



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Blue Coat School Birmingham

Full Name of School	The Blue Coat School Birmingham
DfE Number	330/6070
EYFS Number	EY309405
Registered Charity Number	528805
Address	The Blue Coat School Birmingham Somerset Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B17 0HR
Telephone Number	0121 410 6800
Fax Number	0121 454 7757
Email Address	headssec@thebluecoatschool.com
Head	Mr A D J Browning
Chair of Governors	Prof J N Hay
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	568
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (294 boys; 274 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 35 5-11: 416 3-5 (EYFS) : 117
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Helen Andrews
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	24 Sep 2013 to 25 Sep 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2011.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with two governors. They talked informally to parents, observed snack and lunch times, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Mary Hughes

Early Years Lead Inspector

Ms Philippa-Anne Slater

Team Inspector for Early Years (Head of Pre-Prep, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Blue Coat School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from two to eleven years. It is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. The school was founded in 1722 and moved to its current 15-acre site in Edgbaston, Birmingham, in 1930. The school extended its age range in 2000 to accommodate children aged two and three years. The school aims to provide an excellent, rounded education for every child, developing confidence, ability and intellect within a caring Christian environment. The school's motto is 'Grow in grace'. Children in the EYFS share the facilities of the main school, including the sports hall and some of the outdoor areas.
- 1.2 The EYFS comprises 152 children between the ages of 2 and 5, of whom 35 are under the age of 3. The youngest children are housed in the purpose-built Buttons Nursery. These children can attend either full-time or on a sessional basis. The rest of the EYFS is housed within the Pre-Prep building. Children up to the age of four are in the Transition classes and for two terms may attend either full-time or for morning sessions. During the Summer Term Transition children are expected to attend full-time. The final Reception year of the EYFS has 59 children, all of whom attend full-time. The school day is from 8.30 am until 3.15 pm. Wrap-around care is available from 8.00 am until 5.45 pm. Outside term time a holiday club operates.
- 1.3 The setting currently supports 6 children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 11 for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The school has a cosmopolitan pupil population, reflecting the local multi-cultural area. Over half are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a number of faiths are represented.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, changes have included the completion of the Buttons Nursery building, and the installation of new outdoor play facilities and equipment. A new senior management structure has been introduced within the EYFS. This comprises the Head of Pre-Prep, the Pre-Prep Director of Pastoral Care and the Pre-Prep Director of Studies.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Buttons Nursery	Nursery (2-3 years)
Transition	Nursery (3-4 years)
Reception	Reception (4-5 years)

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
1. Develop more robust formal monitoring procedures and share existing excellent practice in order to ensure consistency of the quality of provision across the EYFS.
 2. Raise the quality of provision in some classes by matching activities more closely to individual needs, particularly for more able children.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Provision for the youngest Nursery children is outstanding. Here the strong emphasis on the creation of stimulating learning environments and a wide range of purposeful activities ensures that rapid progress is made by those under three. Staff have high expectations and seek to develop children's language skills at every opportunity. Planning successfully incorporates children's own interests with clear next steps in learning identified.
- 3.2 Provision across the rest of the EYFS is inconsistent. Teaching in the Reception classes is often good, and sometimes outstanding. Effective use is made of the outdoor environment to build on prior learning in exciting and stimulating ways; for example harvesting carrots to reinforce counting skills. Careful questioning by staff enables children to give explanations and develop critical thinking skills. Provision in the classes for the older Nursery children is not always as well developed. Some environments and activities lack stimulation and staff sometimes do not use all opportunities to move children's learning forward. Staff know the children well and regular assessments take place. In some classes staff do not always formalise the next steps in children's learning and use this information to adapt planning, particularly for the more able.
- 3.3 Children with EAL are very well supported through the use of excellent resources. Staff work very closely with parents to provide well for children with SEND. Well-targeted interventions ensure that they receive appropriate support and make at least good progress.
- 3.4 Parents are appreciative of the way that staff help children to settle quickly. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through formal structures such as the home-school book, reports and parents' meetings. A small number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. In discussion they felt very satisfied with the information given to them about their child's achievements.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 3.5 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding and a strength of the school. Staff give a high priority to children's happiness, health and safety. Relationships are outstanding. As a result children enjoy school, are settled and feel valued. Children under three have extremely close bonds with their key workers.
- 3.6 At the heart of the school is the focus given to children's personal, emotional and social development. The well-developed behaviour management system centred on the Blue Coat School values is consistently applied. All staff have high expectations for behaviour. As a result behaviour across all parts of the EYFS is exemplary. The excellent knowledge staff have of the children enables them to promote their independence well from an early age. Those under three enthusiastically help to tidy away, while older children help to give out the fruit at snack-time and get changed independently for physical education lessons. Children co-operate

extremely well with each other due to the guidance given by staff. They share resources, take turns and organise themselves effectively.

- 3.7 Children are effectively encouraged to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand the rules for descending the stairs and move around the site safely. Staff are skilled in helping children develop a good understanding of healthy eating and exercise. The youngest develop independent hygiene routines. Older children understand why hand-washing is important to their health.
- 3.8 Effective transition procedures ensure that children in the Pre-Prep building move seamlessly from one year group to the next. Strategies to develop stronger transition procedures between the Nursery for the under-threes and the next year group are contained within the school's current development plan.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 3.9 Leadership and management are good. The governing body has effective procedures in place to monitor the provision. They provide strong support and closely monitor and review policies and paperwork to ensure full compliance. Good recruitment procedures, thorough risk assessments and effective mandatory staff training ensure that safeguarding and welfare arrangements keep children safe.
- 3.10 The school has strong systems for self-evaluation and is aware of what works well and the areas to improve. Detailed development plans are regularly reviewed to measure progress, and are adapted when needed. Opportunities for further professional development include regular monitoring of practice. Evaluation is sometimes overly positive and does not always identify clear development points to enable individuals to further improve, leading to some inconsistencies in provision.
- 3.11 Staff work together well as teams within their own parts of the EYFS. Opportunities to share the excellent examples of practice are more limited as there are too few chances for the whole EYFS team to meet together.
- 3.12 Strong partnerships with outside agencies and parents support the setting's provision and the needs of individual children. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of school life.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.13 The overall quality and standards are good. All children, including those with EAL and SEND make good, and sometimes outstanding progress overall relative to their starting points, abilities and needs.
- 3.14 Outcomes are outstanding for the under-threes. Staff are skilled at adapting the provision according to a child's individual needs. Children quickly adapt to their new surroundings, grow in confidence and are eager learners. They confidently count ten balloons on a computer screen. Older Nursery children show well-developed fine motor skills as they make marks and practise early writing skills with mud, and talk about first-hand experiences. Reception children competently count to 20, can blend simple words and are gaining good knowledge in linking letters with sounds. However, at times when all children complete the same activity, progress slows, particularly for the more able. All children make outstanding progress in their physical development. Children show increasing control as they balance, use ride-on toys and use tablet computers to practise number formation.

- 3.15 Outstanding progress in personal development is evident throughout the setting. Children show high levels of respect for one another. They readily share toys, take turns and are able to leave their main carers happily.
- 3.16 Welfare and safeguarding procedures are secure and ensure that children learn in a safe and welcoming environment. Since the previous inspection outdoor learning has been further developed, fewer worksheets are used in most classes and there are more opportunities for children to learn independently. Recommendations have been addressed and these, together with action plans, show the school's commitment to continuous improvement.