

Inspection of a good school: Blue Coat Church of England Academy

Birmingham Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 2ND

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Blue Coat Church of England Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Blue Coat Church of England Academy is an inclusive school where kindness flourishes. The school's values include wisdom, service, endurance and hope. The school's culture is rooted in these values. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils well, and pupils feel cared for. Staff have high expectations, and pupils live up to these.

The school environment is calm and purposeful. Behaviour in lessons and at social times is positive. This gives pupils the opportunities to achieve their best. Pupils told inspectors that if bullying occurs they will report it to a trusted adult, and they are confident that it will be dealt with.

Pupils enjoy a well-developed personal development programme. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are disadvantaged, take part in a range of extra-curricular activities alongside their peers. These include table tennis, dance and bell-ringing.

Leaders are committed to all pupils becoming successful and active citizens. The school celebrates diversity and meets the needs of all pupils. Many pupils and staff told inspectors, 'We are proud to be a part of the Blue Coat family.'

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

Leaders have constructed a curriculum which is ambitious and meets the needs of all pupils. Lessons are well planned and sequenced in a logical order. This helps pupils to build on knowledge over time. Lessons also include an appropriate focus on careers, training and apprenticeships. This enables pupils to gain knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise. Teachers adapt the curriculum and their teaching resources to meet the needs of all pupils effectively. They do this

particularly well for pupils with SEND. The teaching resources are carefully designed and selected so that pupils can understand and remember more over time. Teachers routinely check pupils' understanding. When pupils do not understand the work, teachers adapt their lessons and reteach. Pupils respond positively to this. Pupils develop knowledge over time, and their work reflects this. Leaders are working towards ensuring that pupils in key stage 4 study the suite of subjects which makes up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

Leaders have prioritised supporting pupils who are at the early stages of reading. These pupils have bespoke intervention so they can improve their reading ages, including phonics teaching and work to improve comprehension. As a result, these pupils are quickly becoming more confident and fluent readers. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure in Years 7 and 8. The school library, 'Whispers', is used well by these pupils. However, pupils in the older years do not have many opportunities to develop a love of reading.

Leaders have created a wide range of opportunities for pupils to benefit from careers education, extra-curricular activities and a personal development curriculum. The extra-curricular programme is well received, and there is something for everyone. Many pupils attend these clubs. Attendance at the clubs is particularly high for pupils with SEND. All pupils receive regular careers advice and guidance in form time. Students in Year 12 complete a work experience placement to prepare them for their next steps. As a result, pupils are confident about making choices for their future.

All pupils receive relevant, age-appropriate learning on healthy relationships, sex education and mental health. Students in the sixth form are role models for their younger peers and are founders of the school's 'diversity group'. This group contributes to promoting inclusivity and diversity across the school.

Pupils have positive behaviour and attitudes towards one another, and towards the staff. Pupils feel safe and say they are treated equally. In lessons, pupils' engagement is high, and pupils have the confidence to ask for help when they need it. At social times, pupils are respectful, and this creates a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils follow staff's instructions when their behaviour falls short of the school's expectations.

Leaders have embedded a positive culture in the school, with pupils' best interests at the heart of all they do. Leaders, governors and members have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have worked hard to get the school to where it is today, and recognise there is more work to do to make it even better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have instilled a culture of safeguarding across the school. This means that staff act in the best interests of pupils. Pupils know how to protect themselves online and offline. Pupils know whom to speak to if they have any worries.

Leaders have ensured that all staff undergo appropriate recruitment checks. Staff receive regular training. Staff know their pupils well and are vigilant. As a result, staff report any concerns, and the safeguarding team works swiftly to deal with these in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The number of pupils who choose to study a language, geography, or history at key stage 4 is low. This means that some pupils are not studying a broad range of EBacc subjects. Leaders should consider and implement the best ways to ensure that more pupils continue to study these subjects after key stage 3.
- Pupils in key stage 4 and key stage 5 have limited opportunities to read widely for pleasure. This means that pupils do not fully develop their fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. Leaders should promote a love of reading and provide opportunities for this to be developed more fully in school.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

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	138606
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10257029
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	913
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lauren Parker
Principal	David Smith
Website	http://www.bluecoatacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses seven registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils across Years 7 to 11.

Information about this inspection

- 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.

- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the principal, the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the personal development lead and the careers lead.
- Inspectors held discussions with those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history and science. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at a sample of pupils' work and spoke to teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's tutor programme. Inspectors also visited form time at the start of the day.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment.

Inspection team

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Graeme Rudland

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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