

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy

Vision

Our vision for education is deeply Christian, and rooted in theology [Matthew 19 V26]. Our vision 'With God all things are possible' speaks powerfully into the heart of all we do.

It is from this Bible teaching that Jesus recognises the value of teaching children and how through God we are able to achieve all that we can. We believe this epitomises our mission and purpose as a school.

Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The Christian vision is lived boldly and intentionally shapes many aspects of school life. This successfully creates a culture where pupils and adults flourish in body, mind and spirit.
- The curriculum is ambitious and is intelligently and explicitly shaped by the school's vision and values. Themes of hope and justice are woven through learning. Pupils are challenged to think deeply, act with compassion and apply their knowledge to real-world issues.
- This is a community of loving acceptance, where dignity, forgiveness and restoration are lived out daily. The school's relational approach to behaviour and wellbeing reflects its commitment to valuing each person as uniquely made and deeply known.
- Leadership is visionary and courageous. Decisions are made with clarity, rooted in Christian purpose and hope. Strategic planning and professional development equip staff and pupils to flourish.
- Collective worship is inclusive, spiritually enriching and draws the community together. It affirms the school's Christian vision and nurtures spiritual growth. Pupils and adults value worship as a meaningful and transformational part of the week.

Development Points

- Extend pupils' and adults' understanding of spiritual development beyond the current model. This is to widen opportunities for spiritual growth.



Inspection Findings

This is a school where the Christian vision is shared, lived and embraced. Grounded in the belief that, “With God, all things are possible”, the vision provides strategic direction and moral purpose. Leaders, including governors, make decisions that explicitly reflect the vision. These include the founding of the Northern Lights Learning Trust, becoming a DFE Teaching School Hub and a DFE Early Years Stronger Practice Hub. The five core Christian values of hope, endurance, community, forgiveness and justice give the vision practical expression. They are recognised and applied by pupils and staff alike. Relationships are characterised by compassion and respect. There is a strong sense of shared purpose across the community. Many pupils confidently describe how the vision shapes their learning and behaviour. Staff also speak of feeling supported and spiritually nurtured, with one reflecting, ‘The presence of God is here’. The trust supports and strengthens the school’s Christian foundation. It provides training and strategic guidance that enhance the school’s ability to live out its vision with integrity.

The curriculum is aspirational and carefully designed to reflect the changing context of the school as the pupil population grows. It fosters rich learning and strong personal development. The values of hope and justice are woven through. These support pupils to become compassionate and thoughtful learners. Pupils study diverse role models, global issues and sustainability. These help them understand their place in the world and how to challenge injustice. This was seen in their reflective response to the recent riots in Sunderland. Pupils considered how communities can rebuild in hope. Learning is well sequenced and regularly revisited. Pupils with additional needs are supported through timely intervention and high-quality teaching. They are fully included in the curriculum and achieve well. The school’s inclusive approach reflects its belief that every child has God-given worth and can flourish. In Early Years, a creative and exploratory approach encourages curiosity and lays foundations for spiritual development from the start. Following support from the diocese and trust, spiritual development is now comprehensively mapped across subjects. Staff use shared language and planned moments for deep thinking and reflection. Recent training has supported teachers to recognise and develop spirituality in lessons. Leaders are beginning to build on this by helping pupils and staff express spiritual growth in deeper ways.

Worship unites the community and draws it into a shared rhythm of reflection, prayer and praise. It is shaped by the Christian vision and rooted in Anglican tradition. Worship includes structure, symbolism and a strong theological core. Pupils value worship deeply. One explained, ‘We can do everything with God by our side’, while another described it as, ‘a space where we learn to be a better person’. Whole-school themes are introduced each week and explored through a cycle of worship. These include class, praise and community gatherings. Worship is invitational, and pupils of all backgrounds engage with respect and curiosity. Those from different faiths value the sense of belonging. Reflections are captured in collective worship books. These enable pupils to revisit ideas and deepen their understanding. Friday community worship is widely regarded as a highlight of the week. Inspirationally led by the parish priest, it is attended by pupils, staff, families and others. Up to eighty additional members of the community join regularly. This affirms its spiritual and communal importance. The school also offers regular Eucharist services. Staff lead worship with confidence, supported by training and thoughtful planning.

This is a community of loving acceptance. Relationships are shaped by the values of forgiveness, community and hope. These are lived out in the everyday interactions between pupils and adults. Consequently, behaviour is excellent and attendance is high. Breaktimes are inclusive and joyful. They are structured to foster interaction across ages and interests. The introduction of OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) has enhanced these opportunities. Pupils of all backgrounds and needs feel included and valued. Staff take time to restore relationships when things



go wrong. They use a relational approach that reflects the school's belief in the worth of every person. Support for wellbeing is woven through school life. Pupils have a dedicated trusted space to share concerns. Staff are supported both practically and pastorally. They value the wellbeing initiatives and the presence of the school chaplain. Leaders, staff, governors and the trust share a deep commitment to creating a school where every person can flourish in body, mind and spirit. This is a place where the value of community is not just spoken, but felt.

Pupils are empowered to lead with courage and compassion. Pupil leadership is a significant strength of the school. A wide range of roles, including Rights Knights, House Captains and Lighthouse Leaders, allow pupils to shape decision-making, support others and lead initiatives. These roles build character, confidence and responsibility. Parents and staff confirm that pupil voice is heard, valued and acted upon. The work of the Pupil Parliament contributes to trust-wide priorities. These include environmental action and tackling the cost of living. Themes of justice and moral responsibility are embedded across the curriculum. This is especially evident in humanities and personal development. The school's focus on global citizenship, sustainability and human rights is linked to the Christian vision. It reflects the belief that every person is deeply valued. Younger pupils recently demonstrated this by writing to Royal Mail about the environmental impact of discarded elastic bands. Pupils regularly lead charitable and community initiatives. They understand that their voice matters and that, with God's help, they can be a force for good in the world.

Religious education is delivered with depth, care and a strong sense of purpose. The curriculum follows the diocesan syllabus and is well-resourced. Staff use materials such as Understanding Christianity to support learning. The content is sequenced clearly and includes a strong focus on Christianity as a global faith. Other world religions and non-religious worldviews are studied in depth. This supports theological, moral and cultural understanding. The subject is well led. The new subject leader has been well supported and is already having a positive impact. This is seen in staff confidence and improved subject knowledge across the team. Regular input from the trust and diocese strengthens professional development. It ensures that RE remains a priority in the school's development planning. Governors value RE as a core subject and monitor its development carefully.

Lessons are meticulously planned and create space for rich discussion and reflection. Pupils enjoy RE and engage with curiosity and respect. Teachers deliver the curriculum with confidence and use assessment to support progress and identify misconceptions. Pupils are able to recall key learning and make links to their understanding of the world. Some are beginning to make rich connections in their learning. One pupil reflected, "The more I am learning about Hinduism, the more I see similarities with the Abrahamic religions." Leaders now aim to strengthen how pupils articulate their learning. This will help them explain how they explore religions and worldviews through the lenses of belief, thinking and practice.

Information

Address	Marcross Drive, Sunderland. SR3 2RE		
Date	2/4/25	URN	137831
Type of school	Academy (former voluntary aided)	No. of pupils	318
Diocese	Durham		
MAT	Northern Lights Learning Trust		
Headteacher	Sarah Armstrong		
Chair of Governors	Gordon Petrie		
Inspector	Darren Dudman 2101		