

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Blue Coat Church of England Aided Infant School

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| Address | Hanch Place, Walsall WS1 3AF | | |
| Date of inspection | 21 March 2019 | Status of school | VA Infant |
| Diocese | Lichfield | URN | 104231 |

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| Overall Judgement | Grade | Excellent |
| How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | | |
| Additional Judgements | | |
| The impact of collective worship | Grade | Excellent |
| The effectiveness of religious education (RE) | Grade | Excellent |

School context

Blue Coat is an infant school with 268 pupils on roll, with an additional 42 children in nursery. Pupil population represents a wide range of heritages including Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean and White British. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. All major world faiths are represented, with the highest number of families identifying as Muslim or Christian. The school is federated with the junior school. Since the last inspection, the leadership structure has changed. The executive headteacher is now supported by a deputy executive headteacher and two assistant headteachers.

The school's Christian vision

'Love God, Love Others, Let your Light Shine.

"I will bless you with a future filled with hope - a future of success, not of suffering." Jeremiah 29:11

Key findings

- The vision, together with its associated values, results in exemplary pastoral care and nurture where every child is recognised and valued as a unique child of God. Each is truly blessed and offered a future filled with hope.
- Leadership of the school, through the executive headteacher, deputy executive headteacher and assistant headteacher is an inspirational example of Christian guidance in action.
- The school shines its light further afield by sharing excellent practice with other schools.
- Blue Coat is recognised by the wider community as a place of reconciliation and support, where all may flourish through excellent partnerships forged between the school, families, governors and the church.
- Religious Education (RE) has high priority and is led by highly skilled staff. It plays a significant role in enabling both pupils and adults to live in harmony in this culturally rich and diverse school, by providing a safe environment in which to explore religious belief and philosophical and social questions.

Areas for development

- Further develop pupils' involvement in the planning and delivery of collective worship in order to enjoy a greater lead in its development within the school.
- Extend the school's excellent practice of enabling pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of other major world religions, and living well together, by providing opportunities for contact with a range of places of worship.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The school's vision, and its associated values, is rooted in a clear theological narrative, ensuring all God's children are valued in this culturally rich, diverse, inclusive school. Governors have been instrumental in its development, ensuring that it honours the original foundation of each school whilst shaping policies, plans and practices so that all may flourish. Working under a single governing body means that each school in the federation enables the other to 'shine'. Governors attend training and monitor standards and spiritual dimension. One commented, 'The governing body has also grown spiritually alongside the school.'

The school's Christian vision and values support living well together. Debating clubs exemplify pupils 'disagreeing well'. There is excellent provision for vulnerable pupils. Robust systems support those with challenging behaviour, who are given second chances through a forgiving, restorative approach in order to have a '...future of success, not suffering'. Mental health and wellbeing are priorities for pupils, families and staff so that all may flourish. Parents speak highly of the school and its excellent caring ethos, recognising it as a place of reconciliation and support. A 'soft door' approach enables them to share concerns. Family support is also provided through the local church. Governors and leaders have shown courage and innovation by opening a transformational 'success centre' for vulnerable junior school pupils who come over to receive support in a personalised, nurturing environment. One pupil said, 'When I was in school before, I got angry. Now I can take responsibility.'

Staff are exemplary role models. They feel cared for, 'We are all valued, never abandoned.' Training strengthens understanding of the school as a Church school. Succession planning, diocesan training and support from the Christian distinctiveness adviser ensure that future school leaders are prepared for their role. Areas to improve from the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The executive and deputy executive headteachers passionately uphold the vision. They use strong ethical arguments for inclusion in their drive for 'a future of success' resulting in a creative, tailored curriculum where no one 'falls by the wayside'. Godly play enhances spiritual development. Awe and wonder and self-respect are generated through topics such as 'Amazing Me'. Innovative use of signing, in all lessons, is used to support pupils' language understanding, and pupil language ambassadors shine their light by supporting other pupils who are new to English. Excellent progress is made by all. Outstanding provision for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities impacts positively on attainment. The school's exemplary work in this area has been used by the local authority as a beacon of excellence. The school shines its light further afield in other areas as well, such as in its approach to Godly play.

Excellent partnerships exist with the diocese and local churches. Participating in the enthronement of the Bishop of Lichfield exemplifies reverence and belonging to a wider Christian community. Bishop Moses' visit from Kenya reinforces service and Christianity as a multi-cultural worldwide faith. Clergy lead weekly school worship. Links are mutually beneficial, exemplified in the school's participation in festivals, workshops and church displays. An outstanding feature of the school is that, although the majority of families are not Christian, they embrace the Christian vision and actively engage with the church. Clergy say, 'There is an openness and willingness to get involved.' They articulate the vision and say that the school 'really lives out its Christian ethos.'

Diversity is celebrated, an example being a parent and child presentation on Islam. Parents say the Christian vision and values develop children's concept of faith. At home pupils readily compare Christianity with other faiths. Awareness of similarities helps foster respect and living well together. As one parent expressed, the school's values are 'entwined in every aspect of school life.' Parents attribute transformational changes in behaviour to the school's Christian vision and values. One commented, 'I have learned such a lot about faith, morality and friendship from my daughter.' Policies and practices challenge stereotypical ideas around disabilities, family make-up and gender bias, enabling all to flourish in a culture of safety and mutual respect.

'Love God, Love others, Let your Light Shine', addresses aspiration and willingness to reach out. Pupils reflect on 'big questions' through prayer, reflection, Jesus' teachings and exploring ethical issues. 'I will bless you with a future of hope...' is a catalyst for many local, national and international links and charity projects. Pupils are proactive as may be seen by their passionate campaign to reduce the use of plastic in the environment.

Collective Worship is viewed as the 'heartbeat' of the school. Invitational and inclusive, it is a coming together to 'pause and reflect' on personal, local, national and global events. Reference to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is central, making explicit the Christian belief of the trinitarian nature of God. Worship follows the Anglican traditions of worship and Christian festivals. Worship explores the vision and values through the Bible. Strong links are made between biblical stories and pupils' own lives through drama, reflection and paired talk. Pupils' own prayers are read out. Pupil worship leaders light candles, lead responses and evaluate collective worship, although they are not fully involved in independently planning the whole worship themselves. Innovative family 'value bags', containing biblical stories and activities, are taken home which, '...give you things to reflect on as a family...'. Pupils' understanding of the sacrament of Holy Communion is developed through breaking and sharing bread. They talk about the Last Supper, saying what the bread and wine represent. Staff very much value the impact worship has on their own spiritual development, saying it also helps in times of personal challenge.

RE reflects the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement. The RE curriculum runs 'as a continuous thread' through the federated schools. RE leaders are highly skilled. Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and make links between Bible stories and their own lives, for example comparing fluctuating emotions during Holy Week to the way their feelings may change during events that happen to them. RE promotes understanding and respect for diversity and difference. Visitors and termly theme days support understanding of other major world faiths, although the school has not visited other places of worship. Working alongside families and visitors from diverse faith backgrounds has developed a healthy, open-minded culture where pupils, as well as adults, challenge prejudice and injustice. Pupils say the Bible helps them to live out values, such as forgiveness exemplified in the story of the unforgiving servant. Imaginative use is made of the forest school to replicate the stable and Jesus' tomb. Through their involvement in overseas projects, pupils are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. 'Big' questions are used to engage pupils in philosophical thinking. Links are made to other areas of the curriculum and British values. Rigorous assessments are in place to monitor progress and plan next steps, and governors are actively involved in the monitoring process.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE has high status and monitoring shows that teaching is always good or better. The revised syllabus has resulted in excellent pupil progress. Staff are enthusiastic, regularly trained and highly skilled (one being on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education). Learning activities are pitched accurately, providing appropriate reinforcement or extra challenge. Consequently all pupils, including those with additional needs, flourish academically in the subject.

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| Executive headteacher | Anthony Orlik |
| Inspector's name and number | Krysia Vickery 940 |