



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School

Vaughans Lane
Great Boughton
Chester
CH3 5XF

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 4 & 5 July 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2011

School's unique reference number: 111455

Headteacher: Ian Wilson

Inspector's name and number: Fiona Ashton 860

School context

The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School is a larger than the average 11-18 secondary school that converted to an academy in April 2011. Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and who speak English as an additional language, is below average as is, the proportion of students for whom the school receives additional funding. The headteacher took up his post in January 2016 and the school is currently awaiting the appointment of a new chair of governors. The school was awarded the Quality Mark for RE, Gold Standard in November 2015.

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

- The dedicated, rigorous and supportive leadership of the governors, headteacher and talented leadership team and chaplain, ensures that all members of the school family are 'Known, Nurtured, Inspired' as intended by the school's motto. As a result, this is a highly inclusive school with Christian values at its heart.
- Excellent religious education (RE) ensures that students thrive academically and contributes significantly to the overall personal development of students so that they become independent, responsible and caring young people.
- The quality of relationships throughout the school community provides support, celebrates success, acknowledges weaknesses and promotes forgiveness, trust and reconciliation in line with its Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Develop the newly designated worship space so that the role of chaplaincy and opportunities to support the spiritual well-being of the whole community can have greater impact
- In RE, develop and embed Biblical and theological literacy in all key stages so that students express their learning in RE with improved accuracy and sophistication.

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

Christian values are deeply embedded and visually celebrated at The Bishops' Blue Coat School resulting in excellent spiritual, curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and decisions. All members of the community are encouraged to know God, have faith nurtured and be inspired to serve God and others. Students understand that the school motto of 'Known, Nurtured, Inspired', shapes their educational experience. Welcomed, encouraged and cared for, students achieve beyond expectation and in excess of national averages. The curriculum meets the varying needs and abilities of students and there is excellent pastoral and academic support for students from Year 6 through to leaving the school. For some students, Oasis nurture groups and, at Key Stage 4, appropriate and well monitored off-site provision ensures individual needs are effectively met. Sixth form students, value the quality of next steps guidance and support that they are offered. Attendance is good and students enjoy being at the school. Guided by Jesus' Great Commandment 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself', excellent provision exists for students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. This is embedded in learning across the curriculum, as well as, through Lessons for Life and enrichment days. The rich opportunities provided for prayer and worship that is distinctly Christian, but accessible to students of other or no faith background, endorses this. One student, without a faith background, stated that worship gives you 'Christian and moral values to live your life by'. The Bible is central to worship and students can explain its messages and impact. This motivates their support of charities locally, nationally and internationally and helps students to grow in their understanding of diversity. Relationships are a palpable strength of the whole school. Staff, students and parents repeatedly attribute this to the Gospel message in action. Students articulate the emphasis on trust and respect and, when needed, restorative justice and reconciliation as relating to the example of Jesus. Students and parents know that there is always an adult to speak to, and on the rare occasions that bullying of any sort occurs, it is immediately and effectively addressed. Excellent religious education (RE) makes an outstanding impact upon SMSC and the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The subject knowledge of teachers is exceptional and therefore students gain an accurate understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Work in the classroom is augmented by a range of enrichment activities that encourage students in their understanding of diversity in the local context and beyond. For example, visits are made to places of worship of other faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a significant strength of the school. A Key Stage 4 student commented that 'It is natural to pray at Bishops'. There is a well-planned, and robustly evaluated, programme of worship that facilitates students gathering twice weekly in year groups and in form groups at other times. Worship planning by the Chaplain and members of the senior leadership team with responsibility for Beliefs, Values and the Whole Person and the Sixth Form is meticulous. Thus students are exposed to collective worship that celebrates both the liturgical year and the breadth of the Anglican tradition. This includes worship in both the parish church and Chester Cathedral. Local clergy and a Christian youth worker support school leaders, and other staff, in leading worship. Each brings their own style and Christian witness to the worship they lead but, the use of a lit candle and a common form of words to signal the start and end of worship, supports students in their understanding of what is occurring. Students value highly the school prayer, written by previous students, because it is prayed together and keeps past students present in the school. The students' Assemble and Pre-Assemble drama groups and Ethos Ambassadors, amongst others, regularly prepare, lead and evaluate worship. Reboo worship resources facilitate and enrich form worship. Students and staff value Reboo for the mixture of scripture, prayer, reflection and theology that it encourages. The Chaplain's ability to create pop-up prayer spaces and his co-ordination of scripture biased Reflection Days, nurture students in their understanding of, and relationship with, God. The thriving Christian Union – Beta, provides another means by which students understand the relevance of the Bible and the power of the Trinity.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has a very high profile within the school. Students achieve excellent academic and non-academic outcomes as a result of the hard work of the inspirational head of academic RE and a dedicated and talented team of specialist teachers. Through teaching that is often outstanding, and never less than good, students are inspired to achieve beyond expectation. Students speak of RE lessons that are 'consistently interesting' and 'thought provoking' and of teachers who 'go the extra mile for you' and who 'always show you how to improve'. The RE curriculum is impressive for its breadth and challenge and for the pastoral awareness and care that underpins its structure. RE is true to the school motto of Known, Nurtured and Inspired. At Key Stage 3, it incorporates the Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders Award and a focus on world faiths. The programmes of study are theologically challenging and clearly meet the requirements of the Diocesan Framework for Religious Education. Additionally, it enables students to see faith in action through outreach activities such as supporting students from Dee Bank Special School. The excellent and mutually supportive relationship between religious education and chaplaincy facilitates this. All students complete a GCSE course in Years 9 & 10 and move to a tailored non-examined 'REality' programme in Year 11. This relieves examination pressure and has raised achievement at Key Stage 4. REality encourages students to question more deeply a range of moral and religious themes and to explore them from theological and philosophical perspectives. For example, students were observed discussing the difference between relative and absolute poverty and how Christian beliefs inform responses. Students and parents commented on the enjoyment and personal growth that this course allows. It is a sure foundation for both, the study of Philosophy and Ethics at Key Stage 5, and the theologically challenging RE that all sixth formers access through enrichment days. The department leads the very well attended, all age, debating club to very good effect. Students from Years 7 to 13 attend and share ideas and opinions in a highly respectful, yet, challenging and thought provoking manner. The parent of a Year 7 student was delighted by the confidence her child gained from being included.

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

A deep and nourishing understanding of Christian values and the school's purpose in enriching students lives through learning and guidance lies at the heart of every plan, development and activity within the school. This is exemplified in the exceptional quality of relationships, opportunities, trust, forgiveness, love, support and challenge that exists among all members of the community. Governors are proactive in their monitoring of every aspect of the school and have been particularly robust in fully addressing the issues of focus from the previous SIAMS inspection. By realigning their responsibilities, governors have greatly strengthened their knowledge of the school as a distinctly Christian community. Additionally, the appointment of an inspiring senior leader with responsibility for Beliefs, Values and the Whole Person has brought even greater focus and energy to this area. By investing in staffing and resources governors have ensured that the school meets the demanding Statement of Entitlement for RE in Church of England Schools. The new headteacher, building on already excellent practice, ensures that the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning are underpinned by its mission as a church school. Strong strategic leadership promotes the school's 'can do' culture and balances this with a mindfulness for the well-being of staff and students. Parents, students and staff all commented that there is always someone to ask, to listen and to care. Staff are nurtured both to be effective in their existing roles but also to take on new challenges and respond to new opportunities. One member of staff described it as being 'allowed to flourish'. Staff stay at the school because of the care, support and guidance that they experience and this provides stability and continuity for students in their learning and ultimately their achievements. The school has highly effective partnerships with the Christian faith communities throughout Chester and internationally through links with a diocese in the Congo. The chaplain's role extends far beyond the leadership of collective worship and provides, often intuitively, support for students, staff and their families.