

Inspection of Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy

Marcross Drive, Moorside, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 2RE

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Armstrong. The school is part of Northern Lights Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jo Heaton OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Katie Hammond.

What is it like to attend this school?

Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy is aspirational and nurturing. Pupils embody the school's vision of 'With God all things are possible' and strive to do their best. Right from the early years, pupils are welcomed into an ambitious learning atmosphere that fosters their curiosity, critical thinking and personal growth. Pupils thrive both academically and socially. The school's Christian ethos gives pupils daily opportunities to reflect, be thankful and develop a sense of community.

Pupils show great enthusiasm for their learning. The school removes barriers to learning for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. They benefit from the ambitious curriculum and staff expertise. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

The school has carefully designed a language-rich and stimulating environment in the early years. The experiences and activities promote children's creativity, social skills and emotional development. Children have a phenomenal start to their education in this school.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The mutual respect they show to each other is evident during lessons and playtimes. Pupils are valued and are constantly motivated to contribute positively to their school and wider community. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in the local area and when online. Pupils leave the school as confident and well-rounded individuals.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Subject leaders have carefully considered learning to ensure that pupils develop a deep understanding of important knowledge over time. The school prioritises pupils' communication and language development. Pupils are encouraged to think critically in lessons and make connections between their learning. This helps them to deepen their understanding and discuss their learning eloquently. Consequently, pupils achieve highly.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. It has ensured that learning is challenging and well sequenced across all year groups. The subject knowledge and expertise of staff are impressive. This is continuously enhanced by the high-quality professional development they receive from the trust.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. They receive targeted interventions that are seamlessly threaded into the classroom routines. Staff are well trained in adapting lessons to meet the needs of these pupils. This means that they can access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. The school's inclusive approach ensures that pupils with SEND not only meet their academic targets but also develop the personal and social skills needed for success in the future.

Reading is a key priority for the school. Pupils benefit from an exceptionally well-structured reading curriculum. The school ensures that pupils develop fluency and confidence in reading from an early age. The school's commitment to developing staff expertise in early reading means pupils learn to read quickly and fluently. Those who need additional learning receive effective support. Pupils benefit from the strong focus on vocabulary development and comprehension. Their love for reading is palpable.

The school's early years provision is exemplary. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to promote exploration and curiosity. Staff use carefully structured questions to develop children's language and independence. Children confidently use technology, such as digital microscopes, to examine their fingerprints and other items of interest. Staff support children's conversations to build their critical thinking. The school ensures that all children, including those with SEND, are well supported and included. Staff effectively adapt the curriculum to meet children's individual learning needs, ensuring that every child can access the full range of learning opportunities. Children spend time in 'family groups'. This allows staff to monitor and support each child's progress closely. The school prioritises children's personal, social, and emotional development. The family-style mealtimes are used as a fantastic opportunity to develop children's conversational skills and excellent social interactions. Every interaction between staff and children is maximised to be a meaningful learning opportunity. Children play together harmoniously. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the education their children receive in Nursery and Reception. They appreciate the rapid progress their children make in all areas of their learning.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. There is a calm and focused atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils show a clear commitment to their learning. They act with respect and consideration for others. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils are confident the school addresses any issues immediately. Pupils enjoy coming to school. The school's systems encourage good attendance and punctuality.

The school's values underpin all aspects of character development, helping pupils to grow into compassionate and reflective individuals. Pupils feel supported emotionally. They regularly engage in activities that develop their leadership skills, teamwork and citizenship. Pupils take part in charitable projects and decision-making activities. The school champions pupils' opinions through systems like the trust-wide Pupil Parliament or supporting pupils' activism to create a city-wide girls' football league.

There is a strong, united vision shared across the school. Leaders are deeply committed to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. Their strategic focus on continuous improvement is evident in all areas. Staff are valued and supported. Governors and trustees play an active role in championing the school's vision and maintaining high standards. They continually strive to provide an excellent education to every pupil who attends Benedict Biscop.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137831
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10297362
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	318
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Katie Hammond
CEO of the trust	Jo Heaton OBE
Headteacher	Sarah Armstrong
Website	www.benedictbiscopacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of Northern Lights Learning Trust.
- This is a Church of England school. The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in March 2017.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including representatives from the board of trustees, the Diocese of Durham and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, computing and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about pupils’ learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils from different year groups reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors met the special educational needs coordinator, spoke to pupils with SEND and reviewed plans to support these pupils. They visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported.
- Inspectors visited the early years provision to check safeguarding arrangements and discuss the learning with children and leaders.
- Inspectors observed behaviour at the start of the day, at lunchtimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online staff and pupil surveys. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.

Inspection team

Georgina Chinaka, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

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