

Blue Coat C of E (Aided) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114274
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311543
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Murray
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Cox
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Langley Road Newton Hall Estate Durham County Durham DH1 5LP
Telephone number	0191 3865975
Fax number	0191 3867813

Age group	7-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blue Coat Church of England (Aided) Junior School is an average sized school in an urban area near the city of Durham. Numbers have risen recently and pupils join or leave the school through the year. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is slightly below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The majority of pupils are White British. The school has achieved a number of awards including Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, BECTA ICT Mark, International Award (Intermediate level), Activemark and Investors in Children Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blue Coat C of E Junior School is a good school with outstanding features in personal development, well-being and care, guidance and support. This means pupils thrive, both socially and academically. The school is a vibrant place where pupils' achievements are celebrated with pride.

Pupils start school with skills and capabilities that are above average. They make good progress to reach standards that are well above average. Some of the most able pupils are working at a very high level beyond that expected of them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and achieve as well as their peers. Whilst pupils reach impressive standards, the school recognises that more challenging work would help some pupils achieve even better.

Teaching and learning are good with some examples of outstanding practice. Pupils enjoy lessons, particularly within the new context-based themes. Positive relationships between staff and pupils also contribute to success in lessons. Pupils are becoming more confident with the targets set and feel that this helps them to know what they have to do to improve their work. However, lessons are not always focused sharply enough on pupils' learning so they are not given sufficient opportunities to think for themselves and learn independently. The school has a firm commitment to teaching basic skills but also to learning French and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils are provided with a range of extended opportunities, ranging from choir and hand bells to visitors such as the Lions of Zululand.

Pupils' personal development is excellent, as demonstrated by their exemplary behaviour and their respect and care for each other. Pupils know how to keep safe and healthy and make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Their strengths in social and academic skills prepare them very well for the future.

The school enjoys a great deal of support from parents. Many feel that their children are at the best possible school and would recommend it to others. This support is typified in the comment that, 'areas of manners, pastoral and social issues are well balanced with the more academic curriculum'.

The headteacher demonstrates clear leadership, commitment and determination to improve the school. Senior staff and middle leaders work to support new initiatives focused on giving pupils the best opportunities. Governors are highly committed, very well informed and bring considerable expertise to their role, providing an excellent balance of support and challenge. Together, they make a considerable contribution to driving the school forward. Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are given work that challenges them, particularly the most able pupils.
- Ensure that lessons are sharply focused on learning so that pupils have the opportunity to develop independence in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards reached by pupils are well above average. Pupils enter the school with above average standards and most make good progress to finish Year 6 with well above average standards. Work seen in lessons shows that some pupils can work at standards above the highest expected for their age in national tests. Overall, boys do not perform quite as well as the girls, particularly in science; in mathematics girls and boys reach very similar standards. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language perform exceptionally well. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. The school has correctly identified that pupils have not done as well in writing and have put in place successful strategies to address this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and, as a result, behaviour and attendance are both exemplary. They feel safe around school and say that there is very rarely any bullying in school; when they fall out, it is dealt with sensitively and quickly. Pupils thrive on the many opportunities to accept responsibility and contribute to the school community. The school council is active in finding out what pupils think and in developing and presenting these ideas confidently to improve the school environment. For example, they worked closely with a contractor in designing the new timber trails for the field. Pupils know what they need to do to stay healthy and choose to do so. Members of the School Nutrition Action Group ensure that the school kitchen staff know which healthy foods are most popular and, as a result, pupils think the dinners are very good. The Year 6 buddies are well trained and organised and help younger children to enjoy break times. The pupils are also involved in many activities in the local community, showing their concern for others often through fund-raising and writing cards supporting the 'send my friend to school' campaign. Pupils learn about the diversity of modern British culture through events such as visiting a synagogue. They also find out about the wider world through strong links with schools and pupils in France and Australia. The combination of acquiring good academic skills and a caring attitude towards others means pupils have an excellent grounding for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and leads to effective learning. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of strategies to engage and motivate pupils. Learning activities are well planned with a variety of tasks being used, although these do not always challenge the most able pupils to achieve the highest standards they are capable of. The recent introduction of pre- and post-unit assessment is helping to develop the use of data to inform planning. In some lessons, there is an over-emphasis on teacher input so that pupils do not have the best opportunities to develop their independent learning. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported by a team of skilled teaching assistants. Interactive whiteboards are used well to both demonstrate teaching points and to engage pupils. In the

best lessons, pupils are involved in assessing their own and each other's work, which is effective in moving their learning forward.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Following recent developments, the curriculum is good and improving. The school actively promotes links between the subjects and this context-based approach to planning and teaching makes the curriculum relevant and enjoyable for its pupils. Assessment is being refined so that target setting can be more sharply focused and effective. Lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils were sensitively and skilfully encouraged to discuss their feelings when coping with bereavement. Appropriate use is made of specialist teaching, for example, in the teaching of French and physical education. The school provides a range of support programmes for pupils with learning difficulties. For example, a suitable computer programme is used to boost the reading and spelling skills of those pupils who need it. A good range of visitors and trips, including a residential experience, significantly enhance pupils' personal development. After-school clubs are well attended and popular with the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an exceptionally caring, friendly school with a cheerful atmosphere where pupils are well known and cared for by adults. The development of pupils' personal, social and emotional understanding is a high priority and is carefully nurtured. The school works in close partnership with parents and has developed good links with a range of agencies to ensure the best possible provision for its pupils. Well-planned procedures help pupils to settle happily when they start school and prepare them for the move to the secondary school. Pupils who join the school through the year are assigned two 'Smiley Blues' to help them quickly become part of school life. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and health and safety checks are secure. Risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly. The tracking system and target setting are helping pupils know what they need to do to improve. There are some examples of excellent marking of pupils' work, especially in Year 6, with the result that pupils know what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The strong leadership of the headteacher is a key factor in the success of the school. She has accurately identified appropriate key priorities and, with the support of the senior leadership team and subject coordinators, has begun the process of further improving the curriculum to ensure enjoyment and enrichment. This is moving the school forward with clear direction. The relationship between all adults and pupils in the school creates a caring atmosphere. The leadership have been particularly successful in bringing about positive behaviour and developing self-confidence, which has resulted in outstanding personal development and pupils' well-being. Measures to improve standards in writing are proving effective. Monitoring is rigorous and is beginning to focus more on the impact for pupils rather than just the teaching. Equal opportunities are promoted vigorously and all pupils are included fully in what the school provides. Governance is outstanding because governors have an

exceptionally accurate picture of the school. They bring considerable expertise which helps them provide very helpful levels of challenge and support. The school has a good capacity for improvement because the senior leadership has a clear view of what needs to be done and demonstrates determination to do so.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

12 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blue Coat C of E (Aided) Junior School, Durham, DH1 5LP

I want to say a big thank you for welcoming the Ofsted team to your school, and for the welcoming cards you gave us. We enjoyed chatting to so many of you, finding out what you think about your school and seeing how well you are doing in your lessons.

Lots of you told us you think your school is good and we agree with you. Your teachers and the headteacher give you a good education and some aspects of your school are outstanding, such as the way you learn to be responsible and look after one another, and the way the teachers look after you.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that the adults take good care of you. You like the way you are rewarded for doing well, in learning or behaviour. In lessons, you listened carefully to your teachers and worked hard and we could see that you have learnt a great deal this year. You get very good results in your tests, so – well done! Keep trying your best!

Although we know you are doing well, we think your school could be even better, by making sure you have work that really challenges you, particularly those of you who sometimes find learning quite easy. We also think you need time to think about what you are learning for yourselves, during lessons.

You can help these things to happen by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning, as we saw you doing. Most of all, we know you are proud of your school. Well done for helping to make it such a friendly and fun place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders
Steven Horne

Lead inspector
Additional Inspector