

Blue Coat Church of England Academy, Walsall

Birmingham Street, Walsall, WS1 2ND

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal's clear vision of what he wants for the academy and his ambition for it are helping to create an environment in which all students can achieve success.
- The curriculum is good and its focus on developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent.
- The academy prepares students very well for life in modern democratic Britain, and its focus on developing community cohesion is exemplary.
- Governors and academy sponsors provide very good support for academy leaders; whilst, at the same time, having high expectations of what leaders should achieve.
- The sixth form is good.
- Good teaching and the fact that students are keen to learn contribute well to the good progress students make.
- Support for disabled students and students who have special educational needs is very strong and enables them to achieve well.
- Teaching assistants are used very well to help teachers support students who require additional assistance, including those for whom English is an additional language.
- The academy's actions to ensure students are safe are outstanding.
- Students, including all groups of students, make good progress and, as a result, the standards they reach are rising.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Approaches to improve the literacy skills of older students are not as strong as those for younger students.
- Rates of progress made by lower attaining students are not as rapid as those made by other students.
- The quality of teaching in a few areas is not as good as that in most areas.
- The sixth form curriculum does not include sufficient work experience for all students.
- The quality of data used by leaders to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the academy does not highlight emerging issues as quickly or as well as it might.
- Not all leaders in charge of subjects use the data they are provided with well enough to make decisions on how to improve the teaching and learning in their departments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 31 lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the Principal and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors attended form time sessions and an assembly. One inspector joined a member of the senior leadership team on a learning walk to scrutinise students' work in a range of subjects. All inspectors scrutinised students' work during lesson observations.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, members of the senior leadership team, leaders of subjects, the academy sponsor who represents the Lichfield diocese, the co-sponsor who is the Headteacher of Holte School, and the Chair of the Governing Body and other members. Formal meetings were held with students from each of the key stages, and other meetings were held with individual students as requested by the lead inspector. In addition, inspectors met informally with a large number of students at break, lunch and lessons change times.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents including 2014 academy data about attainment, progress, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. The academy's self-evaluation was reviewed and documents relating to checks on teaching, staff performance and governing body minutes. Safeguarding procedures and records were also scrutinised.
- The inspection team considered the views of 17 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and the views expressed in 61 staff questionnaires. In addition, they considered the views of approximately 200 parents and carers who responded to academy-based questionnaires in spring term 2014 and summer term 2014.

Inspection team

Gwendoline Coates, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ingrid Abrahams

Additional Inspector

Glenn Mayoh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Blue Coat Church of England Comprehensive School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Blue Coat Church of England Academy is much smaller than the average secondary school.
- According to the latest academy data, almost half of its students speak English as an additional language, which is well above the national average, and fewer than 15% of students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above average. The proportion of students who have a statement or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Over half of all students are supported by pupil premium (extra funding provided by the government for students who are eligible for free school meals or are looked after by local authority), which is well above average.
- A large number of Years 7 and 8 students benefit from the nationally-funded catch-up programme, which is for students who do not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of their primary schooling.
- None of the students in the academy attend alternative provision elsewhere.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at Key Stage 4.
- The academy is a stand-alone academy sponsored by the Church of England Central Education Trust (CECET). Its co-sponsor, Holte School, is an outstanding school in Birmingham.
- In March 2013, the school was awarded the Anti-Bullying Silver Award. In June 2013, it was awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM), and in June 2014 gained IQM Centre of Excellence Status. As an IQM Centre of Excellence, the academy has supported other schools, including Birchills Church of England Community Academy and Streetly Academy in gaining the Inclusion Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students make substantial and sustained progress throughout year groups and across all subjects, by:
 - improving the literacy skills of every student whose reading age is below their chronological age, including those beyond Years 7 and 8
 - increasing the rate at which lower attaining students make progress so that it is as rapid as that of other students.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching always meets the high standards of that of the best in the school, particularly in relation to:
 - ensuring work is sufficiently adapted to enable the most or least able students to make rapid progress
 - ensuring pace is such as to maintain the highest levels of student interest
 - ensuring teachers' questioning provides opportunities for all students to develop higher level thinking and speaking skills.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management in the academy by:
 - improving the quality of summative data used by academy leaders so that they highlight areas of concern, or of celebration more effectively and more quickly, and thus help leaders improve the school even more
 - ensuring that leaders in subjects that are relatively weaker than others make better use of data about students' and teachers' performance in order to ensure achievement is as good as that in the best departments
 - broadening the non-qualification requirements of the sixth form curriculum to include more extensive work experience for all students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Staff and students comment on the work of the Principal in encouraging strong and supportive values in the academy. Staff are committed to his vision and ambition for the academy. Their trust in his ability is an important reason for the strong improvements seen in recent years.
- Subject leaders are successfully taking responsibility for improving teaching in their areas and the progress students make in lessons in their subjects. Some subject leaders are not using data provided as well as others to identify areas that need further improvement.
- The academy sets demanding targets for students and tracks their progress regularly so that underperformance is quickly identified and appropriate support is put in place. Well directed training for teachers is helping to improve the quality of teaching, and checks on teaching ensure that only teachers who demonstrate strong performance move up the pay scale.
- Effective use is made of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to support relevant groups of students. As a result, the skills and understanding and the progress of these groups of students are improving.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of students well. For example, in Key Stage 4, academic, vocational and skills-based courses ensure the needs and interests of students of all abilities are met. Very good provision is made to support the development of language skills to enable the large numbers of students for whom English is an additional language to take a full part in lessons as quickly as possible. Extra-curricular provision is popular. Information, advice and guidance are good and are particularly strong for the most vulnerable students.
- The curriculum promotes the development of students' spiritual moral, social and cultural understanding exceptionally well through Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) days, assemblies, the debating society and, generally, in lessons across subjects. As a result, students develop respect for and understanding of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles and are very well prepared for life in modern democratic Britain. Every week, all students attend a whole school assembly or church service at the local church; hardly any parents or carers request their child be excused from this.
- The academy is an inclusive community where everyone is considered important. All, including parents, are aiming for the same thing – a strong, multi-faith, multi-ethnic community that promotes tolerance, understanding, trust and respect for difference. Community cohesion is exemplary. The recent award of IQM Centre of Excellence Status reflects the academy's work in supporting other schools to achieve and maintain an inclusive learning environment.
- The academy's sponsors have high expectations of what leaders should be able to achieve, ask searching questions and, at the same time, provide leaders with excellent support.
- Senior leaders' judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of the academy are accurate, but the quality of data that inform these do not highlight areas of concern or of celebration as quickly or as well as they might.
- Leaders' capacity to improve the academy further is good, as indicated by their record of improvements to date. It is also shown by the increasing confidence potential parents and students show in the academy, for example by the increasing number of students wanting to join the academy in Year 7 and the number of students wishing to progress to the academy's sixth form.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The range of skills and expertise of governors enables them to ask academy leaders searching questions. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the academy, how good teaching is, how well students achieve and those areas that still require improvement. They are fully informed about the use and impact of pupil premium funding and have a clear understanding of targets set for teachers and how these contribute to improving teaching and achievement. Governors ensure that all national safeguarding requirements are fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good because students' conduct is courteous, respectful and thoughtful. Students are an asset to the academy and reflect its efforts to promote high standards. Their good behaviour in lessons and their improving attendance contribute well to the good progress they make. Students come to lessons ready to work and respond promptly to teachers' instructions.
- Attendance has improved and the number of students away from school for long periods has fallen. The

appointment of teaching assistants with foreign language skills has improved communication with parents and ensured that they understand the importance of attendance and punctuality. The number of students who are excluded from school for short periods of time because of poor behaviour has fallen significantly and permanent exclusions are low.

- The behaviour policy, which emphasises consequences, is popular with students, particularly because they enjoy the rewards that result from good behaviour and good attendance. Despite the fact that there is still some variability in how consistently all teachers apply the policy, it has been very effective in bringing about a significant reduction in the number of incidents of misbehaviour in recent years.
- Case study evidence, to check the experience of students who face difficult circumstances, indicates that they receive good academic, emotional and social support. The help and guidance for disabled students and those with special educational needs are very good. The academy works well with external services to provide additional support for students where this is appropriate.
- Bullying incidents have fallen substantially in recent years. When they do occur, they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Students speak very highly of the effectiveness of the system for reporting concerns and the support they receive from pupil groups and from staff.
- Safety is outstanding because the academy ensures that students are safe, and students say they feel very safe. Students understand what constitutes unsafe situations and, because of the support provided by the academy, are very aware of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The academy meets all national safeguarding requirements at a very thorough level. All staff and governors have safeguarding, child protection and safe recruitment training relevant to their responsibilities. Safeguarding procedures and practices at the academy have been used as an example of good practice by the local authority.
- Site security is a key strength, particularly in relation to the road crossing between the two sites. A dedicated member of the support staff and academy leaders are on duty on the road crossing at the start and end of the day, at break and lunch times, and at every lesson change. Not only is this a strong safety feature, but it also provides additional opportunities for academy leaders and students to meet. Members of the public regularly comment on the good behaviour and smart appearance of students when they see them at the crossing.
- Students are provided with very good and very extensive information about how to keep themselves safe. College assemblies and Personal, Social, Health and Economic days focus on all forms of bullying, e-safety and issues such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and safe sex.
- Young students are confident around the academy and suggest that the vertical tutor group system contributes very well to this because older students in their tutor groups, as well as prefects and sixth formers, help and guide them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because it creates opportunities to stretch students, encourage them to work hard and allow them to make good progress. Teachers want students to do their very best. They use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that students find interesting. Teachers have excellent relationships with students and, at all times, teachers' behaviour demonstrates to students the importance of respect, tolerance and understanding of difference.
- Students' good behaviour and the fact that students are keen to learn contribute to the good progress they make in lessons. They have a pride in the academy and this is reflected in their work, which is generally neat and tidy. Students' responses in lessons and evidence from checking work in their books indicate that students develop knowledge, skills and understanding that prepare them well for the next stages in their education.
- Teachers understand the importance of developing students' literacy skills, and rising standards and improving progress indicate the positive impact this is having. However, their actions are not yet as effective or as well focused for older students as they are for those in Years 7 and 8.
- Teachers use data on the skills and understanding students have reached to plan lessons that include work of the right level of difficulty for students of different abilities. As a result, the most and least able students in their classes are helped to make the progress they should. Teachers monitor how well students learn during lessons and use this information to adapt their planning over time and within lessons to ensure students make at least good progress. Their planning takes good account of the needs of students for whom English is an additional language, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The academy's approach to assessment, marking and feedback is effective. Teacher assessment of

students' work is accurate and is supported by internal academy and external checking. A review of students' work indicates that, although practice is still variable, excellent use is often made of the green/red pen system of teacher feedback and student response. Students value this approach and understand that it is an important part of the learning process.

- Students know and understand their target grades. In lessons, teachers regularly refer to standards against which students' success can be judged. This helps students understand how their work links to their target grades.
- Very good use is made of teaching assistants to support students. Teaching assistants receive good training to enable them to understand their role and the students they support.
- Teachers help students to think hard and to develop their speaking and writing skills by using effective questioning, by providing appropriate learning activities and by getting students to understand that there are different ways of arriving at correct answers. In a Year 11 history lesson on the importance of evidence in relation to advancements in medicine, the teacher used very well-judged learning activities to develop students' skills in answering high mark questions that require extended writing. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on algebraic expressions, the teacher encouraged students to come up with answers to a series of questions. Using their different answers, she was able to convey the important message that there are different ways of arriving at a correct answer.
- A Year 8 religious education lesson symbolised much of what is good in the academy. Teachers and students of different ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths, including students who are learning English as an additional language, discussing different religious faiths, in this case Sikhism. The teacher used interesting and varied activities to enable students to understand and appreciate key facts about Sikhism and, with the help of a teaching assistant with foreign language skills, helped students develop their literacy skills.
- On the few occasions when teaching is less effective than the best, students' learning and the progress students make are not as good as they should be. This occurs when teaching is not as well matched to the needs of the most or least able students, so that not all students make as much progress as they are capable of; when slower pace and too much repetition means students' interest and the rate at which students learn is less than it should be; and, when teachers' questioning is less effective in helping students to think hard and develop their speaking skills and when it fails to check students' understanding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment has risen strongly in recent years. The percentage of students gaining five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grades C or above is now close to the national average. Attainment in English and mathematics is below the national average, but improving strongly. Mathematics is stronger than English.
- The skills and understanding of students when they start in Year 7 are exceptionally low. The good progress they make during their time at the academy contributes significantly to the improving standards they reach at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The progress students make in English and in mathematics is now good. It is stronger in mathematics than in English. In 2014, improved progress was made by all individual groups, including low and high attaining students, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs. However, low attaining students are not performing as well as they should. Students for whom English is an additional language, of which over half are disadvantaged students in this academy, make better progress than their peers.
- In lessons, students' positive attitudes to learning shine through. This thirst for learning serves them well and, as a result, most acquire knowledge and understanding securely. Developing and acquiring skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics ensure that most students are well prepared for the next steps in their education. While reading is very firmly established in Years 7 and 8, Key Stage 4 students read less widely and less often and, as a result, lower attaining students with weaker literacy skills do less well.
- The most able students make at least good progress toward achieving the highest grades at GCSE, and increasing proportions of students in the sixth form achieve the highest grades.
- In 2014, there were marked improvements in narrowing the gaps in attainment and levels of progress in relation to disadvantaged students compared to other students. Attainment in English for disadvantaged students is just under a grade below other students nationally and about a quarter of a grade below other students within the academy. Attainment in mathematics for disadvantaged students is about one and a quarter grades below other students nationally and just under a third of a grade below other students

within the academy.

- Evidence of significant improvement in the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is apparent in 2014 results. In relation to their skills and understanding when they joins the academy, a significantly higher proportion of these students are making the progress they should or even better progress in both English and mathematics than in the past.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Attainment in the sixth form meets the 16–19 interim minimum standards specified by the Department for Education. The large majority of students who entered the sixth form without grade C in GCSE English improved their grade; of those who entered without grade C in mathematics, nearly half did so.
- Attainment and progress in the sixth form have improved sharply in nearly all areas since the school became an academy. Although attainment remains below average, this reflects students' well below average attainment on entry. Students, including the most able students, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs, made good progress in 2014. Previous weaknesses in science have been overcome.
- Consistently good teaching makes a strong contribution to students' learning and the development of their higher level skills. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on robbery and case law, a key strength was the way the teacher encouraged students' ability to make confident and perceptive contributions in discussions.
- Retention rates are strong. Good information, advice and guidance ensure students are guided onto courses that are well matched to their aspirations. The school works very well with the families of students, for example to encourage sixth form students to apply to university, often overcoming significant cultural and socio-economic barriers. In 2014, 95% of all A-level leavers went to university.
- The curriculum supports the progress of students with a range of academic and vocational courses. Many sixth formers take on wider responsibilities, including helping and guiding younger students and contributing to the running of school events. However, not all sixth formers undertake work experience in support of their learning or chosen future destination.
- Leaders of the sixth form energetically support student welfare and achievement. In raising standards and levels of progress, and, for example, in strengthening the provision for level 2 mathematics for current Year 12 students, leaders demonstrate good capacity to bring about further improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138606
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	452677

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy Sponsor Led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	670
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Tonks
Principal	Alan Westerman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01922 720558
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