

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Junior School

Address	Springhill Road, Walsall WSI 2LP		
Date of inspection	23 January 2020	Status of school	Voluntary aided junior
Diocese	Lichfield	URN	I04230

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils 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

Blue Coat is a junior school with 360 pupils on roll. Pupils are of very diverse heritage with 26 home languages spoken. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The school forms part of the Blue Coat Church of England Infant and Junior Schools' Federation, sharing the executive headteacher who has been in post since 2012.

The school's Christian vision

I will bless you with a future filled hope – a future of success, not of suffering. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Love God, love others

Let your light shine

Believing, celebrating, succeeding

Key findings

- The school's Christian vision and associated values are embedded in all aspects of school life, creating a school where God's light does indeed shine to allow pupils and adults in its care to flourish.
- The drive to bring God's hope and love ensures that barriers to learning and wellbeing are removed. All pupils receive exceptional nurture, with the dedicated care given to the most vulnerable demonstrating an unswerving commitment for all to thrive.
- Highly committed governors know the school extremely well and fully support its vision and values. They provide dedicated support and appropriate challenge. Strong systems for monitoring are in place but these do not always include an exploration of the pupils' views on their own learning.
- The outstanding teaching and learning of religious education (RE) deepen and enrich pupils' understanding. Pupils develop a high level of religious literacy whilst being challenged to consider and debate their own views. However, some aspects of marking and assessment are inconsistent across the school.
- Invitational collective worship enriches pupils' spiritual experience as it celebrates the beliefs at the heart of the Christian faith in a way relevant to all. School life is underpinned by prayer, while links with local churches are exceptionally strong. Although not yet planning independently, pupil worship leaders take an active role within times of worship.

Areas for development

- Refine the robust systems by which leaders, including governors, monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's vision by deepening their exploration of pupils' views and using the results to direct the school's drive forward.
- Extend pupils' experiences by allowing them to plan and lead worship independently, while also giving them more responsibility for enriching reflective opportunities within their own classrooms.
- Ensure that RE marking is consistent across the school and pupils are actively involved in assessment of their own work in the subject and know what steps are needed to deepen their excellent learning.

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

Inspection findings

The promise of a God-given hope-filled future drives the life of Blue Coat Junior. The dedicated headteacher and committed leadership team share a passion to ensure that faith permeates all aspects of life in this exceptional Church school. The inspirational biblical promise was chosen as the school vision by pupils and leaders together. Staff and governor teams reflect the very diverse mix of cultures and faiths found in the school community. However, leaders, parents and pupils explain that they fully support the vision and share its aspiration for a secure future lived with God's help. Governors speak of 'a golden thread of commitment' running through everything. Parents, whatever their beliefs, express pride in being part of this over-subscribed school, known for its care and faith. Parents explain that they are welcomed as they are and never 'pushed into a different mould'. The vision is clearly proclaimed on the website and in documentation. Pupils explain its meaning and biblical roots confidently, giving examples of its relevance to their lives. The positive behaviour policy offers restoration and forgiveness built on Jesus' command to 'Treat others as you want them to treat you' (Matthew 7:12). This approach ensures a calm and respectful atmosphere. Any bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils feel happy and well supported. They know that 'God never gives up on us even when we make mistakes', linking this to values of perseverance and forgiveness. Rigorous and effective systems allow the well-informed governors to monitor school progress across all areas, including the school's Christian character. They take a full part in the school's self-evaluation, challenging leaders and holding the school to account.

The school is extremely proactive in ensuring that its pupils both make good progress and are enabled to transform their lives for the best. Each pupil is known and cherished as a unique and precious child of God. Many enter well below age-expected levels, yet make exceptional progress. This is especially true of pupils with English as an additional language. Their care is supplemented by pupil amigo mentors. The specialist inclusion team provide the most vulnerable pupils with innovative nurture clearly linked to the school's vision. They ensure that the most challenging pupils are lovingly supported. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions in the last five years. The school shares its excellent practice across the Borough, supporting as a beacon of good practice. Pupils are highly engaged in learning. The broad and varied curriculum enriches individual learning through questioning and research. The presentation of work is of an extremely high standard as pupils let their own lights shine and take a pride in doing their very best. Parents value workshops that allow them to learn alongside their children. Extra-curricular activities further develop individual talents and interests.

Diversity is celebrated throughout the school. Pupils talk of the need to treat all alike and with respect. They explain that they follow Jesus' teaching by standing up for the poor. Pupils are encouraged to become courageous advocates for those who face discrimination or injustice, locally or globally. Their understanding of diversity is deepened through partnerships with schools in Kenya and Herefordshire. Pupils select a Lent charity to support and discuss why they make their choice. The school's preparation for new relationships and sex education guidelines demonstrates its loving care. Consultations with the many communities represented ensure that all can confidently share the school's approach. The resulting policy truly values all God's children. The school has taken major steps to ensure that staff are highly trained in caring for pupils facing emotional and mental health issues. The wellbeing of staff is also given priority with health and work life balance supported very effectively. Staff professional development is given priority. Although well equipped to embrace church school leadership, staff are reluctant to leave the loving Blue Coat family.

Worship is central to school life. The school's vision, values and foundational faith are celebrated within interactive and engaging worship. Pupils respond enthusiastically to song, dance, drama, Bible teaching and quiet reflection. They explain the impact of worship upon their everyday lives. Pupils are extremely confident in explaining Christian beliefs. They discuss the importance of Jesus for Christians, and explain such challenging concepts as incarnation and the Trinity. Pupils have a detailed understanding of major festivals. Pupil worship leaders pray and read confidently, but do not yet plan and lead worship independently or involve wider pupil groups in leading. Prayer provides the heartbeat of school life. Individually painted stones prompt pupils to personal prayer. Pupils share prayer requests and offer their own prayers in a variety of settings throughout

the day. They talk of answered prayer, while staff and governors share their reliance on prayer within school life. Even the medical room displays prayers to be shared with the unwell. Worship times include spontaneous, responsive and liturgical prayer. Church volunteers lead a prayer club, enriching pupils' experiences and promoting discussion. The rector is a frequent visitor, leading worship each week. Close links between school and parish church are strengthened by partnerships with other local churches. These result in diverse worship that widens pupils' experience. These deep encounters include visits from both diocesan and Kenyan bishops, singing in the cathedral and a moving leavers' service in the Methodist church. Many governors are church members and pupils see the church as an integral part of school life. Parents greatly value times when they can share worship. These include school-led church services, including the celebration of Eucharist in which pupils and their families join enthusiastically.

RE lessons significantly deepens pupils' understanding. Pupils explore concepts at the heart of a variety of faiths, using appropriate vocabulary. As a result, they develop an extensive understanding of the meaning of faith. RE is led by a dedicated team who confidently share their subject knowledge, enabling staff to deliver the challenging topics studied. The engaging curriculum, enriched by the 'Understanding Christianity' resource, is very well planned, while visits and visitors enhance lessons. Pupils readily express their own views and believe their opinions valued. Debate and discussion are strongly promoted. Class RE diaries further celebrate their work. The thinking skills promoted in RE impact positively across other areas of learning. Governors monitor RE and worship very effectively, although their unstinting support includes only a limited exploration of pupils' views. School leaders work with the diocese to offer RE support and training across the Borough-wide network of Church primary schools.

Blue Coat's vision that God will bless them with a hope-filled future allows the whole community to flourish. The school shines as a beacon of God's love across Walsall.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Teaching and learning are consistently strong, with RE regarded as a vital core subject. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported and join fully in lessons. Pupils learn through a wide variety of engaging and challenging activities, demonstrating deep levels of knowledge and understanding. Although pupil self-evaluation is not securely embedded, effective and robust assessment strategies enable staff to track progress and attainment in the subject and use the results to drive learning forward.

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