



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Blue Coat Voluntary Aided Primary School

Symn Lane

Wotton under Edge Gloucestershire,

GL12 7BD

**Diocese: Gloucester**

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Date of inspection: 11th June 2014

Date of last inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

School's unique reference number: 115734

Headteacher: Mark Ryan

Inspector's name and number: Maria Wells NS793

### School context

Blue Coat is a larger than average primary school with 317 pupils. It serves the town of Wotton under Edge. The number of pupils for which the school receives Pupil Premium is below average as is the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance is significantly above the national average. The headteacher has been in post for two years; prior to this he was deputy headteacher and then acting headteacher at the school. The current deputy headteacher has recently been appointed headteacher of another local Church of England School.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blue Coat CE VA Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Leaders have a strong vision rooted in Christian values.
- Christian vision and values impact on the lives of all members of the school community.
- Worship is highly valued, is linked to Christian values and teaching and impacts positively on the life of the whole school community.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the system for assessing pupil progress in religious education (RE) enables the tracking of progress over time accurately so that it informs planning and can be used to inform parents.
- Develop the outdoor environment to enhance the opportunities for prayer and reflection.

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

The school's distinctively Christian values pervade all aspects of school life. The school has undertaken a comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders regarding the vision and values. As a result all members of the school community talk enthusiastically about the values, what makes them distinctively Christian and how they impact on their lives. The school has developed a values-based approach to teaching and learning and this has led directly to high levels of achievement across the curriculum and high attendance levels. The behaviour policy is also based on the core school values of happiness, respect, responsibility and creativity. As a result behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are rewarded with tokens for demonstrating values; this extends to a values voucher system used by parents to reward their children for demonstrating the values outside school. The headteacher commented 'We teach the values as Jesus' message in action; pupils learn that they need to act out the value not for self but for others.' Consequently, pupils and staff are confident, happy, feel respected and are given a high level of responsibility and freedom to be creative. School leaders have a shared definition of what spirituality means and have carried out pupil conferencing on spirituality. The response of one pupil when asked what spirituality meant was 'It's like looking at your soul.' Pupils are encouraged to explore spirituality throughout the school day for example, the patterns of numbers in algebra and the wonders of the natural world during forest school sessions. Thus, all stakeholders' interpretation of spirituality is highly developed and is integral to all life and actions within this distinctive church school community. The school's Christian values impact on the moral, social and cultural development of pupils who show a high level of respect and tolerance for each other and an understanding that others may have different beliefs.

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

Collective worship at Blue Coat School is inspirational and is highly valued by both pupils and staff. Its positive impact on spiritual development, as well as moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, is articulated by pupils and staff alike. Bible Stories and Scripture references are regularly included which give acts of worship a biblical foundation. A focus table is used during worship; this includes a Bible, cross and candle on a cloth with the colour of the liturgical season. The symbolism is explained at the start of worship and the concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit referred to throughout worship. As a result, pupils have developed an impressive understanding of the Trinity. The planning of worship is highly effective. Acts of worship take place at the end of the day so that they can impact on pupils outside of school. One parent commented 'My children often talk about worship on the way home.' Pupils take an active part in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Evaluations are carried out on a daily basis and are used to inform future planning. On the day of inspection the head teacher skilfully used questions and talk partners to challenge pupils' thinking about courage at different levels. As a result the act of worship was both inclusive and a meaningful learning experience contributing to pupils' SMSC development. Parents appreciate and talk enthusiastically about the opportunities they have to join their children for class worship. One parent commented 'I'm not a churchy person but I find it a very meaningful experience'. Prayer and reflection are used both during acts of worship and throughout the day. There is a prayer blackboard wall in the corridor which pupils contribute to on a regular basis. Consequently pupils are developing an understanding that prayer can be a valuable part of their daily lives. One pupil commented 'We can write on it whenever we like but I don't always write, I sometimes just say it in my head. God doesn't mind.' The major festivals are celebrated at the parish church and year groups take part in events such as Experience Easter. As a result pupils have a good understanding of Christian traditions in worship and the seasons of the Church year. Pupils' experiences of worship are further enriched through the wide range of local church members who lead worship.

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

Religious education is regarded as a core subject at the school and its leadership is given a high priority. The subject leader has a high level of expertise and time is given in staff meetings for teachers to develop teaching and learning. The monitoring of RE is highly effective and, as part of this, the subject leader regularly observes lessons. A full review of the subject was carried out in September 2013 and included a learning scrutiny and pupil conferencing. As a result the action-plan for RE demonstrates a high level of reflection and identifies a clear desire to continue to develop the subject. Achievement in RE is at least in line with national expectations and the school is already taking steps to further align attainment in RE with that of the very high attainment in other core subjects. Since the last inspection much has been done to improve assessment procedures in RE and there is now a rigorous and robust system in place. The school is aware of the need to embed the system so that there is an accurate profile of progress over time. Lessons are well planned and designed to inspire and challenge pupils. Teachers set clear learning objectives and use a range of effective strategies to enable pupils to develop their understanding of religious beliefs and practices. The level of questioning during RE lessons encourages higher order thinking and has a positive impact on pupils' SMSC development. Links with the school's Christian values and SMSC are built in to lesson planning. On the day of the inspection KSI pupils were 'hot seating' as characters in the story of the Good Samaritan and were asked to think of questions they would ask of them. This enabled pupils to make links with biblical teaching and the school's Christian values. In both the lessons observed on the day of the inspection there was a high level of engagement by pupils. The school has a wide range of enrichment opportunities and activities within the RE curriculum designed to give pupils experiences to further their understanding of the impact that beliefs can have on them and others; for example, visits from a church member to explain why their faith is important to them and a visit from an Aboriginal artist to explain the culture and faith which his art represents.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a strong vision for the school rooted in Christian values in which they see the Christian ethos running through the whole school day and beyond. The thorough consultation regarding the vision resulting in the development of the current vision and values has ensured ownership of these by the whole school community. Parents talk enthusiastically about their involvement in this process and are clear about how Christian distinctiveness impacts positively on their children. All pupils at Blue Coat are regarded as leaders; this is exemplified in the way that the school council is called 'Future Leaders'. Pupils are actively involved in school improvement planning because the school leaders encourage and involve pupils in thinking about the future world they will be living in. As a result of this they talk with confidence and insight about school improvement and their role in shaping the future of the school. Governors effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian distinctiveness of the school to ensure it is sustained and developed. The ethos committee has a specific focus on monitoring and evaluating the impact of Christian distinctiveness and the teaching of RE. They produce comprehensive visit reports and communicate their findings to the whole governing body which is fully involved in the school self-evaluation process. Leaders at all levels at Blue Coat are constantly reflecting on practice. As a result, the school has in place effective strategies for further improvement focussed on meeting the needs of the pupils. The school has strong links with the local churches and wider community. The school has collaborated with the local Anglican church to support charities such as the Food Bank and Christian Aid. These links have helped to develop pupils' understanding of local, national and global communities.

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