

Inspection of a good school: Blue Coat Church of England Aided Infant School

Hanch Place, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 3AF

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2022

Outcome

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a place where everyone is welcome and appreciated. Leaders have created an ethos that nurtures each child's unique qualities. Pupils say they are happy to come to school. They feel safe when they are in school and know that adults care about them.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Pupils know they should 'be kind, be safe and be ready to learn'. Pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They play well together and show kindness to each other. Most pupils say that bullying does not happen. They say that if it does, staff deal with it. Leaders' records support this view.

Pupils enjoy a range of different subjects. They are good at recalling the mathematics facts they have previously learned. They know about different artists and are developing an appreciation of classical music.

Opportunities in the wider curriculum help to develop pupils' character. Being an 'A star sheriff' or a school councillor enables pupils to contribute to their school community. Events such as the harvest festival ensure they also engage with their wider community. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular clubs such as choir, multi-skills and art club.

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

Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for all pupils to achieve both academically and personally. As pupils start to recover from the lost learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this ambition is increasingly realised. The school's mission statement 'Let your light shine' is reflected in the broad and balanced curriculum on offer. It is also evident in the bespoke support that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. The puffin class and the nurture hub provide pupils with specific and sometimes complex SEND a curriculum that meets their needs. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to make accurate assessments of pupils with SEND and to advise on how to tailor the curriculum. This enables these pupils to access appropriate learning and make progress.

Leaders have considered what pupils will learn in each subject, including the areas of learning in early years. They have also thought about the order in which pupils need to learn this. In many subjects, this enables pupils to learn what is most important. In Nursery, children could talk about the parts of a flower using the vocabulary petal, stem and leaf. However, in some units of work, the key knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember is not as clear or is too vast. As a result, some pupils struggle to remember what leaders want them to in these areas. In art and design, for example, pupils could name the artist they were studying but not the techniques she used.

Reading is a high priority across the school. Books are central to the curriculum. This starts in early years where there is a clear focus on language and communication. Staff read to children regularly and explore a range of vocabulary. Staff have enhanced their expertise in early reading. The books pupils read are closely matched to the sounds they know. Staff use assessment to identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. They provide extra support to pupils to help them catch up. This has helped many pupils to improve their phonics knowledge. However, there are still a minority of pupils who struggle to blend the sounds to read fluently.

Learning to count and understand number from the start is also a priority. Children in early years develop their understanding of numbers and shapes. Through the curriculum, pupils build on this knowledge steadily. Pupils use practical resources and pictures to help them understand key concepts. Staff use actions alongside the mathematical vocabulary to ensure all pupils can access the learning. Lessons start by revisiting previous learning. This helps pupils to know and remember what is important. Pupils are achieving well in this subject.

Staff use a range of assessments across the curriculum. Less formal assessments, such as recap questions and quizzes, help to identify gaps and inform teaching. More formal assessments help leaders to measure how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

The school is calm and a place where pupils can learn without interruption. Pupils respond well to staff in lessons and on the playground. Pupils are polite to each other and visitors.

Pupils' personal development is an important part of the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy working as a team, for example when exploring the forest area. They learn about their own faith and the faith of others through assemblies and special events such as Bhangra dance workshops. They also experience fundamental British values through voting for roles such as school councillors. These experiences prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders take staff's well-being seriously and staff say they feel valued members of a supportive team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive a range of safeguarding training. Staff are aware of any signs that a pupil might be at risk from harm. All staff know the school systems for reporting safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond swiftly to any issues raised. They refer to external agencies when appropriate. Leaders are rigorous when following up on referrals made. They challenge agencies if they do not feel that the right action is taken.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe online. They also learn about road safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils do not blend phonics well to read unknown words. As a result, they cannot read confidently or fluently. Leaders should ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support in phonics to improve their ability to read.
- Parts of the curriculum do not clearly identify the key knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember. At times, some units of work contain too much content. As a result, pupils do not always know and remember the intended learning. Leaders should ensure that all areas of the curriculum make clear the important knowledge they want pupils to learn.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104231 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 10240837 |
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 310 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Anita Edwards |
| Headteacher | Anthony Orlik (Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.bluecoatfederation.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 and 13 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Blue Coat Church of England Aided Infant School is a Church of England school for pupils aged three to seven.
- Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The school had its last section 48 inspection in March 2019. Its next inspection will be within eight years of that inspection.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the executive deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator,

subject leaders and governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also discussed other subjects, such as music, with leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work from science, history and geography.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead, and the inclusion leader to discuss safeguarding. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of the checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their workload and the support they receive to carry out their roles.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about how safe they feel in school and how they learn to keep themselves safe.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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