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28 November 2014

Ms Gwyneth Evans  
Principal  
Bede Academy  
Sixth Avenue  
Blyth  
Northumberland  
NE24 2SY

Dear Ms Evans

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Bede Academy**

Following my visit with Her Majesty's inspectors Brian Blake, Gina White, Michael Maddison and Christine Inkster, to your academy on 26 and 27 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was undertaken at the direction of the Secretary of State for Education. Under s8(1) of the Education Act 2005 the Chief Inspector, if requested by the Secretary of State to inspect a school, must inspect and report on that school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the Principal and other senior leaders. In addition, meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of middle leaders, main scale teachers and groups of students. They observed a range of lessons and a number of tutorial sessions and assemblies. During these observations, inspectors spoke informally with students and checked their work. A range of documentation, including the academy development plan, the funding agreement, attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, academy policies and schemes of work, was scrutinised.

### **Context**

Bede Academy is an 'all through' academy which caters for students aged from three to 18 years old and is much larger than similar schools of its type. The academy is based on primary and secondary campuses within the town of Blyth and is part of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, a group of four sponsored academies in the north of England. The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for support

through the pupil premium funding is below the national average (the pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority). The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.

The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. Few students leave or join the academy other than at the beginning and end of the academy year. The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

### **Main findings**

The inspectors' main focus was to establish whether the academy's curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, and whether leaders, including governors, ensure that students are adequately prepared for life in modern Britain. The inspection findings raised no concerns about either aspect of leadership and management. Inspectors did, however, identify areas of work where further improvement would strengthen the overall effectiveness of this good academy.

The academy curriculum matches the requirements set out in the academy funding agreement and offers a broad range of subjects. It is well matched to students' needs and provides well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The philosophy, theology and ethics (PTE) curriculum, together with regular tutorials and lectures, ensures that students are adequately prepared for life in modern Britain. However, the coverage of world religions is limited and needs to expand. Older students commented that they would welcome more opportunities to broaden their understanding of other cultures and religions. The academy has an effective primary school council but this is not the case for secondary students and an opportunity to teach the role of democracy by modelling it in the secondary phase is missed.

Students achieve well. High expectations are clear throughout the academy and students are encouraged to strive for academic success. While academy leaders recognise that developing students' literacy and numeracy skills is a key factor in raising standards; in this regard, inspectors considered that the use of tutor time is not being used as effectively as it should be. Behaviour throughout the academy is good and students of all ages are very aware of the excellent facilities provided in all areas of the curriculum. Students are proud to wear the academy uniform, have positive attitudes to each other and to adults, and play a key role in making the academy a harmonious and pleasant community to work in and be part of.

### **External support**

Bede Academy receives support from the other academies of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation. The Foundation has been effective in brokering a significant range of

support in the areas of leadership and management, and teaching and learning to help drive improvements in the academy.

**Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that leaders review how effectively the academy prepares all students for life in modern Britain including through a more expansive approach to the study of major world religions.
- Review the use and purpose of tutor activity time so that all opportunities are taken to support improvements in students' literacy and numeracy skills.

I am copying this letter to the Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Services for Northumberland, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Brown  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**