

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104230
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	286887
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Tonks
Headteacher	Jacqueline Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Springhill Road Walsall WS1 2LP
Telephone number	01922 720921
Fax number	01922 640013

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Junior School is bigger than most schools. The large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, including Indian, Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds. Many pupils join the school at the early stages of learning English or having recently entered the country. Nearly half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. A large number of pupils either leave or join the school during the academic year. Many of the pupils are from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There has been a significant turnover of staff in the last few years and the school has been affected by long-term staff absence.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Junior School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Until recently, not all pupils have made satisfactory progress and should have done better. This was the result of a large turnover in staff and inadequate teaching. The headteacher, staff and governors have been working hard to ensure that pupils are now making the progress that is expected from their starting points. Effective steps have been taken to identify where there are weaknesses and to intervene to make sure that pupils do not fall behind. Standards are below average at the end of Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory. Rates of progress are accelerating and older pupils say that they are now learning more. Positive strategies to improve teaching and learning have had a positive impact which is shown in the better rates of progress. However, there are still pockets of underachievement, particularly in pupils' writing and mathematics in Year 5, and there remains work to be done.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although many lessons have a number of good features, teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress all of the time. Lessons are well organised and teachers take into account the different needs of pupils in their classes, but at times, lessons have insufficient pace and expectations are not high enough.

The school has been successful in developing a welcoming and caring community. One parent, representing the views of many, spoke highly of the school's 'positive Christian ethos' while a Year 6 pupil described the last year at school as 'ten out of ten'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite and well behaved and their good attendance is a reflection on how much they enjoy coming to school. Pastoral support for pupils is good. The many pupils who join the school during the academic year settle in quickly and soon become part of the community. The support given to pupils for their academic work is not as strong as the school's pastoral care, but is developing effectively. Overall, the care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities provided by the school's satisfactory curriculum. This is enriched well by visitors to school and additional activities such as French lessons. It is common to be welcomed by 'bonjour' and 'ça va?' as one walks down the corridor. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to extend their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects of the curriculum.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and recent improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement indicate that there is the capacity to improve further. The monitoring of performance by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has improved considerably so senior managers are clear about the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The quality of teaching is checked very carefully. Staff have had to take on board many new strategies and initiatives over a relatively short period of time. Most have been welcomed enthusiastically although there is still some inconsistency in practice and not all new systems are fully embedded. Staffing has been reorganised; some senior managers are relatively new to their posts and are still developing their roles, particularly in terms of evaluating and monitoring practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pupils' rate of progress and standards by raising the quality of all teaching to the level of the best.
- Plan regular writing and mathematical activities in other subjects and topics.

- Develop the monitoring role of leaders and managers at all levels to ensure a consistent approach to new strategies and initiatives.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils joining from the infant school start Year 3 with broadly average standards. However, a significant number of pupils join with much lower standards, so attainment on entry is below average overall. The school has introduced a number of successful steps to ensure that all pupils now make at least satisfactory progress. Inadequate teaching has also been eradicated. In English and mathematics, there has been a specific focus on the needs of individual pupils and groups by placing pupils in ability 'sets', providing very specific group work and support for individual pupils by teaching assistants. Consequently, the large majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English, are making at least satisfactory progress. Where teaching is particularly effective, progress is even more rapid. Data provided by the school, for example, indicate that many pupils in Year 6 have made good progress over the last year. Conversely, a small minority of pupils in Year 5 have underachieved as a result of ineffective teaching at the beginning of the academic year. This was resolved by the senior leaders and managers in the school. Despite pupils making satisfactory progress, standards are not as good in writing and mathematics as they are in reading and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and contributes well to pupils' confidence and high levels of self-esteem. Daily collective worship is an important part of school life, effectively providing a calm start to the school day and good opportunities for reflection and celebration, particularly for the school's diverse population. Racial harmony is a notable feature of the school. The vast majority of pupils feel safe and are confident that any incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils generally understand the importance of keeping safe although there is some running in corridors. Pupils make a good contribution to community life through fund raising and 'Eco' work with partner schools. The school council has played an active part in improvements to the school; for example, it was instrumental in establishing the adventure playground and climbing wall. In Year 6, pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as prefects, wet-play monitors and playground buddies. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles both through the curriculum and the many sports clubs. The pupils' good social skills and developing skills in literacy and numeracy mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their educational career and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Regular monitoring of teaching, with a clear focus on improving pupils' achievement, is contributing to the satisfactory or better progress seen in lessons. However, recently introduced initiatives and strategies have not yet fully impacted on the rate of pupils' learning in all classes because there is still some inconsistency in teachers' performance. Most lessons inspire and sustain pupils' interest and teachers make good use of 'working walls' and the interactive whiteboards to help learning. Occasionally, teaching is not carried out at a brisk enough pace or there are inconsistent approaches to managing pupils. At times, the expectations that teachers have of their pupils are not high enough. The pupils work well together, for example when they engage in 'talking partners'. The use of self-assessment by pupils is developing well, but is not used consistently across all classes. Teaching assistants support learning effectively, either working in class with individuals or with small withdrawal groups. There are a few occasions when they are not given sufficient direction by teachers. This results in their contribution being less effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is effective at promoting the pupils' good personal development. There is a wide range of enrichment activities such as visits and visitors and a good variety of extra-curricular activities. Although the curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced for the majority of pupils, this is not always the case for Year 6 because of the extra focus on English, mathematics and science. The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils are given more time to practise their writing skills. However, there is still scope for pupils to develop their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pupils' pastoral care is a strong feature of the school. Effective child protection procedures are in place and arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe and healthy are good. Regular risk assessments are carefully attended to. Good links are in place with other professionals and services to ensure the care and welfare of the most vulnerable pupils. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are invited to regular meetings so that they can share their children's targets and look at the progress they have made. Academic guidance is developing. Most pupils can either explain or show their learning targets. The quality of guidance which is given to pupils to help them reach these targets is variable between classes and subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have provided a strong lead in bringing about recent improvements, although they fully understand that there is still some way to go. The focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement has been effective because the rate of pupils' progress is accelerating. Other senior leaders and subject coordinators are developing their

roles and becoming increasingly accountable for pupils' progress and the standards they reach. The work of these leaders and managers is moving in the right direction, although there are variations in effectiveness and still some inconsistencies in school practice, such as marking, that need to be addressed. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have become increasingly effective in holding the school to account for the quality of education that is provided. A number of them have given a good deal of support to the school over recent times as improvements have been initiated. They have provided appropriate challenge and have been effectively involved in monitoring the action plans that have put been in place to drive improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blue Coat Church of England Aided Junior School, Walsall, WS1 2LP

Thank you very much for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we inspected your school a few weeks ago. We were pleased with how polite and friendly you were. We were particularly impressed with the confidence some of you showed when greeting us and asking how we were in French.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Over the last few months the headteacher and staff have worked hard to ensure that you all make at least satisfactory progress. They had to do this because some of you were not doing as well as you could have done in your work. Teaching has got better and lessons are now more interesting and challenging for you and you all have targets to aim for in English and mathematics. Some of you told us that you were now making better progress. We have asked the school to make sure that all teaching is good so that you all make even better progress and reach higher standards. Your writing and mathematics are not as good as your work in reading and science so we have also asked the school to make sure that you have plenty of opportunities to practise your writing and mathematics in other subjects.

We were pleased that attendance at the school is good because this means that you enjoy coming to school. You are well behaved and most of you work hard and enjoy your lessons. The teachers and other staff look after you well. There is still much to do at the school to ensure that it keeps on improving. For this reason, we have asked the school to make sure that all of the leaders and managers do their jobs as well as they can.

I am sure the staff would appreciate your help in moving the school forward. You can help by always doing your best in lessons and continuing to behave well.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Chris Kessell Lead Inspector