

# Inspection of a good school: Bede Academy

Sixth Avenue, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 2SY

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Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Bede Academy is a warm and caring school community. Across the primary and secondary phases, staff are committed to doing their best for the pupils they teach and care for. The school has a strong set of 'virtues' for moral living, and to a high degree, these are lived out by pupils and staff.

From the youngest children to the oldest students, Bede Academy provides a rich wider curriculum to help them become the best young people they can be. Expectations are high.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors feel safe in school. Through conversation with inspectors, and through their responses to Ofsted's surveys, most pupils say that bullying is not a problem in school and that, when it happens, staff deal with it effectively. A small number of pupils and parents, however, do not think that this is the case. A small number of pupils told inspectors that not all staff respond supportively when pupils alert them to instances of derogatory language. Some pupils do not feel that they have an adult they could talk to in school.

The very large majority of pupils behave well. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are respectful and courteous. A small minority of pupils, however, are persistently disruptive.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have made sure that pupils follow a well-organised and coherent curriculum, founded on the national curriculum. As such, it is ambitious in its scope. In certain subjects, such as English in the secondary phase, the curriculum is undergoing review and

restructure. In the early years, children follow a curriculum that is rooted in the government's statutory guidance. In the sixth form, leaders are well underway with plans to further strengthen the post-16 curriculum by the addition of T-level qualifications, to align with the local economic context.

Teachers across the school have strong subject knowledge. In the early years, teachers make explicit reference to the required areas of learning. The teaching of reading in the early years is strong, including for those children who need a little more help with their reading. Teachers make effective use of assessment to ensure that pupils keep up with their learning by, for instance, spotting any emerging misunderstandings.

Leaders have prioritised reading throughout the school, including effective provision for those older pupils who need help with their reading.

Leaders have recently restructured their team in support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with further appointments to be made imminently. Leaders in the SEND team have started to carry out quality assurance of SEND provision in school and are identifying where provision is strong and where it is less so, but this process is not fully established. Inspectors saw that teachers' ambition for pupils with SEND was high. Some parents, however, do not feel that the needs of children with SEND are well met.

The extent to which the curriculum and teaching lead to pupils' high achievement is varied. In 2022, outcomes in the government's phonics screening check were significantly above the national average. Pupils in key stage 2 also made significantly more progress in writing and mathematics than did pupils nationally. At key stage 4, pupils' overall progress was in line with the national average. However, pupils' progress at the end of 2022 was significantly below national averages in English, science, humanities and languages. Leaders are conscious of these weaknesses and are taking action to address them, not least through some changes in subject leadership and curriculum redesign.

During the inspection, pupils' behaviour across phases was of a high standard. They conducted themselves in lessons and around school with courtesy and consideration. Most pupils, staff and parents who communicated with Ofsted think that this is generally the case. However, some pupils, staff and parents do not feel that behaviour is good most of the time. Leaders are working to improve the conduct of a small minority of pupils, particularly in Year 8, who consistently disrupt the learning of others in the secondary phase. In the current academic year, ten pupils have been permanently excluded, which is a high rate. A large proportion of these pupils are in Year 8. Some are pupils with SEND. Leaders with responsibility for SEND have recently started to liaise more closely with pastoral teams, so as to minimise the use of permanent exclusion of pupils with SEND as far as is appropriate.

The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is of a high quality. For example, teachers exploit opportunities to develop pupils' SMSC knowledge. When studying literary texts, for instance, pupils are taught about Victorian attitudes towards science. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a wide range of activities to foster pupils' wider development as young people and

future citizens. This includes the early years, where children are learning about the benefits of nature through gardening, and the sixth form, where students undertake work experience. As one pupil put it to an inspector, 'There's loads of brilliant clubs'.

Leadership of the school is principled and founded on doing the right things for pupils. Trustees, the CEO of the trust, and school governors have a strong understanding of the areas of priority facing the school. To a high degree, staff feel supported in their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the necessary checks on adults employed to work at the school are carried out. Leaders with particular safeguarding responsibilities have a secure understanding of their roles. They provide appropriate and regular safeguarding training for all staff. As a result, for instance, staff know what to do should they be concerned about the conduct of an adult in school. Safeguarding leaders' records of cases are thorough and demonstrate that appropriate actions are taken to support pupils who are in need of help.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- A small number of female pupils who spoke to inspectors do not have confidence that staff would respond in appropriate, supportive ways if alerted to boys' use of derogatory language. As a result, some girls would not report such instances, as they do not think anything would be done about it. Leaders should take action to ensure that all staff understand how they should respond if pupils raise concerns about other pupils' use of derogatory language.
- Some pupils and parents do not think that school leaders manage instances of bullying well. Consequently, among a small number of stakeholders, there is a lack of confidence that staff would, or do, respond appropriately. Leaders should take necessary action to reassure all pupils that any concerns about bullying would be treated appropriately, ensuring that all staff understand how to respond when bullying concerns are raised.
- A small number of pupils are persistently disruptive, particularly in Year 8. Despite a high rate of permanent exclusions in the current academic year, largely of Year 8 pupils, the behaviour of a minority continues to be challenging. Leaders should review their behaviour policy and its efficacy to bring about further improvement in the behaviour of this cohort of pupils.
- Pupils' progress in several subjects at the end of key stage 4 was significantly below the national averages in 2022. Leaders should continue to take the actions already commenced to address these weaknesses.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135619
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240208
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,975
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Stewart McKinlay
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Thelwell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bedeacademy.org.uk">www.bedeacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 9 June 2017

## Information about this school

- Bede Academy is an all-through school, situated across two sites. The south site provides teaching for early years and primary pupils, and the north site provides teaching for secondary pupils and sixth-form students.
- The school has a Christian ethos. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in January 2020. The next inspection is due within the next two years.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers, operated by the local authority, and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met the headteachers of both the primary and secondary phases. Inspectors also met senior leaders across both the primary and secondary phases.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust, a group of trustees, and members of the school's local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, science, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met the leaders with specific responsibility for safeguarding on both school sites, reviewed case files across both sites, checked the records of staff employed at the school, and discussed safeguarding with a range of staff and pupils.

## Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Roger Ward

Ofsted Inspector

Jenny Thomas

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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