

Section 48 Statutory Inspection Report

Bede Academy			
Address	Sixth Avenue, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2SY		
Date of inspection	12-13 March 2024	URN	135619
Status of the school	Academy inspected as voluntary aided – part of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation		

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling students 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 this non-denominational Christian academy serves those of all backgrounds from Early Years through to Post 16. Many live in areas of social and economic disadvantage. There are 1,988 students on roll, including 196 in the sixth form. Most students are of White British heritage. The number with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) is in line with national averages and increasing. It had an engineering and enterprise specialism, an emphasis on character education and is designated a School of Sanctuary meaning that currently 49 displaced children are amongst its secondary number.

The school’s Christian vision



Each person is valued, challenged and inspired, being ‘made in God’s image’ and therefore infinitely precious, morally responsible and gifted for a purpose. Founded on faith, hope and love, and inspired by Christ, we pursue excellence in character development, learning across the curriculum and service to our communities.

Core Virtues: Love, Wisdom, Fairness, Self-Control, Courage, Humility, Integrity.

John chapter 10 verse 10. Jesus said, I came that you might have life and life in all its fullness.

Key findings

- The academy has continued to ensure that its non-denominational Christian foundation lies at the heart of its service to its community. Consequently, its Christian underpinning is explicit and extremely well known by students and staff. It supports and drives forward developments in exemplary ways.
- Areas for development from the previous Section 48 denominational inspection (2020) have been fully addressed. Current development planning is rigorous and clearly focused on ensuring that students are well cared for personally and appropriately challenged academically.
- The principals, effectively supported by governors and senior colleagues along with mutually supportive relationships with the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, provide exemplary leadership and competent management. Through this leadership the deeply embedded, inclusive and aspirational Christian vision mission and virtues are strongly expressed.
- The vision has been refined at a Foundation level since the previous Section 48 inspection. Bede Academy staff were closely involved in leading and facilitating this revision. The impact of the vision, mission and virtues are firmly embedded within the academy. For example, through the high-quality relationships and exemplary pastoral, safeguarding and SEND care, an aspirational approach to learning and teaching and strong character development. Consequently, the academy continues to be a happy and supportive place in which to work and to learn.
- The academy is now designated as a School of Sanctuary and offers impressive care for formerly displaced young people. This is rightly recognised as another outworking of its caring and inclusive Christian character. These students are well integrated and have been positively welcomed into the academy family.
- Based on its inclusive approach exemplified through its vision, mission and virtues, links with the local community are exceptional and impact positively on the academy's work, on the attitudes, attainment and progress of students and on the life of various organisations, charities and businesses in Blyth and beyond.
- The vision is practically expressed through an appropriate emphasis on 'curriculum, character and community' to frame and give positive direction to its work. The curriculum is broad, balanced, and aspirational. It is well matched to student need. Co-curricular opportunities are excellent so that all members of the community can extend the virtues beyond the classroom.
- The Personal Development (PD) programme in the secondary phase is exceptional with the Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) programme in the primary being strong but in need of further refinement. This includes logging more clearly the statutory elements of PHSE and the Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). The PD programme is an effective expression of the academy's Christian and inclusive nature. Planning and delivery is commendable. The approach to planning and delivery is well worth sharing more widely.
- Attainment and progress in the primary phase is exceptionally strong. In the secondary phase many students make at least good and sometimes accelerated progress from their various starting points. This means that attainment and progress compare favourably with local and national benchmarks for boys and SEND students. This reflects the effective work of leaders (including from the Foundation and the governing body), teachers and indeed students and expresses the academy's vision in a positive way.
- The impact of collective worship on the academy as an institution and on individuals and groups within it are evident. Students and staff value the time together. It is planned to further broaden opportunities for prayer and reflection across the academy.
- Both collective worship and Philosophy, Theology and Ethics (PTE), through which students' religious educational entitlement is met, make excellent contributions to the academy's non-denominational Christian vision.
- The PTE curriculum inspires students to delve deeply into key theological concepts in Christianity, other religious and non-religious worldviews and to explore their own and others' convictions.
- PTE excellently contributes to students' flourishing both academically and personally. The curriculum is well planned and delivered so that students are able to relate their learning to the academy's virtues placing them at the heart of the learning process.

Areas for development

- In keeping with academy ongoing development planning cycle review PHSE provision and practice across the primary phase, ensuring that it is specifically linked with the academy's vision, mission and values and mapping the statutory elements of PHSE and RSE more clearly. Proactively take opportunities to share the PD programme planning and approaches more widely.
- Extend the range of teaching and learning strategies within Philosophy, Theology and Ethics to support greater reflection and deeper discussion across the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3.

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

Inspection findings

Exemplary leadership and management, and strong and productive links with the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, means that Bede's vision, mission, and associated virtues permeates and drives its exceptional service to its community. This is commendable.

Since the previous Section 48 denominational inspection was carried out in 2020 there has been a reconsideration of the vision, mission and associated virtues at Foundation level. This was part of an ongoing review and improvement planning approach. Bede's staff were deeply involved in this review and have taken this opportunity to sharpen and revitalise its purpose still further. Consequently, there is an excellent emphasis on recognising, supporting, and extending the various gifts and talents of students and staff who are 'made in God's image' and therefore 'infinitely precious'. A key change in the revision was moving from an emphasis on values (beliefs) to a focus on virtues (actions). This has deepened the academy's continuing and innovative work around character education, in recognition of which it received a Kite Mark Plus from the Association of Character Education in 2022. This award reflects a holistic emphasis on developing students' character growth. The impact of this can be seen in the high standard of behaviour and attitudes to learning evident across the academy. Students are aware of the importance of thinking and acting in considerate and helpful ways. Consequently, this leads to a calm, purposeful and stimulating learning environment.

Staff, irrespective of faith or non-faith personal positions, are well able to articulate the impact of the academy's non-denominational Christian foundation. It is evident throughout the recruitment, induction, and ongoing development phases. It demonstrates how the vision positively shapes the academy's workforce in exemplary ways. Under the productive and effective leadership of the principals, ably supported by senior colleagues, collegiate ways of working are the norm. Consequently, staff are valued and recognise how their professional lives are appropriately nurtured. Many 'go the extra mile' in supporting their students academically and personally.

Students and their parents or carers are overwhelmingly positive about the pastoral care and the quality of the education received. They see the positive impact that the academy's inclusive Christian basis is having. They understand that this leads to the emphasis on being 'valued and morally responsible and gifted for a purpose' as laid out in the vision statement. They appreciate that this is reflected in high expectations both academically and in terms of behaviour. Students from nursery through to sixth form are well able to articulate, in age-appropriate and often mature ways, the importance of the academy's inclusive Christian vision. As one primary aged student said, 'I'm not a Christian but see the importance of it at Bede every day. It helps me think about what I should do with my life and how I should treat others'. A biblical understanding at the heart of its vision recognises and values each person as precious to God. This is expressed in a clear theological understanding of the importance of education as a means of achieving to one's full potential, personally and academically. The academy's virtues are derived from, and strongly express, its vision. They impact positively on students' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are in daily evidence across both phases of the academy. They support the exemplary pastoral care excellently. Mutually respectful relationships are strongly in evidence and the virtues figure large in the positive behaviour seen. On those very few occasions where attitudes or behaviour falls short of the appropriately high standards expected, there is a consistent approach to modifying such behaviour, often through discussion of the virtues and usually successfully. This is recognised by students. As one lower secondary student said, 'The way in which poor behaviour is dealt with is fair and helpful. It doesn't happen often, but you know what to expect. People are given a second chance because forgiveness is important.'

The academy's ongoing self-evaluation and development planning is rigorous and accurate. Governors are well informed and appropriately engaged with all aspects of Bede's life. Key issues for improvement from the previous Section 48 denominational inspection have been well targeted and revised to meet the academy's ongoing needs. The vision leads to ambitious targets for continuing improvement being set which lead to high aspirations for students who are strongly supported. Almost all respond excellently to this. Many students make at least good progress from their various starting points. Progress across the primary phase is extremely strong (amongst the top five percent in the country). This means that these students enter the secondary phase well above national averages. Many students who did not attend the primary phase at Bede enter the secondary below national expectations. These students are well integrated into the life and ethos of Bede Academy with many making accelerated progress through their secondary journey. During the period of the pandemic Bede continued to work effectively with its students and their families. Unfortunately, some mental health issues and behavioural problems did arise following a full physical return. These were dealt with compassionately and largely effectively across both phases. However, a small group in the secondary phase had major problems on return which despite

the best efforts of senior leaders and the pastoral team continued. This led to some underachievement which slightly depressed the outcomes for GCSE in 2023. All the indications are that the academy has effective strategies in place to ensure that this will not be repeated in 2024.

From Nursery through to the end of Key Stage 4, and in keeping with its aspirational vision, there is a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, which appropriately includes its engineering and enterprise specialism. The curriculum is well tailored to the learning needs of all, including those with SEND. Since the previous Section 48 denominational inspection a statutory requirement for sex and relationships education (SRE) has been put in place. In response, the academy has developed a suitable SRE policy, delivered through Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) in the primary phase and through the exemplary Personal Development (PD) programme across the secondary phase. The academy has rightly identified the need to further develop and refine its PHSE and SRE provision across the primary phase, particularly in mapping the statutory elements of both areas in more detail. The sixth form curriculum is strong with an appropriate balance between academic and more practically based qualifications. A new technical level (T level) in Engineering is in place with one in Health being introduced from September 2024. This is indicative of the responsive, creative, and focused adaptation of the sixth form offer as these new T levels have only just been made available. Consequently, Bede's is at the forefront of them being introduced nationally. The academy works proactively with local businesses to facilitate apprenticeships. The effective curriculum is strongly complemented by extensive extra-curricular and enrichment experiences. There is large-scale take-up for this provision which is commendable. It expresses an aspirational and holistic view of education and personal development that runs throughout. This is clearly based on its inclusive Christian underpinning. It leads to an outstanding emphasis on students', and indeed staff, wellbeing, and flourishing. Consequently, it contributes to the academy being a welcoming, happy, and mutually respectful environment in which to learn and to work.

Opportunities to address issues of spiritual, religious, and moral importance are well taken across the wider curriculum with Philosophy, Theology and Ethics (PTE) and the Personal Development (PD) Programme and collective worship taking the lead. Charitable giving is rightly seen as an outworking of the academy's vision and as a way of demonstrating the virtues in action. Students are encouraged to improve their academy and wider community as illustrated by, for example, the primary student leadership group, who are currently leading a 'walk to school' initiative to cut down, where possible, on congestion and pollution. Bede is now designated as a School of Sanctuary with displaced young people being effectively supported and well-integrated into its life and work. This is commendably recognised as a direct reflection of its Christian, caring and inclusive vision.

The daily worship programme is of central importance to academy life. It is well planned and delivered to reflect and deepen the academy's vision, mission and virtues. Biblical material and themes are well thought through and relevant to the academy's priorities and in supporting personal reflection and/or prayer. The programme is highly inclusive, invitational, and inspirational. This means that students and adults from various faith and non-faith backgrounds feel comfortable in joining in and benefit from it. Engagement is consequently very strong. Planning is exemplary, with very clear support provided, for example, for tutor group worship. Placing 'assembly' at the beginning of the day leads to a calm and purposeful start which is valued. A number of visitors, including governors, clergy and others locally help to lead the worship programme. This is a reflection of the excellent links and strong relationships that the academy has proactively nurtured with its local community. These wider links are numerous and exceptionally strong. An example of the way in which students' opinions and suggestions are taken into account is a recent 'student voice' exercise focusing on collective worship. During this, some said that they would value a greater range of prayer and reflection opportunities which would enhance provision further. Consequently, this area is now an area for development and improvement planning with an initial focus on Key Stage 3 provision and practice.

Statutory requirements for religious education (RE) are met through the Philosophy, Theology and Ethics curriculum, which is well thought through and has an appropriate balance between a focus on Christianity and other religious and non-religious worldviews. Governors and senior leaders ensure that PTE is placed at the core of the curriculum and senior leaders have acted quickly to rectify previous issues in the leadership of secondary PTE. This demonstrates its importance as a core subject and the commitment at all levels to ensure that PTE makes a significant contribution to students both academically and personally.



The effectiveness of Philosophy, Theology and Ethics is Excellent

The academy has undergone changes in the staffing of PTE at the secondary level in the past year. This has enabled a clear refocus on developing the subject in the secondary phase so that students across the academy consistently receive high quality, impactful learning opportunities. The refocused curriculum, introduced

in September 2023 for Years 7, 8 and 9, is built around the concept of The Big Story of Salvation and covers the key concepts of Christianity and other religious and non-religious worldviews imaginatively. Through the new leadership of the subject there have been changes at GCSE and A Level to ensure that students make the high levels of progress in PTE which are seen elsewhere in the academy.

Regular monitoring of PTE in all phases enables leaders to speak accurately about student learning in lessons and about their levels of attainment and progress. Teachers in both the primary and secondary phases are extremely well supported in teaching PTE and work in a collegiate way to support students' learning. The priorities for the development of the subject area are accurate and effective and rightly focused on aspirational targets for all students across all years in the academy.

PTE inspires students to delve deeply into key theological concepts. The emphasis on rich knowledge based on the disciplines of theology, social science and philosophy ensure that students encounter religion in its fullest expression. Students explore their own convictions and those of others by revisiting core concepts, personal belief and through deepening their substantive knowledge. Consequently, students develop an appropriate understanding of the complexity of religious thought and action. This clear focus on the role of religion across the academy and in the locality affords students a clear understanding of the place of religion as a lived experience. Irrespective of their personal faith position they address issues of spiritual, religious and ethical concerns well. Students across the academy speak highly of PTE and how their learning is linked to the virtues and to John 10:10 enabling them to explore 'fullness of life' within their own context. PTE excellently contributes to students flourishing both academically and personally.

Students make at least good or often better progress across both the primary and secondary phases. The depth of written work across the academy ensures that progress is evident and shows how the students have taken the opportunity to encounter and understand the nuanced nature of holding a particular world view. The opportunities for students to develop their understanding further is not yet fully realised at Key Stage 3 in the same manner it is in the primary phase and in Key Stage 4 and across the sixth form. The exploration by students and the discussion of Christian concepts and biblical ideas is highly developed in the primary phase and examination classes and is a developing feature of a newly developed Key Stage 3 curriculum

Principals	Bede North – Andrew Thelwell Bede South Primary – Nicky White
Inspector names	Pamela Draycott Ian Nicholson