

# Coombe Boys' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	137859
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	395279
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Patricia Metham 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>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	805
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	93
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Penny Parker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Deborah Walls
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5–6 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	College Gardens Blakes Lane New Malden KT3 6NU
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8949 1537
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8942 6725
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@cbs.rbksch.org

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	2–3 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	395279



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional inspector

Rukhsana Sheikh

Additional inspector

Jenny Usher

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 36 lessons, observed 36 different teachers, and held meetings with a member of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and students. Inspectors took account of responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They evaluated students' achievement over three years and reviewed schemes of work, policies, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and minutes of governing body meetings. They considered 99 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers, 150 responses to the students' questionnaire and 33 responses from staff.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average but expanding boys' comprehensive, in full federation since 2006 with a neighbouring girls' school judged 'outstanding' at its last Ofsted inspection. The federated schools converted to academy status in February 2012. The headteacher leads both schools and post-16 provision is shared. Both also have an active partnership with a large independent boys' school; this encompasses academic and extra-curricular projects. Coombe Boys' School meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. In September 2008, it gained specialist status for mathematics and computing. In 2010 it won recognition from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust as 'a most improved school'. Among its awards are the Silver Eco award and the Silver Artsmark.

The school has a higher-than-average proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, the largest groups being of Asian heritage. In Key Stages 3 and 4, one student in every three speaks English as an additional language. A slightly lower-than-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportions on the School Action Plus programme or with a statement of special educational needs are small but a relatively high proportion of students are on the School Action programme. Predominantly, these students have behavioural, emotional and social issues. A higher than average proportion of students join partway through secondary education, often speaking limited English.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- The school provides a satisfactory education and is improving steadily under the purposeful and persuasive leadership of the headteacher. It is not yet good because students' attainment is not yet better than satisfactory and teaching is not consistently good in each key stage. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate, initiatives to improve achievement are making a positive difference and the capacity for further improvement is good. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
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- The sixth form is satisfactory. Students are well motivated and make a positive contribution to the life of the school. The attainment of sixth formers following vocational options, rather than AS- and A-level courses, is well above average.
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- Care for staff and students underpins all planning, ensuring that curriculum design, pastoral support and professional development are well directed and productive. Safeguarding procedures are thorough.
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- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is informed by the equality of respect and opportunity promoted in this diverse community. Students are keen to do well but they are cooperative rather than independent learners. Apart from an occasionally disruptive minority, they treat each other and adults courteously.
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- Most students enter with low prior attainment and make satisfactory progress to attain broadly average results. Those who speak English as an additional language do well. Although gaps are closing, disabled students and those with special educational needs do less well than their contemporaries but as well as similar students nationally.
- 
- The systematic monitoring of teaching leads to well-managed staff training and support. Expectations are not yet consistently high and teachers do not always

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adapt to meet students' immediate needs. On occasion, concern to develop students' skills prevents teachers' enthusiasm for their subject shining through. Assessment and marking are often good but do not consistently balance praise with guidance. The proportion of good teaching is increasing.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements in students' attainment and progress by:
  - ensuring that students across the ability range are fully challenged and consistently encouraged to be reflective, active and independent learners
  - embedding approaches to assessment and marking that help students to tackle areas for improvement and to develop skills that they can apply confidently in different contexts.
  
- Refine and embed best practice in lesson planning and teaching to establish consistency across all departments by ensuring that teachers:
  - adapt plans in lessons whenever appropriate to meet students' immediate needs and take advantage of unplanned opportunities to extend students' thinking and approach to problem-solving
  - adjust their pace and the timing of activities to match students' concentration spans and rates of working
  - communicate an engaging enthusiasm for their subject as well as help students to develop important skills.

## Main report

### Achievement of students

An upward trend has brought the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades or equivalent at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, in line with the national average. The same applies to the proportion gaining five or more C or higher grades overall, with success in vocational options making an important contribution. The achievement of those known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled students and those on the school action programme or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Gaps in attainment between these students and their school contemporaries are closing. Progress observed in lessons and in students' books was at least satisfactory and, on occasion, good in each key stage. Students are more confident and persuasive in discussion than in their writing; there is considerable variation in the progress they make in developing literacy skills. Most read aloud with confidence and understanding.

Students enter the sixth form with relatively low prior attainment. Acting on good advice, many opt for one-year vocational courses that equip them for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The number taking up AS- and A-level courses is small; most are successful and benefit from opportunities offered through

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the federation but few gain the higher grades. Students' most conspicuous success is in the BTEC National Certificate and National Diploma.

The great majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire feel that students are progressing well. This reflects students' positive attitudes and personal sense of achievement rather than the progress they make compared with students nationally.

### **Quality of teaching**

Students and almost all the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire have confidence in the skill and commitment of teachers. Key Stage 3 students were keen to make it clear how much they enjoy school and value their teachers: 'The relationships between staff and students here are amazing – you can talk to them about anything.' The parents of a student with special educational needs spoke for many: 'The teachers are very supportive, not just on an educational level but on a personal level for my son.'

Teaching strengths across Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form include: secure subject knowledge; a positive rapport with students; use of open questions to test students' understanding, although not always to challenge initial responses and extend students' thinking; encouragement of group work and peer- and self-assessment; confident use of varied resources; attention to literacy across subjects; and, in the most effective lessons, the matching of tasks to individual abilities and learning styles. Students' individual needs are identified on entry and teachers advised on how best to provide support as well as challenge. In addition to in-class support from trained teaching assistants, disabled students and those with special educational needs benefit from one-to-one tuition and small-group teaching. Among examples of outstanding practice observed was a session with Year 11 students still in the relatively early stages of English acquisition. The teacher showed great skill in responding to students' diverse knowledge and competencies. She created an ethos in which students confidently discussed differences in their birth countries' cultures and shared knowledge about the British way of life – about bank holidays, for example.

This good practice is not widely enough shared, however, and in too many lessons teaching is not better than satisfactory. In lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers' explanations are over-long and opportunities for students to show initiative and be independent are limited. More-able students are not challenged to extend their thinking or to be innovative and, on occasion, teachers do not take up potentially productive lines of enquiry suggested by students' responses.

Staff morale is extremely buoyant. Teachers take pride in the initiatives they have developed such as: science projects with primary schools; subject-based clubs; mathematics, creative writing and public speaking competitions; and links with communities in Africa.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school is a tolerant, highly-diverse community in which differences are accepted as a matter of course. The relatively high number of reported incidents of insensitive attitudes to race, all promptly dealt with, demonstrates how firmly any examples of discrimination or prejudice are dealt with rather than being evidence of a widespread problem. Students are emphatic that they feel safe and that difficulties are quickly and successfully resolved. Great care is taken to help new students settle in. Late-joiners in Key Stage 4 spoke of the immediate friendliness they were shown: 'I felt I was with the community.'

Disruption to learning was the principal concern expressed by parents and carers and by students themselves in their response to the inspection questionnaires and in discussion with inspectors. When the pace of lessons is slow, or the time given to activities is too short to allow students to achieve something worthwhile or too long for some to maintain concentration, behaviour becomes distracted and distracting. This low-level disruption subsides as soon as the learning becomes more engaging. Behaviour around the school is lively and sociable. Students welcome opportunities to take on responsibility, as house officers or prefects for example. Sixth formers act as reading buddies for Year 7 students and also work with children in local primary schools, often as an aspect of the school's mathematics and computing specialism or its sports and performing arts programmes.

## **Leadership and management**

The move to federation and recent conversion to academy status have been managed efficiently and with minimal disturbance. Governors, the headteacher and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and the results of their improvement programme are apparent in steadily rising standards. They share a clear and ambitious vision for the school within the federation, aspiring to make Coombe Boys the boys' school of first choice locally on the basis of good achievement across a broad spectrum of ability, talents and interests.

Partnerships, especially with a high-achieving independent school, make an important contribution to raising students' aspirations and extending their opportunities within and beyond the curriculum. The school's leaders work closely with the local authority, benefiting from its training resources and its role as a shrewd critical friend. School-home communication is regular and comprehensive, including frequent postcards celebrating students' personal successes. Attendance at students' progress review meetings is good. Challenges presented by any students are approached collaboratively, with considerable success. Students' safety and well-being are carefully protected, with child-protection training for staff, health and safety issues and risk assessments regularly updated. Equality of respect and opportunity is given a high priority in practical ways as well as through the school's ethos.

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To teach consistently well and to drive improvement in students' attainment and progress are the key targets set for teachers' performance management. The headteacher and senior leaders monitor teaching and learning rigorously, following up action points and putting in place support and mentoring where appropriate. Subject leaders are taking an increasingly active part in monitoring teaching and in reviewing marking and assessment. Through mentoring and access to nationally accredited courses, the school is increasing middle leaders' and managers' capacity to drive improvement. The proportion of good or better teaching is increasing. The school's specialist subjects, in particular computing, are extending teachers' use of modern technology, which students find very appealing.

The curriculum is now good; it is broad and balanced, develops key skills and subject foundations in Key Stage 3 and offers pathways through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form that combine academic and vocational subjects with sufficient variety to support all needs. There is a lively programme of clubs and activities, particularly in sport and the performing arts. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through curriculum topics, visiting practitioners and trips to places of historical and cultural interest. There are also opportunities for students to experience the culture of other countries and to undertake community service locally and abroad. The overview presented by a parent encapsulates the evaluation made by many of the school's impact on their children: 'The pastoral care, certificates and postcards home and the prefect system have helped mould our son into a fair-minded, socially aware young man.'

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



4 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Coombe Boys' School, New Malden, KT3 6NU**

Thank you for the friendliness and openness with which you showed us your work and answered our questions when we visited your school recently. Yours is a satisfactory and steadily improving school, with particular strengths in its leadership and in the curriculum.

We agree that your teachers are committed to giving each of you positive support and appropriate guidance and that they have the subject knowledge and skills needed. You told us that: 'The relationships between staff and students here are amazing – you can talk to them about anything.' A good range of academic and vocational options, extended through links with the girls' school and King's College Wimbledon, provides you with programmes of study well suited to your individual needs and ambitions. Your attainment and progress are improving. We were pleased that you feel safe and are happy to be at school. You benefit from belonging to a community with such a rich cultural and ethnic mix and you learn from experience how important it is to treat each other with respect. So that your school goes from strength to strength, we have asked your headteacher to ensure that:

- teachers always have high expectations, ask challenging questions and encourage you to be independent thinkers and to be aware of how you learn
- assessment in lessons and the marking of your work help you tackle areas for improvement and develop skills you can use in different situations
- teachers adapt their lesson plans to match your immediate needs, manage time in ways that keep you interested and allow you to complete tasks, and take advantage of opportunities to explore ideas you may have suggested
- teachers share with you the pleasure they take in their subjects as well as help you develop the techniques you need to do well in assessments.

You can help by aiming high and taking full advantage of opportunities to extend your knowledge and skills. I wish you all great success.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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