

Coombe Girls' School

Clarence Avenue, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3TU

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students' achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 is excellent. The standards they are reaching overall in Year 11 are considerably higher than the national average. This represents outstanding progress as the majority of students start at the school with attainment that is broadly average.
- Students do extremely well in English and mathematics. They make outstanding progress, well above typical expectations.
- Teaching is of exceptionally high quality. Teachers have high ambitions for their students. They support them very well to ensure they succeed in their next stage of education or employment.
- The school has a whole range of help available for those students who need extra support, such as those who speak English as an additional language, as well as disabled students and those who have special educational needs. As a result, all make excellent progress from their different starting points.
- The headteacher is inspirational and has set high goals for each of the students in the school. The staff overwhelmingly support her vision. In its short history the school has hugely flourished under her leadership.
- The governing body is well equipped with a whole range of expertise to support and give high levels of challenge in equal measure. Leaders across the school constantly follow the example set by the headteacher and they share the same high ambitions to improve outcomes for all the students. As a result, the students' experience has been enriched and this has had a positive impact in improving their lives.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary both in and out of class. They have an excellent relationship with each other even though they come from a whole range of different backgrounds. They feel very safe in the school.
- The sixth form is good. Students make excellent progress in Year 12, particularly at AS level. However, achievement is not outstanding in Year 13 and attendance rates in Year 13 are not as high as those in the rest of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 50 parts of lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to other lessons. Inspectors also listened to students read and scrutinised their work.
- Meetings were held with five different groups of students from all ages and from a range of different backgrounds. Inspectors held informal discussions with other students.
- Inspectors also held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, two other governors, senior leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at documents relating to safeguarding, the performance management of staff, the tracking and assessment of students' attainment and progress, records on attendance, behaviour and safety and the monitoring of teaching and learning. They looked at the impact of the school's use of the pupil premium funding.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 86 parents in the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Also, the school's own survey and written responses from two parents were considered. Inspectors scrutinised 38 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector

Anthony Byrne

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Full report

Information about this school

- Coombe Girls' School is larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. Although the students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are all girls, approximately 30% of the sixth formers are boys.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.) At Coombe, almost all the students eligible for the pupil premium are those known to be entitled to free school meals and this proportion is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school has a multi-ethnic community evenly balanced between White British and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The school is being managed by a headteacher who is also overseeing the work of Coombe Boys' School as part of the Coombe Secondary Schools Federation.
- There are currently five students attending alternative provision at Mecklenburg and Malden Oaks Pupils Referral Unit.
- Coombe Girls' School converted to become an academy in February 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as Coombe Girls' School, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2007, it was judged to be outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in the sixth form so that it is outstanding by:
 - continuing to build on improvements in achievement and teaching already secured in Year 12 so that students make more rapid progress in Year 13
 - improving attendance in Year 13 so that it is at least as good as that in the rest of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students make excellent progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. This is especially true for English, mathematics, sciences and modern foreign languages, where the proportions of students making and exceeding typically expected progress are high. As a result, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Current information on achievement indicates that students are making excellent progress; 94% of students are on their way to achieve five or more grade A* to C GCSE qualifications, with 81% of students on track to achieve five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. Students' standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are expected to be well above the national average. This is particularly impressive since most students start at the school with levels of attainment broadly in line with the national average.
- Students who join the school at the start of Year 7 are doing exceptionally well and they continue to do so as they move through the years. Current information on achievement shows that they are making rapid and sustained progress.
- The achievement of all groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, White British students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds is equally strong. They do much better than similar students in other schools across the country. This is because the school checks their progress very rigorously and then supports them accordingly.
- Additional funding from the government (the pupil premium) is used effectively to support the learning of eligible students. For example, it pays for extra staff to give one-to-one support for students and to work with small groups. This work greatly improves the achievement of these students, who are making excellent progress when compared to similar students in other schools across the country. The gap in attainment between these students and others has narrowed significantly in both English and mathematics and there is now very little difference.
- Achievement in the sixth form is currently good overall and in some subjects it is outstanding. Students learn well in lessons and make good progress overall. The leadership is fully aware that the progress in Year 13 is not yet as rapid as that in Year 12 and strategies have already been put in place to raise achievement further. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work.
- There is a strong focus on developing students' skills in speaking, reading and writing across the school. This happens in lessons, through other support sessions and through extra-curricular activities to promote debating and speaking skills, and 'My World' which helps to improve students' writing skills. As a result, students gain confidence and broaden skills which contribute positively to their achievement across the curriculum.
- A small number of students are entered early for GCSE examinations, principally in mathematics and religious studies. This does not affect their attainment and they achieve extremely well. They typically move on to other courses or to more challenging work.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision for part of their education. The school has strong links with these providers and the benefit to the students is clear. They learn and achieve well because of these arrangements.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- As a result of outstanding teaching over time, all groups of students make excellent progress during Key Stages 3 and 4. This high quality teaching promotes excellent attitudes towards learning.
- Teachers share the learning intentions that they have planned. They set challenging work which is at precisely the right level of difficulty for each student. Students are responsible for their own learning. Teachers and students have high expectations about what they can achieve. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and the relationships between students and teachers are excellent;

students work in groups exceptionally well.

- Lessons regularly help to develop students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, teachers' regular use of key words and their oral feedback support aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- Questioning is used extremely well to develop students' thinking and learning, and to promote discussion. In the best lessons, which are commonplace, there is an excellent balance of the teacher explaining the task and students working together, or demonstrating their understanding of the task to the teacher and their classmates. Consequently, students have a clear understanding of their work and this helps to improve their knowledge and that of their classmates.
- Students' work is marked regularly. In the very best examples of marking, work is assessed to indicate the student's level of achievement and clear feedback is given on how to improve and achieve the challenging targets set by the teachers. There are many opportunities for students to check their own work and that of their classmates. As a result, they have a clear understanding of their level of knowledge and this motivates them to do even better.
- The many support programmes in place make sure that any student at risk of falling behind is given very well-targeted support both in class and outside of lessons, for example during lunchtime and after school. Teaching assistants' support is very effective and focuses on promoting learning through well-thought-out questioning and timing.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall with examples of outstanding practice. Students are currently making good progress because of this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Due to very high expectations, students' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They work very hard and are keen to do well. Behaviour in lessons is exceptionally good and reflects a very calm atmosphere around the school during breaks and at lunchtime.
- Students have a strong sense of respect for each other and for the differences between individuals and their cultures. They are very proud of their school. This is glowingly reflected in the school's motto 'Coombe-Unity' and 'preparing you for a world of opportunity'.
- Students, staff and parents all agree that students are safe at the school. Students feel confident, happy and are keen to succeed. They are very well prepared for the careers path they wish to choose, for example through the 'Young Enterprise' charity and 'Eco-Action group'.
- Students are very aware of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying. All types of bullying are very rare and students know that it is morally wrong to bully anyone in any form. Cases of racial abuse are also rare. When bullying does happen it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school.
- Attendance is high and there have been no permanent exclusions recently. Students like coming to the school and they are proud and loyal. However, attendance rates in Year 13 are not as high as those in the rest of the school.
- There is a very effective approach to managing poor behaviour. Behaviour management processes are strong and effective. There is a range of support packages which help students who might be at risk of being excluded to get back on track, such as alternative provision with strong management and excellent links, such as those with the 'Anstee Bridge' project.
- Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities in the school, such as heads of house, prefects, school councillors and being on the recruitment and selection panel for the appointment of senior leadership for the Coombe Secondary Schools Federation. They take the initiative in raising funds for charities. As a result, they make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who puts the students at the heart of everything she does and leads by example. In such a short time, since its opening in September 2012, the school has achieved outstanding outcomes for its students in achievement, teaching and behaviour and safety under her leadership.
- Her mission is to ensure each student achieves his or her very best, including those in the sixth form. In achieving this, she makes sure students have realistic but challenging targets and she holds her senior leadership and staff to account very effectively. Teachers know that they have to do the very best for the students.
- The senior leaders share this mission in all key stages. They work very well as a group as well as on their own areas of responsibility. They are role models for the staff and students at the school.
- The leaders of subjects and other middle leaders play a full part in moving the school forward and improving the quality of what it does. They improve teaching in their particular areas. They follow a very robust tracking system to ensure students achieve very well and provide help when there is a risk that they will not. This has a considerable impact on students' achievement.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding, including in the sixth form. The school has a wide range of ways that help teachers to improve continuously. The best practice in teaching in the school is shared effectively and there is very good quality support for those who have recently joined the school. There is convincing evidence to show how this work has a positive impact on teaching.
- There are detailed targets for teachers, which are effective and reviewed regularly. Teachers receive useful feedback about their work and know how to improve. These are directly linked to the achievement of the students they teach. The impact can be seen such as in Year 12 where students' progress has recently accelerated, compared with the previous term. Leaders and teachers are rewarded through pay progression only when this is deserved.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance and strong, focused plans are in place to continue to improve the school further. All leaders in the school contribute to this process, meaning that they all understand the school's main strengths and areas for development. They make good use of local authority experts to help them make sure their judgements are right.
- Equality of opportunity is clearly demonstrated by the way the school cares well for all its students and ensures that there is no discrimination. As a result, students make outstanding progress.
- The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 has been fully reviewed and further refined so that it stretches and challenges students of all abilities, including the most able. The curriculum in the sixth form is appropriate and it meets the needs and interests of all students, including those in Year 11 who are hoping to join in the future.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported well through the curriculum. There are excellent opportunities for students to perform well academically but also to enjoy the extra-curricular activities the school offers to its all students, such as a whole range of after-school clubs, sports, dancing and drama. This has a significant, positive impact on students' attitudes, views and behaviour, as well as their involvement in everyday school life.
- Links with parents are excellent. This is especially true where help for individual students and their families has led to regular contact with parents and involved them in supporting the progress of their children. The school has a 'Parents and Friends Association', which makes positive contributions to the school's development as well as raising funds. Parents are very well supported though training such as the 'parenting programme' so that they are able to support their children effectively. The school very much benefits from the Coombe Federation links through sharing resources and high quality teaching and training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a wide range of professional expertise in areas such as education and finance. They have excellent knowledge of what happens in the school. They have regular

training and this helps them to challenge school leaders very effectively, leading to students' outstanding achievement. Governors make sure that appropriate safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place. Through scrutiny of the school finances, governors are well aware of how effectively pupil premium money is used to support eligible students' learning. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and of the progress students are making in all key stages. Governors know about teachers' performance management and make sure that pay awards are only given where appropriate.

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	137848
Local authority	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	413301

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1402
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Davies
Headteacher	Deborah Walls
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	020 8942 1242
Fax number	020 8942 6385
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