

Blue Coat CofE Aided Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104231
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	323994
Inspection dates	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Buchanan
Headteacher	Janet Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
School address	Hanch Place Walsall WS1 3AF
Telephone number	01922 720740
Fax number	01922 720306

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The impact of work by key leaders to enhance provision for writing and in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- Work to improve attendance and its impact.

Evidence was gathered from:

- published assessment data
- the school's own records
- parents' questionnaires
- observations in all classes
- interviews with staff, governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Blue Coat CofE Aided Infant School is bigger than most infant schools. It has a large EYFS made up of a Nursery and three Reception classes. There are three classes in each of Years 1 and 2. Children start EYFS with well below average levels of skills and knowledge, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Most pupils live within two miles of the school, although a few come from much further away. The entitlement to free school meals is above average. The pupils come from 15 different ethnic backgrounds, with over a quarter from Pakistani families. Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils are other large groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average, including a few Polish speakers, some of whom have joined the school part way through their infant education. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Blue Coat CofE Infant School is outstanding. Parents are one hundred per cent in agreement that it provides an excellent education for their children. The pupils are proud of their school and are keen to show visitors all the many things, places and people that are special to them. They are bursting with enthusiasm for work and play and they make rapid strides in their studies from the first few days in EYFS. The quality of work at the end of Year 2 would not disgrace pupils who are two years or so older.

Lessons are frequently vibrant and intriguing and are based on the rich and rewarding curriculum. The pupils work sensibly together, whether deciding why they want to be a sheep, completing their 'Clouds of Wonder' or working with their whisper partners to unpick the story of 'A bad fox'. Teaching quality is outstanding through the school. All staff keep up-to-date with ways to improve their teaching and there are very well developed systems to check that new ideas and approaches bring the benefits that are expected. The tracking of pupils' progress is exemplary and is based on thoroughly reliable assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils are given very well informed academic guidance. They know what good work looks like and aspire to match its quality. Expectations of what pupils will achieve in school are high. Staff use every opportunity to build pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The teaching of phonics is as much part of assembly as it is literacy lessons. Thus, standards are above average and rising, and pupils make outstanding progress.

Staff and governors are constructively self-critical and constantly seek improvement. Whilst the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 3 in the Year 2 National Assessments has continued to climb during the last four years, senior leaders recognise that even more pupils can reach this standard. This is the key area for improvement in the year to come. The prospects are very positive because the pupils just starting in Year 2 have already shown just how good they are in writing. The rising standards in writing, which was a key area for improvement last year, are due to the very effective literacy programme and the school's leading edge teaching. The outstanding progress of pupils is shared by those who speak English as an additional language. It is not long before non-English speaking pupils are conversing freely with their new friends and achieving well in their work. The support for these pupils is highly skilled in helping them become fluent and confident in English.

Parents recognise that the school is as successful in helping their children to develop as people as it is to ensure their excellent achievement. The sense of community is very strong, as shown when pupils hand-signed their hymn to help the few pupils who are hearing impaired. They are as alert as they should be to health and safety matters and look after each other carefully. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is first rate. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on the special things that surround them. They often show awe at the things they see. The school's Church of England traditions are valued expressly by parents, many of whom are members of other faiths. The diversity of the pupils is celebrated daily. Pupils of all backgrounds respect each other and make an extremely strong contribution to the very marked community cohesion locally.

The air of enjoyment in school is very obvious. Pupils are extremely keen to explain what they enjoy and why, and they do this convincingly. Their enjoyment is infectious and is a cornerstone of their outstanding achievement. They are particularly well prepared for the next step in their education, which is frequently in the junior school that is part of the family of schools in this corner of town. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also relish their work, which is matched to their specific needs and focused carefully on the step-by-step development of essential skills and knowledge.

Pupils are cared for conscientiously and properly. They are safeguarded thoroughly. The school works in full partnership with other agencies and parents to make sure every pupil can achieve their best. As one parent wrote, 'pupils are valued as individuals and not just for their academic achievement'. During the past few years, the school has worked closely with parents to improve pupils' attendance rates. From a below average level, they have risen to a figure that is close to the national average. Most of the absence is due to the illnesses that often affect young children. Where it is occasionally due to other reasons, the school is vigilant in following up the cause and in insisting on full attendance. The management of behaviour is a real strength. It is low-key, positive and encouraging, with the result that pupils behave in a highly sensible and mature fashion.

The very many strengths of the school are due to the sterling work of school leaders and the governors. The headteacher is dedicated to making sure pupils do exceptionally well and that staff bring high quality to their work. She leads the school with great expertise, humour and compassion. More than this, she values the work of others and trusts them to take responsibility and account for their actions. Staff are happy to take up their duties and to make sure that they contribute fully to high standards and outstanding achievement. They feel very well led, but also valued fully. They are not afraid to set very challenging targets and they celebrate pupils' achievement with them. The school's evaluation of its work is very honest and realistic. There are comprehensive checks to see that the trust placed in people to bring good results is not misplaced. All staff and governors play a crucial role in setting out priorities for improvement and checking they are met. Governors ask demanding questions to ensure the school is as effective as it aims to be. Recent improvement has been very marked, as shown in the rising standard of work and innovative practice in information and communication technology (ICT), which was a major issue at the last inspection. As a highly efficient school, with many successes to its name, it has outstanding capacity to continue its rise.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in EYFS is excellent in meeting the very diverse needs of the children. The high level of interaction between adults and children contributes strongly to the outstanding achievement shown in Nursery and Reception. Much of the work is play-based, which the children enjoy immensely. They investigate, explore and discover with great enthusiasm and each day is full of new things to learn. Staff make exceptionally good use of ICT to extend the children's horizons and give them highly

motivating activities that help develop the key skills of literacy and numeracy. All staff are very well skilled at helping the children learn and develop.

There is excellent care and guidance that, together with the strong partnership with parents, ensures the children's welfare is assured. The children's personal development and well-being is encouraged most successfully. They play and work in friendship and partnership with other children. They gather confidence and enjoyment as they grow, and develop enquiring minds. By the end of EYFS standards are broadly average and the children are very well set for work in Year 1. The assets of EYFS have been established effectively because the stage is led and managed with great expertise and firm direction.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the proportion of pupils reaching Level 3 in the National Assessments.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	3
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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

18 September 2008



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blue Coat Infant School, Walsall, WS1 3AF

What a great time Mrs King and I had when we visited your school. You were friendly and gave us a warm welcome. Thank you for sharing your ideas about your school and helping us discover what makes it the special place it is. We will remember for a long time how you hand-signed in assembly to help those who are hard of hearing and how clearly you explained the rules for using the fitness trail.

We have written a report that shows people outside school why it is so good. We have said it is an outstanding school. Your parents and carers agree with us.

There are many good things in school, but these are the most important:

- you make rapid progress in Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2
- you reach good standards
- you have exciting lessons that are taught excellently
- children in Nursery and Reception take part in lots of very enjoyable activities
- you are extremely well cared for
- you also take great care of each other
- Mrs Davies makes sure the school is very successful
- all the staff and the governors join her in expecting you to do your best.

During the last few years standards have got better and better. However, the staff know that there are still things they can do to make them the best. The chief of these is to make sure as many of you as possible reach the higher level 3 when you do your Year 2 tests.

Because you showed us how keen you are to do well, we know you will work hard to reach these higher standards. Keep sharing with your teachers how well you think you are doing.

We wish you good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely
David Carrington
Lead inspector