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17 June 2011

Miss G Evans  
Principal  
Bede Academy  
Sixth Avenue  
Blyth  
Northumberland  
NE24 2SY

Dear Miss Evans

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to Bede Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Andrew Johnson HMI to your academy on 15 and 16 June 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other members of staff, students, and the Chair of the Governing Body, who also represented the sponsors.

### **Context**

The new purpose-built academy opened in September 2009 and is sponsored by the United Learning Trust. It is one of the first academies to cater for students from the age of 3 to 18 and presently has 1,384 students on roll up to Year 10. The academy serves local communities in Blyth. The academy's specialism is engineering and enterprise. Virtually all students are White British. The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and with home languages other than English are well below the national average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The number with statements of special educational need is higher than usually found. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Students enter the academy in the reception with broadly average levels of attainment. The attainment of many students who started in year 7 to year 10 is below average. A significant proportion of the teachers are recently qualified.

January 2011

**PROTECT-INSPECTION**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

The academy has made good progress in raising attainment and achievement since it opened. Attainment is now average and rising. In 2010, the Key Stage 1 test results were above local authority and national averages, with girls outperforming boys in English. The results of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2010 were in line with the national average in English and lower in mathematics. Middle ability boys did not achieve as well in both subjects at Level 4+. Inspection evidence confirms school data that attainment in 2011 is significantly higher, for example 78% of students were at Level 4+ in mathematics in February 2011 at Key Stage 2.

An increasing proportion of students are on track to achieve or exceed challenging targets in 2011 as a result of the good progress they are making, including those who follow the specialism in engineering. Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and enjoy challenging lessons which quickly capture their interest. Good and effective intervention programmes are raising aspirations and attainment. The rigorous analysis of detailed assessment information shows the progress of different groups of students is continuing to improve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Attendance is above average, behaviour is excellent and exclusions are below the national average. The positive academy and Christian ethos ensures policy is always translated into consistent practice. The focus on making good progress in learning basic skills in literacy and numeracy makes a strong contribution to students' future economic well-being. Students say that they feel safe and are confident in their approach to learning. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is good, for example through physical education and extra-curricular sport.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Inspection evidence reflects the academy's evaluation that teaching and assessment to support learning are good and improving. The already high proportion of good and better teaching is continuing to rise because the Principal and members of the governing body have made it a high priority. Frequent and robust monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders is helping staff to know how effective their teaching is. Students know how well they are doing, what they are aiming to achieve, and how they can improve their work.

The most successful teaching is characterised by the attentive, respectful and polite behaviour of students and learning which develops deep levels of knowledge and understanding. As a result, students make rapid progress and all groups of students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included. In those cases where the teaching is less successful, work is insufficiently tailored to meet interests and needs. Assessment information is not always well used to vary tasks and engage

students in independent learning. Students remain well behaved although they do not enjoy learning as much.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is being developed very well, for example at Key Stage 4 where students can take a range of accredited courses from academic and vocational options including the specialist subjects which are making a good impact. The provision of activities beyond the curriculum is very extensive and take-up is exceptionally high. There are strong partnerships which enhance course provision and provide a good insight into the world of work. The academy provides effective care, support and guidance for its students, including those at risk of exclusion or with special educational needs.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The Principal and senior team have a clear and ambitious vision for the academy. They have successfully inspired students and staff, who share a common sense of purpose. High expectations have been established and any underachievement is rigorously tackled. The academy has very successfully promoted partnerships with parents and the local community to raise expectations and standards. Self-evaluation is accurate and leadership at all levels has driven improvements very well in the last year. The positive impact of the actions taken by senior leaders and managers demonstrate strong capacity for further improvement. The governing body is strongly committed to the development of the academy and the principle of inclusion. They understand the barriers that have to be overcome to raise standards and their future vision is highly focused. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are routinely monitored.

### **External support**

The academy's sponsors and the governing body make a strong contribution to all aspects of the academy's work. They are fully aware of the progress being made in raising standards and provide highly effective challenge and support. The School Improvement Partner is helping the academy to develop its own capacity to sustain better outcomes and sharpen the evaluation of performance.

### **Main Judgement**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Continue to improve the academy's overall effectiveness at a rapid pace.
- Further raise attainment and achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

- Make sure all teaching is good or better by continuing to share the best practice and ensuring assessment information is always used to plan the next steps in learning.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc Chair of governors  
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