

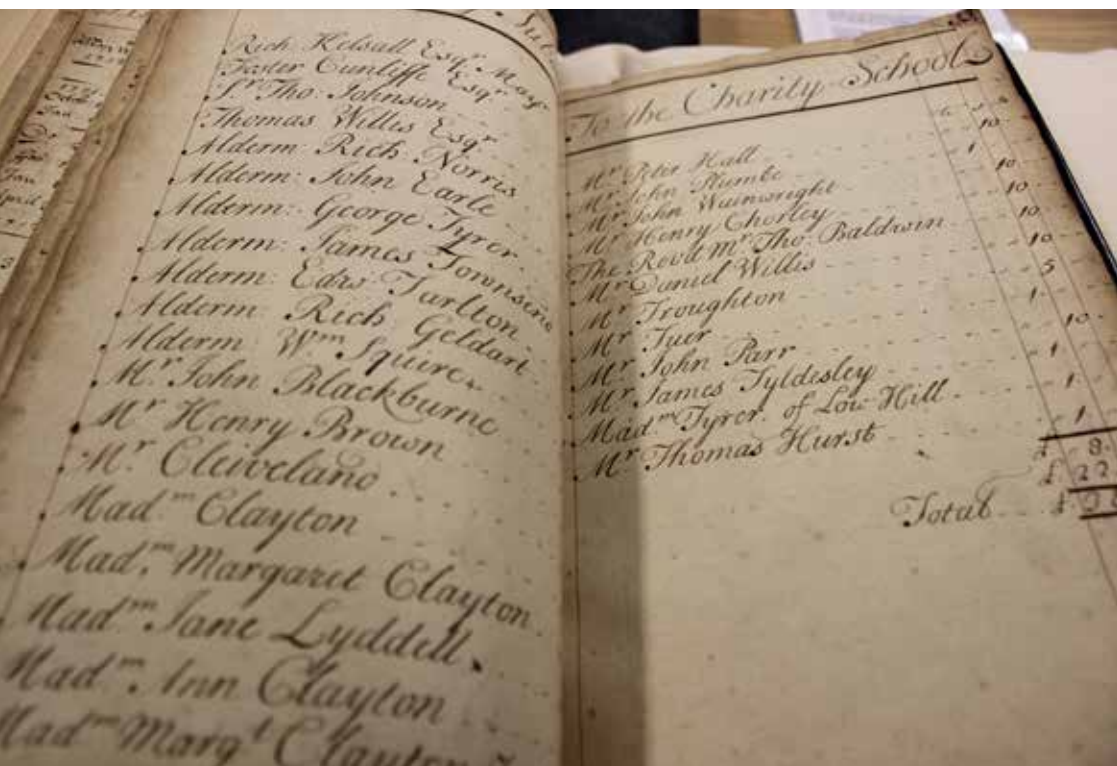


BLUE COAT
FOR ALL

WE ARE THE
BLUE COAT SCHOOL

This is our story





Bryan Blundell's original account book listing the School's founding subscribers, including famous family names such as Blackburne, Clayton, Norris and Tarlton.

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL: THE FIRST 300 YEARS

Liverpool Blue Coat School owes its existence to Bryan Blundell, a natural leader and multi-faceted character whose drive and vision created an institution that through continuous evolution and several reinventions remains every bit as important and relevant to the education of the city's young people as it did on opening more than three centuries ago.

A Master Mariner by profession, Bryan Blundell was distressed by the number of orphaned children left to fend for themselves in the town, bereft of learning or purpose. He joined forces with his friend, the Reverend Robert Styth, in 1708, to start the Blue Coat Hospital (as it was originally called), which was a 'Charity Schoole' to combat this growing problem of orphaned children, endemic in a port where mortality among seafarers was high.

BRYAN BLUNDELL (1675-1756) – A PEN PORTRAIT

Bryan Blundell was one of those pioneering entrepreneurs who would thrive in any era, a go-getting merchant who went to sea aged 12 years, crossed the Atlantic many times under sail and whose tall ship Mulberry was the first vessel to unload cargo in the town's pioneering Old Dock.

Yet he was far more than simply a self-serving businessman intent on accumulating wealth for its own sake. His ambition was to *"see as many charity schools as churches"* and 100 pupils at Blue Coat *"a sight I much and earnestly desired to see before I died"*. He achieved this goal, with 70 boys and 30 girls enrolled after a subscription campaign in 1744.

Together with his Blue Coat Hospital co-founder, Rev Robert Styth, he was a member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and as Liverpool Mayor in 1721-2 and 1728-9, his piety often put him in conflict with the base citizenry of this rumbustious, rapidly expanding seaport.

Undeflected in his aims, in spite of his friend Rev Styth's death in 1714, Bryan Blundell left his seafaring career and became Blue Coat Treasurer in 1714, a position he held for 42 years until his own death aged 81 years in 1756.

As an interesting insight into 18th century mores and morals, Blundell, although clearly a God-fearing man, also had slave-trading involvement, like many Liverpool merchants. His own ship Tarleton transported the first boat-load of 236 slaves from the Gold Coast to Barbados in the infamous West African triangular trade. Founders' Week each



Bryan Blundell, Master Mariner and man of means and education, with his great Blue Coat School project in the background

year gives Blue Coat students the opportunity to debate the issues surrounding the School's origins.

His sons Jonathan and Richard succeeded him as Treasurers. In contrast to the family's slavery interests, Jonathan Blundell took a truly progressive view regarding the pupils' education and introduced full-time study in 1783. Usually charity schools used pupils to manufacture saleable items to defray their cost of education and Blue Coat pupils made stockings, cotton thread and pins. This initiative was decades ahead of similar reforms elsewhere.

Appropriately, Bryan Blundell is buried at Liverpool seafarers' church, Our Lady & St Nicholas. After the church was largely destroyed in a 1940 German bombing raid, his memorial stone was found and relocated to the School Chapel in Wavertree. He is also remembered in the annual Founders' Week, a week dedicated to engaging current students in the School's heritage.



The Blue Coat Band sets out from the old School on St George's Day, 21 April, 1843, by Henry Travis

Originally housed in a small building costing a mere £35, by St Peter's Church in the town centre, Blundell, as the Blue Coat's principal benefactor, wanted poor children to be taught how ***"to read, write and cast accounts, and to instruct them in the principles and doctrine of the established church."***

However, feeling thwarted by the townsfolk's ***"ignorance and impoverishment"*** detrimentally affecting his pupils, he set about raising funds from his fellow merchants to build a larger school with boarding accommodation to exert greater control and ensure his influence was not diluted.

The foundation stone was laid in 1716 and the building finished in 1717, with the first schoolmaster William Trenton appointed with an annual salary of £10. A year later 50 boarders moved in. Alms houses were added to the rear in 1722 and the complex finally completed in 1725 at a total cost of almost £2,300.



Teaching staff in the 1890s, the headmaster equipped with a boater



The oldest representations of Liver Birds in Liverpool are at the gateway to Bluecoat arts centre and over the front door



MOUNT PLEASANT - THE BLUE COAT POEM

*"Yon calm retreat, where freed from every ill,
The helpless orphan's throbbing heart lies still;
And find delighted, in the peaceful dome,
A better parent, and a happier home."*

By William Roscoe, in praise of the Blue Coat Hospital 'Charity Schoole'



William Roscoe MP, 1753-1831: 'Liverpool's greatest citizen' and a keen supporter of Blue Coat School



Liverpool's pioneering wet basin, the 'Old Dock' which was designed by Thomas Steers, architect of the 1717 Blue Coat School building



Augustus Dean, aged 8, in 1904, who would have studied at both the new and old Blue Coat School buildings. He survived the First World War

That the fortunes of the Blue Coat were closely tied to the town's ascendancy as leading seaport of the British Empire are underpinned by the belief that the architect of this very handsome Queen Anne-style building was none other than the pioneering dock engineer Thomas Steers. Immediately before working on the School, he designed Liverpool's Old Dock, a revolutionary step in maritime engineering which gave the port huge commercial advantage over its rivals from 1715, and put it on track to become a global trading force.

Unsurprisingly, numerous pupils found apprenticeships and work with shipping companies or suppliers, some rising to officers or masters and many emigrating to the British Empire's expanding colonies. Those that thrived also repaid their 'debt' to the school through donations and bequests. This maritime link was subtly indicated by the central cupola's tall ship-shaped weather vane. Hard as it is to imagine now, when the School opened in 1717 it was deliberately located in a semi-suburban setting.

By 1899 the School's expansion was restricted by other properties, with pupils and staff suffering from the pollution and noise of a big, bustling Victorian industrial city. The Trustees considered moving out into the countryside and two of them offered an eight acre site by Wavertree Playground.



The impressive 1884 School Report of James Gutteridge, whose conduct was judged to be "Excellent"

The new School was budgeted at £80,000, plus £11,500 for the site (around £11m total now). Immediately £8,000 was pledged, but a further £60,000 was needed before work could proceed. Then, on the passing of a School Trustee, W H Shirley, his will revealed that this leading merchant had bequeathed his entire fortune of £38,000 to the School (worth £4.55m now). This prompted other contributions which along with proceeds from selling the original premises allowed plans to go ahead. Shirley's generosity is commemorated in the naming of the main assembly hall as Shirley Hall, with his monogram over the stage.

The new building, in English Renaissance style, was designed by architects Briggs, Wolstenholme, Hobbs & Thornley, who were also responsible for the magnificent Port of Liverpool Building, one of the Pier Head's 'Three Graces'. Three years after the Earl of Derby laid the foundation stone, the pupils moved in during May 1906. The School was inaugurated by Colonel Blundell-Hollinshead-Blundell, a descendant of Bryan Blundell.

W H Shirley was not the only very wealthy benefactor to assist the School's new location and it enjoyed the generosity of others during Liverpool's mercantile age. For example, the White Star Line's founder, Thomas Henry Ismay, bequeathed the School £1,000 (worth £122,000 now) on his death in 1899. As a memorial to his wife, another ship owner Thomas Fenwick-Harrison financed the exquisite domed School Chapel, also designed by the Schools' architects, and worthy of Sir Christopher Wren (also built in 1906), with fine carving by Edward O. Griffith. Sir Charles Nall-Cain of the Cain's brewing dynasty paid for the Clock Tower, completed in 1915. The Wavertree complex is Listed as Grade II* by Historic England. It includes the rare, museum-quality Father Willis organ of 1874, which because of its value was moved from the old town centre building and installed in Shirley Hall (see panel).

The late great architectural historian Prof Sir Nikolaus Pevsner deemed the School to be: *"One of the most spectacular half-dozen (buildings) of its date in Lancashire."*



The Boys' Drill Squad in the 1920s



A chemistry lesson in the 1930s



The School's landmark Clock Tower, completed in 1915, was paid for by Sir Charles Nall-Cain of the Cain's brewing dynasty



The School Chapel built in 1906 and the gift of ship-owner Thomas Fenwick-Harrison



Shirley Hall in the 1920s with the relocated Father Willis organ centre stage



The Western Front





BLUE COAT FATHER WILLIS ORGAN

The Father Willis organ in Shirley Hall before restoration (picture Jason Roberts)

The School's historic, museum quality Father Willis organ was initially installed in the original Liverpool Blue Coat Hospital building (now the Bluecoat arts centre) in Liverpool city centre, in April 1874, and 32 years later was moved to the school's present magnificent premises at Wavertree, south Liverpool where it is listed as part of the Grade II* interior. Had the organ remained at the original building, it would have been destroyed in the May 1941 Liverpool blitz, which burned out the building.

Situated in Shirley Hall, the instrument is of international significance on account of its size and originality, having had minimal alterations in its 145-year history. The instrument was superbly built from the finest materials: oak, cedar, rosewood, ivory, leather, brass and phosphor-bronze with spotted lead and tin pipework. It retains original mechanical key and stop actions, wind system and pipes. The organ is also unusual in being in a state school and would have been heard daily by John Lennon's father Alfred who was a student of the School from 1924 to 1929.

The organ featured in one of the School's public centre-pieces, The Blue Coat Children's Service, which was held every Sunday up until the Second World War, attended by parents and the public. A new series of public concerts is part of the plans for greater use of the organ once its restoration is completed.



The 1874-built Father Willis organ in the old School's first floor chapel



The plaque on the Father Willis organ in memory of James Hardy Macrae, whose family paid for the instrument



A pre-war open top charabanc day trip for the Blue Coat girls' school students

While these donations were very gratefully received, usually for specific grand projects, as a Charitable Foundation (especially during the inter-war years) the School was asset rich but cash poor and frequently in financial difficulties, with regular press reports warning of impending closure. The cost of boarding the 300-350 boys and girls was about £15,000 annually and the shortage of funds caused educational organisation and equipment to be severely restricted. The School governors were unable to take advantage of Grammar school status with the money this offered as the intake was non-selective. The only capital investment was the 1934 William Prescott Memorial Playing Field, in Lance Lane, required as the surrounding area had become rapidly built up.

This state of affairs continued up until the outbreak of the Second World War on 3 September 1939 and the School's evacuation to Anglesey, North Wales (see panel). Its return in 1946 marked a major reinvention of the School, with its status entirely transformed from the previous 230 years.



EVACUATION TO ANGLESEY

The outbreak of the Second World War came as little surprise to many people, neither was there any doubt about the Port of Liverpool being a major target for German bombing raids.

As a result plans were already in place for the evacuation of the city's schools, with Blue Coat pupils led by Headmaster Reverend R Bruce Wilson departing from Liverpool Lime Street station at 11.20am, on Monday 4 September 1939, destined for Beaumaris, in Anglesey. In the meantime, the School buildings were requisitioned by the War Office.

Although Beaumaris is a small town, its residents welcomed the 270 children and 30 adults, who were initially billeted in private houses. Eventually Red Hill House was rented for the girls and some junior boys, followed by Woodgarth mansion.

Although everyone settled in well, difficulties in actually educating pupils worsened. The Governors obtained and converted a large house called Bryn to bring the boys and girls all back under one roof.

As more male staff were called up into war service, a teacher (and later head) GG Watcyn, formed an Army Cadet Company, affiliated to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The cadets even took part in the Changing of the Guard at Caernarfon Castle. The School returned to Wavertree in May 1946, but its temporary Welsh relocation is not forgotten with Old Blues returning for the annual memorial service in the parish church.



School's out! Students prepare to leave for the summer holidays in 1937



A girls' class in the 1920s, when the School was still termed as a 'Hospital'



Four lucky Tyms family siblings were at Blue Coat together



No privacy in one of the typical original dormitories for 50-plus students in 1938

Following the 1944 Education Act, in 1949 the Blue Coat Governors decided to enter into the state education system in return for funding. This dictated a change from a co-educational independent boarding school (actually separate boys' and girls' schools), for pupils who were either orphaned or disadvantaged, into a Voluntary Aided day and boarding secondary school for boys only. The girls were relocated to St Peter's College, Wolverhampton. It was around this time that the traditional distinctive Blue Coat uniform of boys' Georgian dark blue jackets and stiff collar bands and girls' bonnets and bibs was abandoned after nearly two centuries.

By 1967, the School had 518 boys in three equal streams: A (11+ stream), B (13+ stream) and C (non-selective stream) with a small Sixth Form of 63 pupils, in essence a somewhat unusual comprehensive structure, combining a grammar and secondary modern-style intake. While Blue Coat School in the '60s didn't exactly swing, it rapidly modernised under a new headmaster, Peter Arnold-Craft, who introduced School entry by interview, including the scrutiny of parents.

He revitalised the teaching staff with new personnel and exploited what he saw as the rich pool of talent among south Liverpool's youth. This period of national educational changes saw other famous schools disappear, but Blue Coat continued to accelerate its academic achievements and also in other body and mind expanding activities including sport, bridge, chess, public speaking and drama. Higher academic attainment resulted in the first student gaining entry to Oxford University in 1965. Now admission to Oxford and Cambridge universities has become the norm for many Sixth Formers, with almost everyone entering higher education.

One of the last groups of Blue Coat girls before being relocated to St Peter's College, Wolverhampton, in 1949, ending 241 years as a co-educational school



To further broaden students' experience, a dilapidated farmhouse was leased in 1965 at Pen Craig Isaf, near Betws-y-Coed, which was gradually renovated by the Parents' Association for use in adventure-type activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, field courses and hiking expeditions. Indelibly marked on many students' memories was transport there in an old ambulance bought for the purpose.

The goodwill and reputation that this new regime generated unexpectedly proved to be a wise emotional investment to draw upon when in 1984 Liverpool's Militant City Council, targeting Blue Coat School as a bastion of bourgeois elitism, sought a Cease to Maintain order to curtail its financial support and enforce closure. Peter Arnold-Craft and the School's Treasurer Ian Tod, fought back with a huge campaign, collecting an incredible 44,463 signatures ending successfully with the Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph, concluding: ***"This is a school (which has) proved its worth under existing arrangements and in (my) judgement can continue to do so"***.



School cottage, Pen Craig Isaf, near Betws-y-Coed



Hiking trip, North Wales, 1978

Peter Arnold-Craft's retirement in 1989 coincided with another reinvention: transformation into a day school. Dwindling demand caused the boarding houses to finally close after 282 years, with just 29 occupants left. In postwar years the boarding facilities were sustained by the children of military families, such as those serving in the British Army of the Rhine, which was disbanded at the end of the Cold War. Also many families in Hong Kong took advantage of their children's right to an education in the UK, which ended when the British Government returned the colony to China in 1997.



*Blue Coat Headmaster
Peter Arnold-Craft, 1968-1989*



Blue Coat accommodation during the 1970s

After 40 years as a single sex establishment, in 1989 the School once again became co-educational with 20 girls readmitted to the School - albeit only to the Sixth Form, and this heralded yet another new era. Fearing that entry only by interview exhibited a lack of transparency of requirements and decision-making, the School reintroduced an entrance exam for the September 1995 Year 7 intake and returned to grammar school status. This move has turbo-charged the School's academic status, with places highly sought after and attracting high-achieving young people from across the city region. In 2018 there were eight applicants for every one place on offer in Year 7.



In 1989 20 girls joined The Blue Coat Sixth Form

Female entry to the School in Year 7 finally started in September 2002. Unfortunately, the School's further expansion was beset by funding issues and this led in 2003 to the £2.26m disposal of the Southern Wing of classrooms and dormitories for conversion into 45 apartments.

This was also the year in which following the securing of a £8m government grant, plus £1m from the Liverpool Blue Coat School Foundation, work began on the new School Building on the old North Yard, which required demolition of a motley collection of classrooms, the swimming pool, gym and squash courts. Lord Derby, in the tradition started by his great, great grandfather, ceremonially cut the first sod to herald construction. It followed the near-unanimous rejection of an ill-advised notion by the Government that the School should relocate to a site in Netherley or Kensington to help the broader regeneration of these areas.

Building the extension took two years and was completed in 2004. It included laboratories, a new main entrance, an administration block, music rooms, recording and dance studios, and dining and sports halls. The remainder of the North Yard was upgraded to provide better outdoor sports facilities. The old dining hall, beneath Shirley Hall at the heart of the original building, became a library with a mezzanine ICT suite. Plans are now in place to create a new futuristic Learning Resource Centre to be financed with an ambitious fundraising appeal called Bright Minds Bright Futures.



An impression of the new Learning Resource Centre





Major redevelopment work gets underway in 2002

Old buildings require ever-growing maintenance and the Church Road façade, which is the famous public face of the School with its prominent Clock Tower and Chapel, was renovated over a year by the well-known architects Weightman & Bullen, in 2006 prior to the imminent tricentenary celebrations. This 300th anniversary of the School was celebrated in 2008 with a series of special events at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, St George's Hall and the Town Hall.

The School continues to expand with 180 new students now entering Year 7 annually, and a total number of 1,106 students across the School. There is also a focus on the School's role in improving social mobility in the local area, by developing outreach activities with local primary schools to ensure high-ability students have the opportunity to come to Blue Coat, regardless of their background.

With an increase in students and the inevitable juggling of the jigsaw of limited space, the East Wing facing Church Road was refurbished as a Sixth Form Centre in 2018.



Little used spaces were opened up to create the big airy Sir Alan and Ian Tod Common Room, and a smart new Bistro added. The elegant former Boardroom was rebranded as the Robert Styth Study Library. Probably no other state school students can work amidst such splendour as in this room are situated huge portraits of Bryan Blundell and his son Jonathan, and classic 19th century paintings of the School. Inspirational? Hopefully. But what this scheme has undoubtedly achieved is to breathe new life into this original part of the School, as youthful vigour fills these magnificent historic rooms and corridors with a sense of expectation and ambition.



This confluence makes a very real connection between past, present and future, taking the best of the Blue Coat School's tradition and making it entirely relevant to the continuing culture of not only the City of Liverpool, but around the world as our alumni forge their lives across the globe. There can be no better tribute to the enduring principles of the School's founder more than three centuries ago in what was such a different world.

The new Sixth Form centre, featuring the Bryan Blundell Bistro and The Robert Styth Study Room



BLUE COAT FOR ALL

The Blue Coat School was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to undertake an innovative music and social project, focussed on the restoration of the historic Father Willis pipe organ, located in Shirley Hall.

The project name, Blue Coat For All, refers to the School motto 'Non sibi sed omnibus', which means 'not for oneself, but for all'. Once fully functioning again, the instrument will become the main attraction of regular public organ, choral and orchestral concerts for the first time.

The project also includes forming a Community Choir; digitally cataloguing the School Archive and making it publicly accessible on a new website; creating an Oral History archive (to record reminiscences of Old Blues, former teachers and anyone linked with the School); and developing a community outreach programme with local primary and specialist schools.

Besides music workshops, an innovation will be to use the organ as a teaching aid to explain the basic principles of physics, such as the creation of sound waves.

To ensure a lasting legacy from the project a new Blue Coat Organ Scholarship is being launched, providing an unsurpassed opportunity for music students (internal and external) to be taught on the School's restored Father Willis organ, its School Chapel Walker organ, Liverpool Anglican Cathedral's huge Willis organ and Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral's Walker organ. Money for the Scholarship is being raised by public sponsorship of the Father Willis organ's 1,224 pipes. The Scholarship is very honoured to enjoy the support of YOST (Young Organ Scholars' Trust) and the Royal College of Organists (RCO).



Blue Coat student Daniel Greenway and Liverpool Cathedral Director of Music Lee Ward, perform at the launch of the Blue Coat For All Project



Music students Daniel Greenway and Simon Cheung are helping to revive organ playing at the School



Some of the 10,000 parts of the dismantled Father Willis organ cover Shirley Hall floor prior to restoration by its original builder Henry Willis & Sons (picture Charlotte Graham)

Blue Coat For All heritage volunteers (left)





Throughout the history of Blue Coat School, the Old Blues, who are former students and staff, have played an important role in its history and well-being through practical help and as a beacon of the School's achievements.

Our students go on to achieve amazing things after leaving Blue Coat and we have a thriving global network of Old Blues keen to stay in touch with the School. Many Old Blues support the School today through using their careers to share their success and inspire current students by, for example, delivering careers talks or helping students to prepare for University admissions through mock interviews, hosting a stall at our annual Careers Fair or speaking at our Key Stage Prizegivings.

We are also grateful that many of our Old Blues support the School financially, continuing a long tradition of philanthropy that has benefited the School and its students throughout its history.

The Liverpool Blue Coat Old Blues Association, founded in 1838 with the motto *"And may all its proceedings be characterised by brotherly love"*, continues to support the School today.

Further information on our Old Blues can be found at www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/old-blues/



SUPPORT US

Blue Coat School has a fantastic heritage, but we are ambitious for the future. We work hard to provide the very best resources and opportunities for our students, and actively fundraise to fund the 'extras'. Old Blues, parents and friends of the School support us through regular giving, making a single gift, and we are also grateful that some choose to leave a gift in their Will as a lasting legacy.

To find out more please visit www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/support-us



Just some of the project we have been able to support thanks to our Old Blues, parents and friends of the School



SCHOOL TOURS

If you would like to visit the School and enjoy a guided tour please contact Peter Elson on the details provided below.

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ABOUT US

The Liverpool Blue Coat School is a selective state grammar school with academy status, in Wavertree, Liverpool. It was founded in 1708 as the Liverpool Blue Coat Hospital and became a boys' boarding school before reverting in 2002 to its original co-educational remit. Examination results consistently place it at the top end of the national GCSE and A-level tables. In 2017 Blue Coat was named The Sunday Times' Top State School in North West England. In 2016 it was ranked as one of the best schools in the country based on GCSE results. In 2015 it was named The Sunday Times State Secondary School of the Year.



THE
BLUE COAT
SCHOOL



BLUE COAT
FOR ALL



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