

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

The Blue Coat Church of England Voluntary Aided Specialist Science and Mathematics College

Egerton Street,
Oldham
OL1 3SQ

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Oldham

Dates of inspection: 28th February 2008

Date of last inspection: 8th-11th November 2004

School's unique reference number: 105739

Headteacher: Mrs Julie Hollis

Inspector's name and number: Rev. Dr. R. W. Buckley 338

School context

Blue Coat draws its intake from 85-95 primary schools across several local authorities. There are 1381 pupils on role of whom 55% are girls and 7% have an ethnic minority background. This is a high achieving school with 83% gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grade C or above. The school has the Specialist Science and Mathematics college status along with Sportsmark, Investors in People and Healthy School awards.

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

This is a school where students enjoy the learning experience under the mission statement "Faith, Vision, Nurture". Worship and reflective opportunities permeate the whole of school life and enhance the spiritual development of all stakeholders. Both are outstanding. The RE Department makes a major contribution to the life of the school.

Established strengths

- The outstanding teaching, learning and achievement in R.E.
- The sense of community and Christian vision throughout the school.
- School worship as a source of both challenge and enjoyment for stakeholders.

Focus for development

- To implement the vision for a chaplaincy team and monitor its effectiveness.
- To enhance signs and displays in the entrance areas which confirm that this is a Church school.

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

The status of every member of the school community as a "Gift from God to be nurtured" is recognised and resources appropriately allocated to release this potential. Students are listened to and this informs decisions. The development of social facilities on the House landings, the external environment and a positive response to re-cycling were among the many examples mentioned by pupils. Pupils speak openly about enjoying their school experience. They appreciate the open door policy of middle managers and recognise that teachers will go to great lengths to support them in times of difficulty or pressure. Every child interviewed said that there was at least one adult, in whom they had confidence, that they could go to in a crisis. Pupils are safe and confident in school because of the staff presence at appropriate times of the day. Pupils in every key stage feel that they have the respect of the staff and this is reciprocated. There are only very isolated instances of bullying and indiscipline and students say "these are always dealt with in such a way that we can get on with our learning". A member of the upper sixth said "we have been nurtured and not just

dropped off at the end of our school career.” This all leads to a generosity of spirit, a sense of forgiveness and hope which explicitly instances the school’s Christian character and reflects the excellent spiritual, moral, and social development of the pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to school life. This is shown in the generous allocation of time and resources and in staff enthusiasm for assemblies, church and school services and form worship. Collective worship is meticulously planned for house, form and year based groups. Biblical characters and themes are used throughout. All stakeholders identify the multi-faceted collective worship as that which makes this church school special. Pupils expect to be challenged by worship and to find it “joyful fun”. The excellent assembly seen during the inspection fulfilled these expectations. Circle time was identified by many students as an opportunity to explore faith and feeling in an atmosphere of confidentiality and security. The Anglican tradition is fully represented in liturgy, celebration of the Christian Year and the openness to the wider community. The music department supports events in local churches and the community. The Christian Union and Salt Cellar project are just two extra curricular inputs which reinforce worship and spiritual development. There is universal acclaim by students for their freedom to contribute to collective worship and ways their senses of vision, hearing and mobility are all used to stimulate worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The curriculum time allocated to R.E. in the school is appropriate and in nearly all years equates to that allocated to other humanities subjects. The staffing (seven specialist staff) and resource allocation is generous, reflecting the importance the Head and Governors place on the subject. Over 95% of students interviewed said that they greatly enjoy the subject. “It does not have the feel of a compulsory subject” one student remarked. Several pupils appreciated learning about other faiths and extension tasks were greatly enjoyed and appreciated. Lessons are exceptionally well planned yet allow for the individual skills and personalities of the individual teachers to come through. Differentiation by task and outcome is highlighted in the schemes of work and clearly manifests itself in both classroom practice and written work. R.E. lessons have a very significant cross curricular dimension and strongly support spiritual, cultural, moral and social development. For example, evidence was seen of good work on Fair Trade and Human Rights. Extra curricular activities include a philosophy club and lessons in Biblical Hebrew. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is very high with 83% of students achieving Grades A-C. Students in this Key stage were able to identify the causes of war and reflect that it is often a combination of these elemental causes that results in military action. In Key stage 3 students could identify Abram’s change of name to Abraham and what this meant. There was also a good discussion on animal rights based on Luke 12:6. In the sixth form attainment at both A1 and A2 is well above the national average. Significant numbers of students are opting for the subject post 16. Year 12 students were able to identify the contribution of a number of thinkers from Aquinas to Dawkins for and against the design argument for the existence of God. Sixth Form lessons were characterised by academic rigour and an informal but constructive working relationship. All lessons, in every Key Stage, manifest a combination of humour and good, relaxed relationships with students on task throughout.

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

Students, Staff and Governors clearly articulate in their relationships, dedication and vision the mission statement of the school as “Faith, Vision, Nurture” The implementation and monitoring of the R.E. and worship policies is very effectively carried out by Governors who receive regular reports about and visit R.E. lessons and acts of worship. They are committed to their role which they carry out effectively. The distinctive nature of the school as a church school is above all manifested by the central role of a creative, thoughtful worship coordinator, the work of a Head of House in developing circle time worship, the vision and leadership of the head teacher and by the pervading caring ethos. This is what Governors and senior management wanted and it is clearly and effectively established. It results in everybody being proud of belonging to the school. Evidence gathered during the inspection and supported by external consultants strongly indicates that the vision of the Head and

Governors for the school as a vibrant Christian community is shared by the SLT and the wider body of staff and other stakeholders “ from the tree top to the roots” as a member of staff commented. Staff feel valued and able to share their professional skills. They are appreciative of the support offered by the S.L.T. when a colleague died and valued the memorial service that followed. One new member of staff commented on the supportive and warm welcome received on joining the school. “This was professional induction plus” he said. The Head and governors take seriously the school’s role in community cohesion in the town and so the worlds of church and school are strongly interlinked.

SIAS report February 2008 The Blue Coat CE School, Oldham OL1 3SQ