

Inspection of The Blue Coat CofE School

Egerton Street, Oldham, Lancashire OL1 3SQ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since December 2011.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, flourish at this school. They are immensely proud of their school and its history. Pupils are consistently polite and respectful. Their conduct reflects leaders' high standards. Pupils feel safe and happy at school. Teachers deal with any incidents of bullying swiftly and effectively.

Leaders have very high expectations of pupils' academic achievement. Pupils experience an ambitious curriculum that is successfully designed to build a deep and secure body of knowledge over time. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), engage in a wealth of opportunities to promote their personal development. Pupils readily assume leadership roles, for example on the school council. These roles enable pupils to make meaningful contributions to the school, organising events such as the 'Culture Day'. Students in the sixth form strive to serve their local community, working towards the 'Blues Award', which is given for 24 hours of voluntary service.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities available, such as book clubs, music, sports and a Braille club. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from a vast array of trips and visits. For example, most Year 8 pupils visit Belgium. All Year 9 pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, governors and trustees are aspirational for all pupils, including students in the sixth form. Leaders have thought meticulously about the curriculum from Year 7 to Year 13. They are committed to ensuring that pupils leave school with the qualifications that they need to succeed. Almost all pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Subject leaders are passionate about all pupils developing 'powerful knowledge'. They have carefully organised their curriculums to make sure that teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn and when this knowledge should be taught. Subject leaders have ensured that there are many opportunities for pupils to revisit their prior learning. This means that pupils develop rich subject knowledge.

Subject leaders have thought deeply about how to check what pupils know and remember. Their approaches to assessment are sharply focused on the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers swiftly identify and address pupils' misconceptions or gaps in their learning. Pupils and students achieve highly.

Leaders prioritise reading. They have an exceptionally well-thought-out strategy to identify pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. Expert staff support these

pupils to catch up quickly with their peers. Students in the sixth form model positive reading behaviours to younger pupils. Across the school, leaders have ensured that all staff are teachers of reading. Pupils read widely and with fervour.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Subject leaders prioritise the needs of pupils with SEND when designing their curriculums. Teachers are furnished with detailed information about the needs of individual pupils. They expertly adapt their delivery of the curriculum to support pupils with SEND to know and remember more.

Pupils manage their own behaviour exceptionally well, which means that their learning is rarely disrupted. Students in the sixth form behave impeccably. They are independent and highly studious. Pupils and students have positive attitudes towards their learning which are reflected in their high attendance.

Leaders have developed an excellent programme to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils and students are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders have created an additional personal development programme for vulnerable pupils. This supports these pupils to understand sensitive issues, such as those learned as part of relationships and sex education and health education. This helps them to be well prepared for adult life.

Pupils and students experience a high-quality careers education. This is woven through subject curriculums. Leaders provide timely and relevant opportunities for pupils to engage with employers. Pupils and students receive the independent advice that they need to make appropriate and ambitious choices about their futures.

Leaders at all levels are constantly looking for ways to improve the quality of education that they provide. Teachers focus on continually developing their subject expertise. Leaders prioritise curriculum development and, as a result, teachers feel empowered to support all pupils to learn effectively. Staff appreciate the support that leaders give them to manage their workload. They are immensely proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders persevere to make sure that pupils get the timely help that they need from external agencies.

Leaders have a deep understanding of the different safeguarding issues facing pupils and students across the school. This is because leaders consult with a wide range of pupils about risks in the community and online. Leaders successfully make sure that

pupils learn about the issues that are most relevant to them. This supports pupils to stay safe.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137133
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10242464
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,692
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	434
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Gregory
Headteacher	Robert Higgins
Website	www.blue-coat.org
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 December 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cranmer Education Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2016.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body, representatives of the trust and a consultant working with the trust on school improvement.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history, geography, design and technology and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and students about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, records of governing body minutes and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for students, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Ben Hill	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Goodwin	His Majesty's Inspector
Nick Lowry	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector

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