting of the values and vision as part of strategic planning.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff and expect all colleagues to view themselves as teachers of character. Gurdeep reflected on a range of staff development sessions linked to character and induction sessions for new members of staff. The school are very keen to learn from other schools and be an active participant in character education networks, having worked for many years with ACE and had close links with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. The importance of character and virtue development is evident in the recruitment process. A thriving learning culture has been cultivated to encourage staff to learn from research and undertake their own research projects. Leaders take pride in giving staff the autonomy to disseminate their research findings including conference presentations.

Recommendations:

The school have a clear vision of the areas they wish to keep developing and leaders were very astute about how their character provision will further evolve. The main areas we discussed were:

- Leaders discussed the school's strategic 3-year cycle and recognised that a regular refresh will be important when evaluating the impact of the character education work and any necessary adaptations to current practice. They understand that the priority areas for the school need to reflect the current world and the challenges that boys face. As part of the evaluation of impact, Gurdeep is keen to continue to enhance ways the self-reflection feedback is sought and used to inform wider school developments and to track the engagement in extra-curricular opportunities to ensure impact for all.
- Leaders will continue to monitor and support staff to be consistently explicit with character in their lessons.

- Whilst parental engagement with the character mission has developed well, the school are realistic about the challenge of parents recognising the significance of character in relation to academic success so want to further expand their offer of parental workshops and working groups to further enhance engagement and depth of understanding.
- The school are keen to continue extending their influence in the field of character education by supporting other schools through outreach, shared resources, and collaborative training opportunities. They aspire to be an international leader in pastoral development.

Thank you once again for showcasing the significant work Aylesbury Grammar 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Taylor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julie Taylor, ACE Quality Mark Assessor