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Mr David Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

### **Short inspection of Coombe Boys' School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Lynne Isham, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You aim to provide an inspirational and transformational experience for your pupils. The school has provided an enriching range of opportunities. This has had the effect of raising aspirations and increasing pupils' enjoyment of school. When speaking to inspectors, pupils expressed strong appreciation of the sporting and cultural activities available.

Warm, positive relationships have created a supportive environment in which pupils feel confident to ask questions and push themselves further. In a physical education lesson, for example, pupils practised a tricky gymnastics routine, determined to improve their skills.

The latest GCSE results show that the school has maintained above-average attainment in English and mathematics, but science outcomes have remained weak for the past two years. In the sixth form, vocational results are exceptionally strong. The most able pupils at Coombe Boys' School make above-average progress, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Lower- and middle-ability pupils do not progress as well as their contemporaries nationally, though. Disadvantaged pupils make much weaker progress than other pupils nationally, and in your school. You have rightly made the progress of disadvantaged pupils a major focus of your improvement plans.

The school has strong support from staff, parents and carers. A high number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and they are extremely positive about the school. All respondents would recommend Coombe Boys' School to other parents. Also, when surveyed, virtually all staff said that they were proud to work at the school.

You and your leadership team are well supported and challenged by an effective team of governors. They have a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are closely checking that your drive for improvement is working, particularly with regard to the plans to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that a strong culture of safeguarding is embedded. All the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe and well looked after. Their parents agreed. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The single central record of staff recruitment checks is comprehensive and up to date.

All staff are trained to an appropriate level and receive regular safeguarding updates. Pupils causing concern are carefully monitored and appropriate referrals are made. There is evidence of very effective partnership working with a range of agencies. Senior staff in the safeguarding team share their expertise with other staff. This contributes to further growth in the culture of safeguarding. Your curriculum covers key safeguarding issues with pupils, including e-safety, and is carefully matched to the needs of pupils of different ages. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

### **Inspection findings**

- We first looked to see how well your strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils are working. 2017 GCSE results saw these pupils make significantly low progress in all subjects, apart from mathematics. You and your leaders recognised that the funding available to support these pupils was not being used effectively. Your team sought external advice and researched best practice in this area. Barriers to learning, which these pupils encounter, have now been identified and tackled effectively. For example, parental engagement has much improved and you have significantly increased attendance at parents' evenings by this group, this year. At least one parent of every Year 9 disadvantaged pupil recently attended meetings to discuss subject choices.
- In visits to classrooms, inspectors found disadvantaged pupils to be fully engaged in learning in most lessons. In many cases, they showed considerable pride in their work and were keen to share their achievements with inspectors. Through conversations with staff and governors, inspectors found that you have shifted the school culture so that everyone sees it as

their responsibility to tackle disadvantage. In the lower school, literacy programmes are improving the reading ages of this group. Your assessment information also shows that disadvantaged pupils are starting to catch up with other pupils in mathematics and English, in the upper school. Though it is too early to assess the overall impact on progress, there are positive signs that your plans are beginning to work.

- We next investigated how well teaching was contributing to better pupil progress, particularly that of lower- and middle-ability pupils. The previous inspection report identified aspects of teaching as an area for improvement and national progress data shows that the most able pupils are currently making better progress than others in your school. Inspectors confirmed that leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and give opportunities to staff to improve their practice through a carefully tailored training programme. In visits to classrooms, inspectors observed teachers using assessment well to identify next steps for pupils. Teachers used skilful questioning to generate productive classroom discussions, and ensured that pupils knew the right subject terminology to be successful in their writing.
- Occasionally, inspectors found that lower-ability pupils were not always given the right support to help them succeed. This led to work being poorly presented and weaker progress. Overall, high-quality teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, although there is still sometimes a lack of consistency in meeting the needs of lower- and middle-ability pupils.
- We agreed to find out how effective your actions were in addressing weaker results in science. For the past two years, pupils' progress in science has been significantly lower than their contemporaries, nationally. You are reviewing leadership of the department and bringing in greater subject expertise. This is making some impact on the quality of teaching in science. Inspectors found a strong focus on discussion and on pupils' acquisition of science vocabulary. As a result, pupils were developing the skills in extended writing that are needed for the GCSE examinations. Where teaching is most effective, a creative use of resources arouses pupils' curiosity and leads to high levels of engagement. Assessment, though, is not always used well. On occasion, weak planning of learning activities results in off-task behaviour and insubstantial progress. Leaders' actions to improve provision in science are beginning to show impact. However, improving pupils' progress in science needs to continue to be a focus for the school.
- Finally, we decided to find out how well you have maintained high standards of behaviour since the last inspection. Inspectors found that the highly cohesive, harmonious and inclusive community referred to in the last inspection report is still very evident. High standards of behaviour were observed in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are courteous and respectful. They show considerable pride in their school and endorse the high standards of behaviour you expect. For example, one pupil told inspectors that he was pleased that mobile phones are banned in school. 'I used to spend all my time looking at my phone in breaks. Now I play basketball,' he said.

- You and your leaders have identified pupils at risk of exclusion and have put in place interventions, shaped for individual pupils, to prevent it. For example, weekly mentoring with the 'Kick London' charity significantly improved pupils' behaviour and attendance. As a result of these interventions, the rate of fixed-term exclusion has substantially reduced and is now below the national average. You have developed a strong partnership with the local pupil referral unit to meet the needs of a small number of vulnerable pupils. As a result, these pupils remain in education and move on to appropriate vocational courses. Overall standards of behaviour in the school remain very high.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in science continue to be improved by using assessment to plan learning more effectively
- teachers address the needs of middle- and lower-ability pupils more effectively and consistently
- the school continues to develop its approach to improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of Kingston Children's Services. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Whiting  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors visited 14 lessons across a range of subjects, with a particular focus on science. Sometimes with senior leaders, they observed the quality of teaching and learning and spoke to pupils about their work. They interviewed senior and middle leaders, governors, a group of disadvantaged pupils and others from across the age range. Inspectors observed behaviour around the school. They scrutinised documentation, pupils' work and the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.