



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College**

Terry Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2BA

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Coventry**

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 7 & 8 July 2015

Date of last inspection: February 2010

School's unique reference number: 137272

Interim headteacher: Francis Peacock

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field 151

### **School context**

This is a much larger than average secondary school that converted to become an academy in July 2011 under the same name. The proportion of pupils supported with pupil premium funding is below most schools and the proportion with special educational needs is slightly below average. Students come from across the city and the majority gain places on the basis of their faith background.

In the Spring term of 2015, the headteacher and the entire governing body left their positions because of a lack of due diligence resulting in a very significant funding shortfall. The deputy headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher until the end of the 2015-16 academic year when it is planned to make a substantive appointment. An interim governing body (IGB) was set up and is likely to remain in position for the next academic year.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blue Coat as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The Christian commitment of interim governors and senior leaders, fully supported by staff and the wider church community, has rapidly moved the school to a secure and sustainable position.
- The Christian ethos permeates every level of school life. As a direct result of this, students grow into mature and compassionate young people equipped with the skills, determination and passion to play a leading role in making society a better place.

- The rich pattern of prayer and worship, especially the contribution of worship bands, embraces all faith backgrounds whilst nurturing those of the Christian faith. It inspires and binds the whole community together.

### **Areas to improve**

- Make it a priority to secure a new chaplain and to take advantage of this opportunity to re-evaluate the core purpose and model of chaplaincy
- Improve the effectiveness of RE by growing the subject post 16 with teaching that stretches and challenges students and by increasing the impact of subject leadership

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners**

Students develop leadership skills to a very high standard and the Christian ethos plays a key role in this. They have a passion for equality, acceptance and social justice that is rooted in the biblical teaching that has surrounded them since their arrival in Year 7. Consequently, they believe in their ability to 'change the world because of what Blue Coat has taught us'. They have an impressive understanding of the breadth that exists within Christianity locally and world-wide, as well as in other faiths, through the open and lively discussions that are a feature of the social side of school life. Although students may hold different religious views on moral issues, this does not create tensions and no-one is marginalised because there is deep-seated respect for the opinions of others. Bullying, as a result of any form of prejudice, is therefore extremely rare. Behaviour is excellent because when difficulties do arise, the Christian principles of forgiveness and reconciliation come into play. These values are fully understood because they are reinforced through worship and lead to exceptionally harmonious relationships throughout the school. Biblical teaching is woven into learning at every level through texts that define the vision for each subject and year group. These act as prompts for reflection and as benchmarks for personal conduct. As time passes, students' religious perceptions naturally change, faith can be doubted or discovered but always in a safe environment where chaplaincy offers steady support. The Christian character informs the whole curriculum with a wealth of visits and visitors that ensure students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is exceptionally well developed. Although RE leads the way in this, recent training has raised the awareness of all departments and has affirmed what many teachers were already doing to relate their subjects to contemporary issues. Attendance is high and improving because expert support is increasingly available for students struggling with emotional difficulties. This reflects the early interventions now available to support academic learning. Results show that the achievement of students for whom extra funding is available are making better progress, although a gap remains because more able students are also reaching higher levels. The attainment of students remains consistently higher than most schools nationally.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship is the core of school life and leaves a deep impression on staff and students, particularly on their motivation to take action for charity and social justice. Music in worship has a national profile through links with the BBC. Most significantly, it enables students of all faith backgrounds to connect with worship and to develop the leadership skills that are such a strong feature of students' personal development. Each year group has its own worship group and worship band. Students increasingly take responsibility for the bands as they move through the school. Sixth formers have their own gospel choir and Year 10 students regularly lead worship in a local primary school. Performers benefit from working with students from the Nexus Christian Music College to help them gain a deeper understanding of the words they are singing and one commented 'I feel I light up inside as I sing'. Those who listen are equally affected. A student with no particular faith allegiance captured what others felt in saying: 'seeing my friend praising God helps me see what is important in their lives'. The pattern of distinctively Christian and Anglican worship is rich and varied. Termly Eucharists, sometimes in local churches, the Litany of Reconciliation in the chaplaincy and Year group worship in the hall constantly add to pupils' understanding of Jesus Christ and his place in the

Trinity. Students are immensely proud of the close link they have with Coventry Cathedral as the first International Cross of Nails School and services for the whole school in the Cathedral give extra meaning to key Christian festivals. The prayer life of the school is embedded in all aspects of the structure of the school and extends into the community outside. Students grow in their own prayer life from the knowledge that chaplains and their teachers pray for them and are willing to pray with them. The chaplaincy continues to evolve and break new ground, such as preparing students for confirmation. Cell groups, discussions led by older student in the chaplaincy for younger pupils, are now being extended to meet the demand of older students. Systems for monitoring are efficiently managed to gather feedback from this very large community. Any inconsistencies in tutor group worship are far outweighed by the strength of whole school and year group worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The vision of the department for an ideal RE classroom is one of theological conversations, dialogue and critical thinking in exploring the connection between religious belief and life in modern society. This is clearly developing well through staff training tailored to this aim. Christianity is taught well and pupils enjoy being posed questions with an ethical dimension. This interest stays with them even when they stop studying RE. Effective teachers use strategies such as 'morality lines' to ensure everyone engages with the topic. However, pupils tend to rely on teachers to manage discussions and it is now time for them to be given greater responsibility for challenging each other so that their skills in justifying their opinions develops more quickly. Monitoring by senior leaders confirms that teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. Within the department, lesson observations, learning walks and scrutinies of books do not pay enough attention to the quality of pupils' learning and exactly how teaching has an impact on this. Findings are not analysed to identify clear steps for improvement relevant to the teaching of RE. Teachers make use of whole school initiatives and 'green pen marking' is proving effective in challenging pupils to reflect on their learning. Progress in Key Stage 3 is improving rapidly because teachers refer to assessments and the outcomes of previous lessons when planning. Pupils are well prepared for GCSE by 'scaffolding' strategies that help them structure their writing and because everyone is taught by an RE specialist. Consequently, pupils achieve very high standards at GCSE, including at the higher levels, and attainment exceeds that of most schools. This success does not transfer to A level and the reasons for this have not been clearly identified. Although various changes have been made, including raising the entry criteria to the subject, the picture remains a mixed one with fluctuating numbers.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

Coventry Diocese and the Education Funding Agency have complete confidence that the plans and structures now in place to address the school's funding issues are viable and demonstrate good practice. The explicitly Christian ethos, embedded over many years, has withstood the challenges of recent events and continues to have a life-sustaining impact on students. Its profile has re-surfaced and this was signalled by the re-instatement of 'Christian Education with Care' on the school sign. The school achieves its aim for pupils to understand the nature of faith and religious experience in order to prepare for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leadership and management is judged to be outstanding because of the impact of the Christian character on the school community over time. New leaders took rapid and decisive action to enable the school to function effectively. There is still ongoing work to embed a new staffing structure, agree protocols for governance and address the priority of special educational needs. The progress made represents a significant achievement in a short space of time. It affirms the widespread belief that the right people, with deep allegiance to the Christian ethos, are in place to steer the school forward. The interim governing body (IGB) has rapidly gained an insightful understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. It has declared its intention to 'revisit both first principles and the core beliefs and objectives of the school'. The exceptional commitment of all staff has enabled students to continue their studies uninterrupted and the good academic results of last year are on track to be maintained or to improve. Senior leaders have accurately evaluated the school as a church school and know that RE, whilst fully meeting statutory requirements, is an area for improvement. However, the written version of this self-evaluation does not reflect the clarity of their thinking because there is not enough emphasis on setting priorities for

action. The chaplaincy is widely recognised for the quality of its pastoral care and for maintaining truly inclusive and distinctively Anglican worship. The senior chaplain is leaving at the end of this term but the Diocese and interim leaders are fully committed to this post and the IGB is wisely taking the opportunity to revisit the model of chaplaincy. Many members of staff have a deep personal faith including those in key positions. There is, therefore, a strong informal infrastructure in place where the powerful ministry of staff across the school has provided prayerful support for colleagues through uncertain times. The partnership with the Cathedral, and a range of Christian churches across Coventry, is well established. Ordained clergy regularly take the role of chaplain to a year group, ensuring the Church has a high presence in the school.

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