

Section 48 Statutory Inspection Report

The Bede Academy			
Address	Sixth Avenue, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2SY		
Date of inspection	9-10 January 2020	URN	135619
Status of the school	Academy inspected as voluntary aided Emmanuel Schools Trust		

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Part of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation the Bede academy has a non-denominational Christian foundation. There are 1,864 students on roll, including 162 in the sixth form. It is on two purpose-built sites, one for primary and one for secondary. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages although the area has predominantly low-wage employment opportunities. The proportion who have special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) is broadly in line with national averages. The academy has an engineering and enterprise specialism. This is its first section 48 inspection.

The school's Christian vision

Core belief: We believe that each of us are made in the image of God and we seek to follow the example of Christ. This means that each of us are infinitely precious, gifted for a purpose and morally responsible.

Vision: We will be a great Academy where our students achieve excellence in character, excellence in academic outcomes and excellence within our community.

Values: Honourable Purpose, Humility, Compassion, Integrity, Accountability, Courage and Determination.

Motto: Veritas vos liberabit (the Truth shall set you Free)



Key findings

- This is an excellent all-through academy with much strong and exemplary practice that provides an excellent education for its students and encourages their personal and character development exceptionally well. It has been drawn on as an example for and to support others.
- The effective and visionary leadership of the two principals, ably supported by governors and senior leaders, enhances the academy's life and work. Under their leadership, the deeply embedded and aspirational Christian vision is clearly expressed. It provides a solid touchstone and motivating focus for all developments.
- The vision is based on a recognition, well-grounded in Christian teaching, of the value of the individual, each of whom is seen as 'infinitely precious, gifted for a purpose and morally responsible'. This is successfully lived out by staff and students and enables the academy to be a very happy and supportive place in which to work and learn.
- The vision is practically expressed through the emphasis on 'curriculum, character and community' to frame and give positive direction to its work. Likewise, the academy's values demonstrate the vision in action and are strongly demonstrated through, for example, the excellent behaviour, the high quality of relationships and the exceptional pastoral support provided for students.
- Almost every student makes at least good and often accelerated progress from their various starting points across both the primary and secondary phases. This means that overall attainment is high. The academy monitors progress and attainment effectively using this to ensure 'no student is left behind'. The very small number of students who do not make enough progress, for example, in some subjects in the secondary phase, are strongly supported both academically and pastorally.
- Both collective worship and Philosophy, Theology and Ethics (PTE) make excellent contributions to the academy's Christian vision. Students engage positively with both areas, although opportunities to regularly monitor and evaluate worship are less well developed.

Areas for development

- Promote additional opportunities to share expertise and the excellent work in evidence to extend the academy's support for others, within the Trust, local schools and beyond, specifically linking this with exemplifying how vision and associated values can positively drive and enhance policy and practice.
- Build on the current quality of the academy's Christian spiritual life so that opportunities for students to regularly monitor and evaluate worship are increased and ways of deepening the academy's prayer life are enhanced.
- In keeping with academy ongoing development planning ensure that any gaps in attainment between, for example, boys and girls in some secondary subjects are closed.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The academy has a clear and aspirational vision which permeates and drives its service to the community of Blyth and beyond. At its heart is a biblical understanding of the value of each person because they are infinitely precious to God. Consequently, the various needs, gifts and talents of individual students and staff are nurtured and extended. The vision is deeply embedded and clearly articulated by a dedicated and enthusiastic staff team, under the effective and far-sighted leadership of the two principals. The academy's ongoing self-evaluation and development planning is rigorous and accurate. Steps for continued improvement are well-focused and actioned. The vision leads to high expectations for all. This is responded to excellently by the vast majority of students who make at least good and often accelerated progress from their various starting points. This means that despite many entering the primary phase with below average levels of development, they enter the secondary phase at or above national averages. The secondary phase has extended the number of students it receives into Year 7. Many of these external students enter below national expectations. The academy is working effectively to ensure strong progress is made by these students. The vision is well-known to students: their responses are excellent, as are those of adults across the whole academy, including in nursery and the sixth form. Drawing from its vision, ambitious targets for ongoing improvement are set. For example, in the primary phase, there is a focus on increasing the percentage of pupils who attain 'greater depth' even higher than is currently achieved. In the secondary phase, the academy has identified that a minority of boys do not attain to their full potential and this means that there is a gap in outcomes between boys and girls. Effective strategies such as pastoral support, mentoring and various interventions to raise attainment for these boys are being actioned. Students and their families and the community of Blyth are placed at the heart of all the academy does.

The academy's values spring from and strongly express its vision. The values impact positively on students' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are in daily evidence across both phases of the academy. The support the developing and innovative character education programme excellently.

The concept of 'servant leadership', based on the example of Jesus, is very much in evidence across the academy. The principals provide exemplary leadership. In this they are capably supported by members of the local governing board and senior leaders, in and across both phases, Membership of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation provides further support. Staff are excellently supported for working in the academy. Beginning with advertisement, through the interview process and on to continuing professional development during their time, however short or long, in the academy, the vision positively shapes their work in exemplary ways.

There is a broad and balanced curriculum, including its engineering and enterprise specialism, from Nursery through to the end of Key Stage 4. The sixth form curriculum is strong with the academy identifying the need to expand the offer of more practically based Level 3 qualifications. This is partly to meet existing needs. The academy is very mindful of potential developments in Blyth and is proactively working with local businesses to ensure that, for example, higher level apprenticeships can be taken by students should they choose to embark on that route into employment. The effective curriculum is complemented by extensive extra-curricular and enrichment experiences. This provision indicates the aspirational, holistic and inclusive view of education running throughout the academy and which express its Christian vision and associated values strongly. There is a calm, purposeful and stimulating learning environment.

Mirroring its vision, students' personal development, is recognised as important and as having a constructive impact on their academic development and personal growth. Across the curriculum opportunities are taken to address questions of spiritual and moral importance. PTE plays a central role by addressing 'big questions' about God and the relevance of faith and ethical behaviour in the world today. Students are respectful and recognise difference and diversity as something to be celebrated. An example of this is the whole school involvement in a charity in South Africa which a group of sixth form students visit every year. Charitable giving is recognised as a way of living out the values, which in turn reflect the vision.

The personal and character development of pupils is excellently supported through, for example, the curriculum and through the commendable pastoral care. There is an exemplary emphasis on pupils', and indeed staff, wellbeing and flourishing. Equality and justice and personal and community empowerment to 'make a difference for the good' run through the school's life.

The academy works with churches from the immediate and wider locality both to enrich students' awareness of Christianity in the community and to offer service in the community. The academy has rightly prioritised further development of these opportunities.

The daily worship programme is one of the linchpins of academy life. The significance of belief in God, the relevance of Jesus and the Bible for Christians and the academy's vision and values are successfully encouraged. The programme is highly inclusive and invitational. This means that pupils and adults from various faith and non-faith backgrounds feel comfortable in joining in and benefit from it: engagement is consequently strong. Planning for collective worship is exemplary, including for the class/tutor group worship held as part of the programme. The five-year cycle for worship, based on biblical themes is well thought through and relevant for the academy's context. Students lead worship. For example, in the secondary phase each tutor group leads an act of worship for their peers annually. In the primary phase students share their talents by playing musical instruments to lead singing and by reading prayers. However, student involvement in monitoring and evaluating worship overall is under-developed.

The PTE curriculum is how the academy meets its legal requirement to provide religious education (RE) for all students on the school roll, including in the sixth form. The curriculum has an appropriate balance between a focus on Christianity and other world faiths, especially Judaism and Islam. Pupils' appreciation of key Christian beliefs and concepts are excellently focused. Governors and senior leaders ensure that PTE is given adequate time and resources. This demonstrates its importance as a core subject and its positive impact on extending the academy's vision and associated values. Through effective approaches students engage extremely well, enjoying PTE and finding that it, 'helps me think deeply about things,' and, 'we appreciate that people are different and believe different things'. There are many examples of exemplary written work expressing depth of response and understanding of the topics covered and how these relate to life in academy and the world beyond. Assessment opportunities provide a focus to help students know the next steps in their learning. Teachers use assessment well to target learning. RE subject leadership effectively supports developments. There is strong co-operation between the primary and secondary phases to ensure ongoing progression.



The effectiveness of Philosophy, Theology and Ethics is Excellent

Through high quality subject leadership and line management and the regular monitoring of teaching and learning PTE priorities for the development of the subject area are accurate and effective. Staff are aspirational for their students. Consequently, students make at least good or better progress across both the primary and secondary phases. This means that PTE excellently contributes to students flourishing both academically and personally. Within the primary phase class teachers are extremely well supported in teaching PTE. The secondary team has a mixture of specialist and non-specialist staff teaching within PTE and some temporary staffing. That said, the team is stable and work in a collegiate way to support students' learning. The PTE department provides effective support for other schools within the Trust.

Students' understanding and application of their learning in PTE develops well in both primary and secondary phases through a wide and appropriate range of teaching and learning approaches. The emphasis on rich knowledge of Christian concepts and biblical ideas is matched by the encouragement of thoughtful discussion and debate and a clear focus on understanding Christianity and other religions and beliefs. Consequently, most students from 3-19 enjoy their PTE lessons, and engage thoughtfully with theological and philosophical ideas, considering the challenges of different beliefs profoundly.

In the primary years, excellent connections between PTE and literacy, music and science education are a particular strength. For older students, consideration of ethical, religious and philosophical issues through demanding study of texts and arguments provides a stimulus to very good standards.

Principals	Bede South (primary) – Bethan Harding Bede North (secondary) – Andrew Thelwell
Inspector names	Lat Blaylock Pamela Draycott

