

# The Coopers' Company and Coborn School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 102353              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Havering            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 286351              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 28–29 February 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Ian Seath HMI       |

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

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Secondary                               |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                               |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–19                                   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 1313                                    |
| 6th form                                  | 375                                     |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                      |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Dr I Froot                              |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr D Mansfield                          |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 3 February 2003                         |
| <b>School address</b>                     | St Mary's Lane<br>Upminster<br>RM14 3HS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01708 250500                            |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01708 226109                            |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors over a period of two days.

## Description of the school

The Cooper's Company and Coborn School is a large mixed comprehensive school. It is heavily oversubscribed. A high proportion of students stay on to the large sixth form. Standards on entry are high. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low, and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is just below the national average. The school has specialist sports and humanities college status. It is supported by the Worshipful Company of Coopers.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Cooper's Company and Coborn School is a good school with outstanding features. A new headteacher is in post, and many changes are being made so that the pace of improvement is rapid.

The school has a culture which very effectively balances work with the development of wider skills and enjoyment. Students benefit from exceptionally rich provision of extra-curricular activities. The school is well supported by parents. It has produced many examples of students who excel at sports. Both individuals and teams regularly represent the school at local, national and international levels. For example, the school is to represent the country for the second year running in the schools' world cross-country championship.

Students have exceptionally high prior attainment on entry to the school. Standards are extremely high, both at GCSE and in the successful sixth form. However, given their high starting point at entry, a significant number of students could make better progress at key stages 3 and 4. The school recognises this and has made improvements as a result. The establishment of a system to monitor and track progress, the improvement of assessment and the recent development of a systematic lesson observation system, are all examples of changes intended to improve progress. Based on current progress of students and the results of assessments, early indications are that these changes are successful.

Teaching is good, and a high proportion is outstanding in the sixth form. Pastoral care, guidance and support are excellent so that personal development is outstanding. However, not all students are stimulated in class to achieve their best.

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. The school has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve, although some of the mechanisms necessary for this to happen have only recently been introduced. The lesson observation system is accurate, although outcomes sometimes pay insufficient attention to learning. Quality assurance is improving, though some inconsistencies remain between departments.

Based on the rapid pace of recent change, sustained very high standards, early evidence of improvements in both standards and progress, the accuracy of the self-assessment, and the effective use of data to set and monitor challenging targets, the school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Students benefit from a wide choice of A levels and an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Academic support is excellent, as is guidance on careers and university applications. Many students undertake Open University pre-study courses. Target setting is good, and students have a clear understanding of what they should do to improve or maintain high standards. Retention of students on 'A' level courses is exceptionally high, and almost all students succeed and progress to university.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson observations and lesson planning focus consistently on learning needs.
- Improve progress at key stages 3 and 4.

- Improve quality assurance so that inconsistencies between departments and subjects are addressed.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Achievement and standards are good overall. Standards are exceptionally high throughout the school and examination and national test results have many outstanding features. When students enter the school in year 7 they have already attained standards that are well above the national averages.

At Key Stage 3, standards are very high and showed some further improvement in 2007. However, a significant number of students could do better when their high entry standards are taken into account. For these students, progress in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science is below that of which they are capable.

Standards reached at the end of Key Stage 4 are very high, well above national averages. However, as with Key Stage 3, progress in English and mathematics was well below that expected in 2007 for a significant number of students, though early indications are that it has improved in the current year. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C has been consistently very high, and in 2007 was 97%. This figure declines to 90% when English and mathematics are taken into account, but is still very high compared to national figures. The proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades is significantly above the national average, though variable between subjects. The school has very few students with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, they succeed well because they are well supported.

Achievement and standards in the sixth form are outstanding. Almost all students pass all their 'A' levels and make very good progress. Results for 2007 were in the top 10% nationally. The achievement of the highest grades A and B is significantly above the national average overall, but this masks considerable variations between subjects. Around 90% of sixth formers progress to higher education, most to their first choice institution. The retention of students in the sixth form is excellent.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school successfully enables students to develop as well-rounded, confident and articulate young people. Excellent moral and social development is reflected in their courteous behaviour, excellent relationships and good attitudes to learning. Students show very good awareness of healthy lifestyles and recognise the value of their lessons in reducing risk-taking behaviour such as smoking. Assemblies provide students with opportunities to reflect on powerful and emotive issues, and contribute significantly to their spiritual development. The school maintains very high expectations of conduct and students report an effective response to the few reported incidents of bullying and racism. Students have a good understanding of cultural diversity. Very positive attitudes to learning and students' enjoyment of school are reflected in well above average attendance. They value and enjoy the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, for example music, drama, sports, and expeditions to countries such as Bolivia and Namibia. Students thrive on responsibility and

have many opportunities to do so. They are extremely appreciative of the school's provision, although they would like more active involvement and excitement in some lessons. The school council is gaining in influence in effecting change, for example healthy eating and being involved in the appointment of the headteacher. High standards of basic skills such as information and communication technology (ICT), coupled with excellent personal development, ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of work or education. Parents endorse students' views of their school, and are very supportive of its distinctive ethos. Success is celebrated well throughout the school, for example in displays, posters and awards.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teaching and learning are good. A high proportion of lessons in the sixth form are outstanding. A new system ensures that lessons are observed systematically and the school's view of its own teaching and learning is accurate. Most students join the school with high attainment and are capable learners. In the best lessons observed, students are stimulated by their teachers' passion for their subjects. In these sessions, students are often involved in assessing their own work, and encouraged to reflect on it. In addition, effective peer analysis and feedback helps to consolidate learning. Such sessions are well-planned so that they cater for the needs of all students present. Teachers have good subject knowledge. The relationships between teachers and students are good. In a minority of less effective lessons, the pace of learning is slow. The planning of these often pays insufficient attention to learning. Sometimes there is no opportunity to consolidate learning at the end of the lesson.

Most students understand what is expected of them and receive good guidance on the quality of their work and how to improve. However, this is not consistent across all subjects, and some students know their grades but are unsure of how to improve. Some students do not learn effectively because they are taught by non subject specialists who do not challenge students sufficiently.

Professional development is effectively helping teachers to extend their range of teaching and learning styles. In particular, the use of assessment to focus on outcomes is becoming well established. In addition, a new system for the monitoring and tracking of progress is being established across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school provides an outstanding, enriched curriculum. Students benefit from a broad range of academic courses, offering a flexible choice of subjects at GCSE and A level. It does not yet run vocational courses, although a few have previously been offered but had little take-up. All students study at least one modern foreign language. The school's specialist college status in sports and, more recently, humanities, enables it to enrich the teaching of all subjects. This is having a significant impact on both students' motivation and results. Students benefit from outstanding extra-curricular opportunities and extensive links with the community. These include a wide range of clubs, including excellent sports and music clubs, dramatic productions

and charity events. Most students participate in sports and musical activities, contributing towards the school's quality awards for 'out of hours' learning. Many take instrumental lessons in school and the school's bands and choirs regularly perform in top London venues. In 2004, the school won the Sportsmark competition as 'the most sports-minded school in Europe'. It provides a large proportion of the county's school athletes, and will be a part of the opening dance for the 2012 Olympics. Enterprise projects, both during school time and after school, motivate students well and they do outstanding voluntary work, raising money for charity, including schools in Africa. Opportunities to study a certificated ICT course have been significantly extended. Careers guidance is very good, and all students undertake two-week work placements in Year 10. There is an excellent range of academic courses in the sixth form, helping numbers to rise significantly since the last inspection.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute effectively to high standards. The monitoring of students' progress is improving through recently introduced systems, so that interventions can be timely and well targeted. These processes ensure students take personal responsibility for their own learning. A newly-organised student services team focus on the school's aim to produce confident, well-rounded individuals through effective links. There is a rich programme for enterprise, careers guidance and work related learning with improved take-up of PE, dance, humanities and RE reflecting the school's outstanding commitment to its specialisms and distinctive ethos. Students enjoy and show pride in their school and attendance is high. As one parent commented, 'We feel that it provides excellent opportunities and support to academic success and personal development'. All procedures safeguarding students are in place and are well maintained. As a result, students feel safe.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The headteacher is new in post and has swiftly and accurately appraised issues which the school needs to address. He is well supported by staff and, together with the leadership team, has made many recent improvements. In particular, the rapid implementation of a school-wide system to monitor and improve progress is showing early signs of success. At all levels, the setting of challenging targets is good. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and correctly identifies both strengths and weaknesses. Faculty and departmental self-assessments are similarly accurate, though formats vary across the school and they are not always precise enough to enable accurate monitoring of actions. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding.

Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been addressed well. The sharing of good practice has improved and is now good within subjects. However, the extent to which it is identified and shared between different subjects and across the school is underdeveloped. The school is making good progress in the establishment of reliable assessment, and most students have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve as a result.

Standards are consistently high, and there are early indications of improving progress. Teaching is generally good, and learning often exceptional. Senior managers have recently introduced a graded lesson observation scheme and observations of teaching and learning take place on a systematic basis. However, this is recent and so improvements in teaching are not yet evident. The system has enabled an accurate view of the school's classroom practice so that developmental needs can be identified and addressed. However, observations do not always pay sufficient attention to learning focusing, rather, on teaching. Quality assurance is improving and is generally good, but some inconsistencies between departments remain.

The school is well resourced and staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. The provision of professional development is good, and financial control is sound. Governors bring many strengths to the school. They are well informed and effectively challenge poor performance. Targets which they have set for the Headteacher accurately reflect the needs of the school. Because of high standards and the success of students, value for money is good.



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## Inspection judgements

|   |                |       |
|---|----------------|-------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2   | 1   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?   | 1   | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 1   | 1   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |   |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |   |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |   |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |   |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 |   |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |   |

### The quality of provision

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?          | 2 | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 1 | 1 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   |     |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 1   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |     |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |     |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |     |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Coopers' Company and Coborn School, Upminster, RM14 3HS

Last week four other inspectors and I visited your school for two days. We met with some of you, sat in on lessons, looked at your work, and talked with many of your teachers. Throughout this process you were helpful, courteous and impeccably behaved. We would like to thank you for that - your school has many strengths and one of them is you.

Yours is a good school which has many outstanding features, for example the sixth form and the opportunities to participate in sport or other extracurricular activities. One of the things you told us is how well the school cares for you, and provides a well-rounded education from which you all benefit. The chances are that you will succeed well at the school and, if you choose to, go on to university.

However, some of you do not make enough progress - in other words you could achieve better. The school knows this, and the new headteacher and his team are developing a new system to monitor your progress more effectively so that you have a clearer view of how well you are doing. You can help this process by asking if you are not sure how to improve your work. It is in your interests to help the school stretch and challenge you to give of your best so that you are even more successful in the future.

We have also asked the school to make sure that departments work closer together to share ideas, and to make sure that lessons are planned to take full account of your needs as learners.

Your school is improving quickly, and you are fortunate to be a part of it. As I said at the beginning, you are one of its strengths.

Thank you once again, and we wish you well,

Yours sincerely,

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools