



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Blue Coat CE Junior School

Springhill Road
Walsall
WS1 2LP

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Walsall

Dates of inspection: 29th January 2014

Date of last inspection: 8th October 2009

School's unique reference number: 104230

Headteacher: Anthony Orlik

Inspector's name and number: Helen Gilbert 633

School context

Since the last SIAS inspection the school has become part of a federation with Blue Coat CE Infant School and has seen a change of leadership. Both schools are led by an executive head teacher who was appointed in September 2012 along with a new head of Blue Coat Junior school. There have been substantial changes in staffing across the school with the appointment of two new subject leaders in January 2013 and also three newly qualified teachers. There is now a single governing body for both schools with a new Chair of Governors. The town centre clergy team have been supporting the school as the parish has been in an interregnum.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blue Coat Junior as a Church of England school are good

- Collective worship is an outstanding feature of the school and has a marked impact upon the attitudes, behaviour and relationships of pupils.
- A passionate belief that each child is a child of God deserving respect and nurture is embedded throughout the school community and results in all pupils feeling valued, cared for and respected.
- The executive head teacher and head of school live out their Christian faith and demonstrate determined and effective leadership that is leading to rapid improvement.

Areas to improve

- Enhance the religious education curriculum and make greater use of assessments to raise standards achieved by all pupils in this subject.
- Provide more visual stimuli for pupils' spiritual development and interactive areas for quiet reflection within the school and its grounds.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluating, planning and leading daily worship.
- Continue to rigorously challenge any pupil under-achievement so that every pupil is able to realise their full potential.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

The school's distinctive Christian character is clearly stated through its website, aims and policies and is shared openly and explicitly with prospective staff and parents to very good effect. The executive head, head of school, staff, governors, pupils and parents all articulate the school's distinctive Christian values of love, care, perseverance, forgiveness, loving one's neighbour and going the extra mile. These values underpin all the school does and have a profound effect on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Whilst sharing the Christian message of Christ's saving grace, the school seeks to demonstrate the inclusive ministry of Jesus. The head of school plays an exemplary role in building bridges and promoting strong relationships with community faith leaders and as a result families of other faiths all speak of being valued and included. This Christ-inspired commitment to inclusion influences the way the school supports disadvantaged pupils and manages pupils with challenging behaviour, ensuring that exclusion is only seen as a very last resort. Children say that being in a church school is important and teaches them about God. Behaviour is good because children follow the example that is modelled for them and value the life lessons they learn during daily worship and religious education. They respect and listen to staff and each other. Many pupils show remarkable empathy and support for one another and a high degree of respect for people of other faiths and traditions. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of the need to engage with Jesus' commandment to love our neighbour and see this worked out both through daily care of each other and through a number of charitable fundraising initiatives. The school is working determinedly to accelerate progress and raise the attainment of all groups of pupils. It has been particularly successful in improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special needs. School leaders take every opportunity to raise the aspirations of all learners, for example highlighting the achievements of female role models such as Malala, Libby Lane and Ellie Simmons in order to encourage and inspire girls. St Matthew's church supports the school very well indeed and the children and families worker has a key role in supporting and enhancing the distinctive Christian character of the school. Pupils' spiritual development would be enhanced through more visual stimuli and interactive areas for quiet reflection in the school and the outside environment.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship has a very high priority in the life of the school. Pupils of all faiths describe how much they enjoy and value worship. They welcome the range of adults, from within the school and the wider Christian community, who lead worship and bring a breadth and richness of experience. Worship has a strong focus on the person, acts and teachings of Jesus and on the importance of understanding God as a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Themes are based on the church lectionary and are consistently underpinned by bible stories and Christian values such as fairness, justice and valuing strangers and outsiders. As a result pupils have a very good knowledge of a range of old and new testament stories and many can speak with maturity about the importance of what that Jesus did and said. They firmly believe that these teachings have an influence on their own attitudes and behaviour in school and as one child said *'it helps me to stop and think about what I am going to do'*. Prayer has a central place within worship in a way that is relevant and supports the needs of pupils. Each day they can write prayer requests for themselves, families, friends or others in the prayer book. These are read out and the whole school community offers silent prayers to God as candles are lit. As a result pupils are strongly affirmed and value prayer highly. Some say they would like more opportunity to pray at other times during the school day. The head of school has made it a priority to encourage pupils' personal reflection and children make very good use of their worship reflection journals. They enjoy fortnightly classroom worship and would welcome more of these times, which enable them to reflect in more depth on issues raised in whole school worship. Excellent links with St Matthew's church enhance worship further and clergy and the families' worker make a very strong contribution to pupils' worship experiences. Harvest, Christmas and Easter Services in church, together with visits to Lichfield Cathedral,

give pupils of all faiths an excellent appreciation of the key seasons of the Christian year. Clergy comment that the pupils are quiet, respectful and responsive and demonstrate 'a profound sense of worship.' Pupils enjoy preparing and presenting these special acts of worship and say that they would welcome greater opportunities to give feedback on worship and influence the planning and preparation of daily worship in school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in Religious Education (RE) are in line with Diocesan expectations and some achievement is better. Senior leaders, foundation governors and the RE co-ordinator have identified the review of RE provision as a priority within the current school improvement plan. The RE Co-ordinator took over this role eighteen months ago. She is a highly experienced practitioner and models very good practice in teaching RE. Christianity lies firmly at the heart of RE teaching and each year pupils undertake a study of another major faith for half a term. During their time in the school they study Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. This reflects the religious make up of the pupils and affirms their own sense of identify and value, promoting amongst pupils a genuine tolerance and respect for other faiths and beliefs. Teachers adapt existing units of work, ensuring lessons have clear learning objectives, encourage children to develop their thinking and reflective skills and make use of creative arts and modern technologies. Inexperienced teachers are supported in the development of their curriculum knowledge. Consequently teaching is good or better and pupils enjoy and value RE. They have a good understanding of the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practices such as the liturgical colours, baptism and communion. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and visiting their places of worship and particularly value being used as a resource when studying their own faith. They would like further opportunity to learn more about different religious customs and practices and also to talk about how they would improve RE further. They are developing skills of enquiry, questioning, analysis and interpretation, evaluation and reflection. RE supports the spiritual, moral, cultural development of pupils well by making links between what they learn about and how they can apply this to their own lives, attitudes, behaviour and relationships. Assessment procedures are built in to each unit of work and these, along with evidence of pupils' work, provide the co-ordinator and senior leaders with evidence of progress and standards across the school. The planned curriculum review together with more sharing of best practice, the introduction of Godly play and more rigorous assessment, monitoring and evaluation will enable the school to raise standards in RE further.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The executive head teacher and head of school demonstrate outstanding passion and determination to drive the school forwards. As a result they inspire staff and pupils, the school is improving rapidly and standards are rising. They are successfully narrowing the gap between school attainment and national averages particularly for disadvantaged pupils. In order to improve further the school needs to continue to raise attainment for all groups of learners. Foundation Governors know their school well and are accurate in their evaluation of strengths and areas for development. They had a key role in securing the federation with Blue Coat Infant School and appointing the executive head and head of school, who continue to promote and develop the strong Christian character of the school very well indeed. They are proud of the progress the school is making but nevertheless are confident to speak as 'critical friends', offer suggestions, and encourage the school to build on its own good practice and that of the infant school. The school's new middle leaders are contributing well to school improvement. The school makes good provision for developing children's leadership through prefect systems, classroom monitors, buddying and School Council and some pupils are developing as confident and articulate leaders. School Councillors believe their role is important and are proud of changes they have influenced such as the 'Friendship Stop' and the Prayer book. Opportunities for pupils to take more leadership and ownership of planning daily worship are limited and this is an area for development.

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