Excellence in Pupil Development Award
Verification Report

School name:	Lancaster Academy
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Award verifier:	Vina Sharma
Award adviser (if applicable):	Vina Sharma
Date of verification:	Thursday 4th July

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The award co-ordinator provided an exceptionally well-curated portfolio of evidence, which by the time of the award verification day, was both familiar to the adviser/verifier and comprehensive in nature. Over 100 pieces of evidence were cohesively linked together culminating in a convincing and well sequenced portfolio. The portfolio is an indication of both the depth and scale of high-quality personal development for all pupils at Lancaster.

On the verification day the award co-ordinator set up the conference room as a live exhibition: this gallery contained a wide range of primary artefacts from across the personal development offer for pupils at each year group. Culture day art boards designed by pupils were included as part of the display: with high-quality infographics and materials signposting the rich array of partnerships the school has carefully nurtured over time. This is a school that treasures its diverse community: the flags of each pupil's country of origin are displayed in the foyer and pupils on the day spoke of their pride in being part of a rich tapestry of learners.

The distributed leadership approach towards the award has meant that a core group of professionals have led on the central aspects of the award. This includes senior leaders for behaviour, safeguarding and attendance and middle leaders for PSHE, CEIAG and ambassadors. However, it is the highly effective oversight and internal leadership from the

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award-co-ordinator which has been instrumental in ensuring that a clear and powerful narrative has emerged for the school.

This is a narrative of the highest aspirations for all pupils who come from a range of diverse backgrounds, with often high levels of intersecting needs. The school community faces high levels of pupil mobility and EAL; with both in year admissions and exits featuring for many pupils. As a result, all staff aspire to get to know pupils and their needs quickly, to ensure that they are prepared as best as they can be for their next steps. The award verifier witnessed new arrivals being inducted into the school with great compassion and kindness, while reception staff provided food bags for the most vulnerable pupils respectfully and discretely.

Personal development evaluation forms from all stakeholders have been engaged with and the EPDA self-evaluation form was completed collaboratively by the leadership team. Leaders have a very accurate diagnosis of the strengths and areas of further progress in relation to the personal development offer for all pupils, including those with SEND and pupils who are eligible for pupil premium. Leaders have analysed safeguarding, attendance and PSHE engagement data across all year groups, and have a clear understanding of local issues. These inform both teaching and learning and curriculum in an age appropriate and responsive way. There is a sustained focus on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain: through the curriculum, wider school events and immersive experiences. For example, the verification day had fallen on the same day as the General Elections so the award verifier could see that a mock polling station set up on site for pupils to encourage them to engage with what it feels like to cast a vote.

Strengths identified during verification:

Lancaster Academy delivers a carefully sequenced and highly responsive programme of personal development and skills. At the heart of this offer is an expectation that pupils enact READY values: those of respect, employability, accountability, diversity and young ambassadors. These are displayed throughout the school to ensure that these are visible and shared. Sitting behind each value is a codified and carefully considered programme of learning. These values are explored dynamically through six “drop down” days where the whole school come together to explore READY values in action. Pupils across the school express great enthusiasm for these days. Additionally, the schools offer for SMSC is Interwoven within the fabric of READY values and the school pledge. In addition, progress and Mental health mentors support the development of pupils across the school.

The school is an inclusive and respectful place to be for all staff and pupils. Pupils spoken with on the day indicated that prejudice and discrimination are not tolerated in any form at the school. One pupil who joined the school on a managed move reflected that being at Lancaster had opened his eyes to how much he could learn from pupils a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities. Year 7 and 8 pupils were able to talk about their experience of ready values and how these impact on their day-to-day life. Older pupils were able to articulate clearly the range of activities that they had been involved with either through external partnerships or through an internal offer.

The school are constantly iterating and refining their PSHE curriculum in response to the needs of their local community. For example, scenario-based approaches are being trialled with Year 7 to increase pupil empathy and to make learning memorable. CPD on PSHE topics and delivery is embedded into the school’s curriculum with form tutors having access

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to a range of high-quality resources. Each pupil has a PSHE and Careers portfolio which accompanies them through the school: several of these were available of the verification day for the verifier to consider and correlate with pupils who were spoken with on the day.

Both the CEIG offer and the PSHE curriculum are of an exceptional standard: mapping is extremely well considered, and assessment structures allow for regular moderation of pupil work and experiences. As part of the PSHE curriculum, relationships and sex education has been carefully dissected and enacted. PSHE lessons have been thoroughly audited across all years. This well-designed offer is supplemented through several ways such as targeted interventions for pupils, school nurse referrals, subject specific links i.e. through the drama and religious education curriculum and wellbeing mentoring.

Furthermore, the spiral PSHE curriculum also interleaves issues relating to wider safety, social media and technology and financial literacy. In terms of financial literacy economic understanding for all pupils is developed through carefully sequenced PSHE and careers curricula, fiscal planning & budgeting opportunities provided by READY days and both maths and business opportunities,

Impact:

The headteacher has effectively co-constructed a vision for personal development: this has been done with careful attention to detail and from multiple perspectives: the curriculum, behavioural expectations and external partnerships are interwoven skilfully to ensure that each pupil can thrive in what they know, show and how they grow. The focus on personal development over the past four years has led to a cumulative offer for all pupils which is truly impressive.

The academy links effectively with external partners from business and higher education. It has developed and sustained an extensive network of organisations. These organisations contribute to the school in several ways. For example, the “Collaborate and Grow” business breakfasts stimulate pupil knowledge and understanding of employment and entrepreneurship. External providers provide feedback which is thoroughly explored after each contact in school. Partners comment regularly on how the “love visiting the school” and that what is offers pupils is “awesome”. Leaders ensure that any engagement with business has a philanthropic focus – charities feature prominently and proactively. For example, the school has already selected their charity for the next academic year as Heartwize. As a result, the curriculum across all subjects and key stages will be reviewed to consider which common threads might be explored and build on the work of this charity.

The careers curriculum is subject to regular review (both through internal learning walks, work scrutiny and pupil voice) and external review from the Learning without limits Trust. All pupils enjoy careers portfolios which accompany them through the school and ensure that Gatsby benchmarks are frequently met. This is a school that has effectively created both formal review cycles and informal responsive processes to ensure that personal development offers are the very best. For example, pupil voice contributed to an improved focus on mental health and wellbeing – through a series of workshops. Pupil ambassadors have served to further enhance the work around anti bullying and social media. Leaders ensure that pupils understand safeguarding risks and behaviours that feature in modern Britain ie. Toxic masculinity, indicators of County Lines behaviours, grooming and social media risks. Challenging topics are thoroughly embraced by school leaders and teachers

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who are quick to codify and share both local guidance, curriculum links and a repertoire of teaching strategies. Alongside this practice, pupils are celebrated for their decision making, achievements and efforts through a wide range of celebration events and assemblies.

On the day, the Governor spoken with demonstrated a clear strategic and operational understanding of how personal development for pupils is a priority for the school. He reflected on several strengths in the way the school approaches personal development including staff development and the way that leadership team analyses data to ascertain barriers to personal development. An example of this was the “Lonely at Lancaster” project and the way the school had sought to explore deeply the experiences of pupils, by creating a safe space to talk. Forensic analysis of parent and pupil surveys over recent years have led to a comprehensive offer of extra-curricular clubs. Further examples of practice on the ground that the governor was able to explore with the verifier included pupil involvement in the regeneration of the school library.

Areas for development:

- The school now has an extensive number of partnerships with organisations; consider mapping these organisations in relation to different subject areas/ disciplines so that these can add fuel to the academic diet of pupils and be systematically nurtured over time.

-Continue to monitor the impact of changes to the re-modelled KS3 PSHE curriculum, regularly sharing your insights and learning with wider trust colleagues.

-Continue to work with staff to support their understanding of effective assessment of PSHE using the emerging/securing/developing criteria and moderation experiences.

Verifier recommendation:

I am delighted to unreservedly recommend Lancaster Academy for the Excellence in Pupil Development Award. You are doing some truly innovative and exceptional work in relation to personal development.

Head teacher comments:

The report reflects the hard work and dedication that goes on here to ensure that all our students are READY for the future. It is wonderful to be accredited in this way for the creative efforts made to ensure that personal development is at the heart of what we do.

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