

Inspection of The Blue Coat School

Church Road, Wavertree, Liverpool, Merseyside L15 9EE

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since October 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are extremely proud to attend The Blue Coat School. Staff are caring and supportive. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy at school. Pupils and students behave exceptionally well, conducting themselves maturely and confidently. Leaders act quickly to deal with any incidents of bullying.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils and students can achieve. As a result, pupils and students are eager to perform well. For example, they are diligent and attentive in lessons.

Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a culture where everyone can be themselves. Pupils and students show a genuine care for their classmates. Leaders and staff have fostered a school community where diversity is celebrated.

Students in the sixth form act as exemplary role models for younger pupils. Pupils benefit from the positive contribution that student leaders make to the school. This includes delivering assemblies, leading student forums and acting as ambassadors. Pupils and students look forward to visits from representatives of the 'old blues', who offer advice and support to pupils.

Pupils and students take part in a wide range of sports, trips and activities, such as basketball club and table tennis. Leaders promote their motto 'Not for oneself, but for all' by providing pupils and students with many opportunities to learn beyond the academic curriculum. For example, leaders encourage pupils and students to work towards The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This helps pupils and students to make informed choices for their next steps.

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

Leaders have a strong vision for providing a high-quality education for all pupils and students, including those who are disadvantaged. As a result, they have designed a highly ambitious curriculum that has the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects at its heart. Subject leaders ensure that teachers are clear about what pupils and students should be learning and when this subject content should be taught. Most subject leaders support staff effectively.

Teachers have a strong knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This ensures that most teachers deliver the subject curriculums well. Teachers routinely check that pupils and students are learning the intended curriculum content. Staff use the information that they gain from these checks to identify and address pupils' misconceptions in a timely manner. Pupils and students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well across the curriculum. Most students in the sixth form secure places on competitive degree courses at university.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND can achieve well. These pupils follow the same ambitious curriculum as others. More recently, leaders have strengthened further their systems to identify and support the individual needs of pupils and students with SEND. This is helping teachers to better adapt how they deliver the curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils and students.

While some pupils and students talked enthusiastically about the books that they are reading or have enjoyed recently, some pupils do not read as often as they should. Added to this, leaders do not have enough oversight of how well pupils read. This means that teachers are sometimes not able to make sure that pupils read materials that are matched to their reading abilities.

Pupils and students value their education. This is reflected in their very high rates of attendance. Pupils learn to be independent and reflective learners, keen to ensure that they learn the curriculum well. As a result, their learning is seldom disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders have carefully designed a personal development curriculum that is built around their vision for pupils to be valued and valuable members of society. Many pupils spoke confidently about key aspects of this curriculum, such as the importance of equality and tolerance. That said, some staff are not equipped well to deliver some aspects of this curriculum with competence and confidence. This hinders pupils and students in learning some topics in sufficient depth.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from a well-designed programme of careers guidance. For instance, sixth-form tutors provide instrumental support so that students are prepared well for their interviews at prospective universities.

Over recent years, trustees and senior leaders have made positive changes to the school. They are reflective and outward facing. This has helped them to align their priorities for school improvement to best suit the needs of pupils and students.

School leaders and the governing body are proactive in their approach to addressing the needs of pupils and staff. Leaders have taken on feedback from staff and are responding appropriately to ensure that changes to further develop aspects of the school are made adeptly and sensitively. For example, recently, leaders have considered staff's workload carefully when reviewing their training programme for staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This means that they are informed well about what to do if they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil. It also ensures that staff remain alert to the risks that pupils may face.

Leaders engage well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support.

Pupils and students learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, through the relationships and sex education curriculum, they learn how to maintain healthy relationships, prioritise their well-being and look after their physical health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Until recently, leaders have not prioritised reading sufficiently well. Some pupils do not read often and widely enough. Furthermore, leaders do not check on how well older pupils continue to develop their reading knowledge and expand their vocabulary. This means that teachers are not able to provide reading material that further develops pupils' and students' comprehension. Leaders should ensure that they check pupils' reading knowledge in order to ensure that staff give appropriate and well-suited reading materials.
- Some staff are not equipped well to deliver some aspects of the personal development curriculum. As a result, on occasion, this prevents some pupils from learning about some topics in enough depth. Leaders should ensure that staff are suitably trained to deliver the personal development curriculum with confidence and expertise.

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

Unique reference number	137916
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10242468
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,249
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	346
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simone Krüger Bridge
Headteacher	Scilla Yates
Website	www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act.

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use alternative provision for any pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also met with two representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair, as well as a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke with the school improvement partner providing support for the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, science, history, physical education and French. These deep dives involved discussions with curriculum leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.
- The inspection team analysed safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils, staff and leaders to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, development plans, handbooks, governors' minutes, sixth-form destination records, SEND information reports and attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View and the responses of pupils and staff to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Katy Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Gregory	His Majesty's Inspector
Sally Kenyon	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Phillips	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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