

Inspection of Coombe Girls' School

Clarence Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3TU

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 May 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Emily Barns. This school is part of Coombe Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Esther Brooks, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Emma Thomas.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where girls are encouraged to be curious and creative. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils, including in the large sixth form. The broad curriculum offers pupils in key stage 4, and students in the sixth form, a wide range of choices to pursue their interests. Most pupils behave well in lessons, although systems to make sure that pupils behave consistently well are not fully embedded. Pupils in key stage 4 achieve very well across all subjects.

The school is determined to ensure that all pupils, especially the most disadvantaged, are prepared well for adult life. Pupils value the diversity of the school and build positive and strong friendships. The wide range of experiences that the school provides help pupils to nurture their wider talents and develop strength of character. Events such as 'Culture Day' also help pupils to understand issues in the wider world.

Leaders want all pupils to understand their place in the world and leave the school as active citizens. They provide excellent opportunities for pupils to achieve this ambition. The school supports pupils' aspirations, including through a comprehensive careers programme. This means that pupils are very well informed about future options.

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

Leaders provide a high-quality education to all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are ambitious for the school and have implemented a number of changes recently. For instance, the attainment of students by the end of Year 13 in 2023 was below the national average. The school has made considerable improvements to strengthen the curriculum in the sixth form.

Trustees and governors have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide appropriate challenge and support to the school. Despite this, some subject leaders do not have a precise understanding of how well staff implement the curriculum.

The school's personal development provision is extremely rich and broad in scope. Pupils are taught to develop a mature understanding of diversity and to be respectful of different beliefs and lifestyles. Staff teach pupils about how to keep safe and healthy. They help pupils to navigate increasingly complex relationships, including online. Staff explore topics such as diversity and pupils are proud that their school is very accepting of difference. The school provides exceptional support to develop bespoke career pathways for pupils, including those with SEND. It provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. This includes in clubs such as touch typing, embroidery, debating and sports.

Typically, teachers check regularly how well pupils are learning. In most subjects, they use a wide range of assessment information well. This helps them to make sure that important content is understood before moving on to new learning. For example, in design and technology, pupils rapidly develop the knowledge and skills they need to produce increasingly sophisticated products. In the sixth form, students are conscientious in correcting any mistakes that are identified by their teachers and adding extra detail to their work. They value the personalised support that they receive from their teachers.

Teachers across the school have secure subject knowledge. In most subjects, this helps them to deliver the curriculum well. Most teachers explain information clearly to pupils. They make sure that important learning is revisited. However, in some subjects, the aims of the curriculum are not implemented securely. This means that teaching does not build closely on what pupils have already learned. This limits some pupils' deeper knowledge and skills.

The school has prioritised reading. It identifies pupils who are at the early stages of reading and puts an appropriate programme in place to help them catch up. Leaders are also developing strategies to further support reading across the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Teachers get clear information about how to meet their needs. They use this well to ensure that these pupils can access the curriculum successfully and achieve well.

At break and lunchtime, pupils behave sensibly. They enjoy socialising and taking part in different activities. In many lessons, clear routines and high expectations enable pupils to settle quickly. However, the school's new approach to behaviour is not fully embedded. This means that, at times, there is off-task behaviour which disrupts learning. Most pupils attend school regularly. The school has clear systems in place to address low attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Recently introduced systems and procedures are not fully understood or embedded by all staff. This includes the school's work on curriculum implementation. The school should work on embedding these changes so that the vision is realised through strong, shared values, policies, and practice.
- The school should ensure that all staff consistently implement the high expectations for pupils' learning, behaviour and conduct that have recently been introduced. On occasions, some pupils are not motivated and committed to learn

and disrupt the learning of others. The school should ensure that all staff support pupils to be committed to their learning and know how to study effectively to fully realise the school's vision for pupils' behaviour.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137848
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	10323378
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1592
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	372
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Emma Thomas
Headteacher	Emily Barns
Website	www.coombegirlsschool.org
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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, there are boys in the sixth form.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, which caters specifically for pupils with hearing impairments and speech, language, and communication needs. There are currently 11 pupils educated in the unit.
- Leaders make use of three registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, and members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing and the trust, including the CEO.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 13 about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Johnson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Simmons	Ofsted Inspector
Janice Howkins	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Gale	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Saunders	His Majesty's Inspector

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