

Coombe Boys' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102608
Local Authority	Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number	308069
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	651
Sixth form	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Parker
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	College Gardens Blakes Lane New Malden KT3 6NU
Telephone number	020 8949 1537
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Coombe Boys' School serves a diverse community. About one half of the pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, of whom one fifth speak English as an additional language and over 50 are at an early stage of learning it. An average percentage are eligible for free school meals. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with the main ones being behavioural, emotional, social or moderate. Many more pupils than normal join the school after the start of Year 7 and a small number are refugees or asylum seekers.

Since 2006 the school has been federated with Coombe Girls' School under one headteacher and one governing body. They are on separate sites. It has a mixed sixth form that offers vocational courses and access to advanced level courses provided by its federation partner. In September 2008 the school was designated with specialist mathematics and computing status. There is a privately run after-school club on the premises.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has greatly improved since federation, when it became Coombe Boys' School under the very strong leadership of the headteacher of its partner school. Pupils now make better progress and standards have risen. Many features of the school are good. Nevertheless, the legacy of underachievement has an impact on pupils' overall achievement by the end of Key Stage 4. The school correctly evaluates this as satisfactory. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory.

Parents recognise the substantial improvements and praise the school very highly. Typical comments are, 'The leadership inspires both parents and children to greater participation and achievement. Our confidence in the school's ability to deliver has increased considerably' and 'The federation has been fantastic - the improvements in all areas of the school have been vast.' Their support for the school is also reflected in the greatly increased numbers joining in Year 7 and the sixth form.

In recent years standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have been very low. In 2008 unvalidated results rose to 48% of pupils attaining at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C and 34% when English and mathematics were included, which is below average. In 2008 pupils' progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 improved and was satisfactory, with weaknesses in English and mathematics and for low attainers. For those pupils completing Key Stage 3 in 2008, standards were also below average, but for current pupils they are improving. Progress in lessons is good as a result of the good teaching and more stable staffing. Consequently, younger pupils and those in the sixth form are making good progress overall. At Key Stage 4 pupils' progress is satisfactory; it has been affected by their previous underachievement and mobility. The school has correctly evaluated its curriculum to be satisfactory, with some restricted breadth in the range of courses available, due partly to small numbers in some years, and is working to address this.

The good quality of care, guidance and support contributes to pupils' good personal development and well-being. This enables pupils to grow in confidence, behave well and make a good contribution to the community both in the school and beyond. Staff know the pupils and students well and strive to meet their individual needs. Parents find the staff very caring and professional, and welcome the good relationships between pupils and staff. A number of pupils who had experienced difficulties in previous schools have been well supported. They now participate fully and do well. One parent summed this up by writing, 'The transformation in my son is incredible.' Parents praise the sensitive transition arrangements, including the summer school, with such comments as, 'They made a fantastic effort to make the transition from Year 6 to 7 as seamless as possible, and I do feel the school considers the children as individuals.'

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher expertly devolves leadership and builds good teamwork that is focused on improving standards and well-being. This has underpinned the school's improvements, which demonstrate its good capacity to improve further. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies appropriate areas for development. However, there is room for a sharper analytical focus on the progress of groups of pupils and students and the impact of actions. Achieving specialist school status has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, improving academic standards, cementing closer links with feeder primary and partner schools, and raising pupils' self-esteem and motivation.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is recruiting a greatly increasing number of students, of whom many are new to the school. Attendance has improved markedly and is high. Most students complete their courses successfully. This is because they enjoy their learning and feel valued. Students are well prepared for the transition from school to sixth form and newcomers are made welcome and settle quickly. As one student commented, 'Everyone quickly bonded.' Students are treated with respect, and the quality of care and support is good. The range of largely vocational courses offered at the Coombe Boys' School site is currently satisfactory for students' needs. The school recognises the need for more courses, for which it is already planning. The sixth form is part of an effective federation with Coombe Girls' School, offering students the opportunity to take an additional academic course. Students make good progress from their various starting points. The majority of them follow Level 2 courses. Some stay on into Year 13 to complete advanced vocational courses, on which they are very successful. Progress on vocational courses is particularly good with many attaining the highest grade, while performance on additional AS levels or when retaking GCSEs is satisfactory. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and foster independent learning in students through the skilful use of questioning and discussion in class. The facilities for sixth formers are good. Students are polite and confident, and make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. Through an effective programme, they are prepared well to understand their place in society and are helped to make sound moral choices, although no religious education is provided. Students readily take on responsibility for others, including younger pupils. The school guides them well in moving to the next stage of study or employment, and the good links with outside agencies prepare them well to develop the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. The sixth form is well led by a dedicated team who know each student personally and have a good understanding of the strengths of the sixth form and what remains to be done. Working well within a wider team, leaders and managers are analysing individual performance data with an increasingly sharp focus to help inform, support and raise attainment, although evaluation of the progress of groups is less advanced. The improvements show that the sixth form has a good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and progress, particularly in English and mathematics, and for low attainers.
- Analyse more precisely progress and the impact of actions to improve it, including for groups of pupils and students.
- Broaden the curriculum range to meet the needs of pupils and students more fully.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is rising from below average for the older pupils to broadly average for the youngest age groups. The school has worked hard to raise standards and improve progress successfully, but they remain weakest in English and mathematics and for low attainers. High attainers make the best progress, especially in English. The number of

pupils joining the school after Year 7 who are at early stages of learning English has had an impact on the standards in English at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The adequate support for these pupils enables them to make satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. For current pupils, the impact of permanent staffing in English and mathematics, and more targeted intervention, is contributing to improvements in progress. In 2008 too many pupils did not pass English or mathematics at GCSE. Currently the lowest attainers in Years 10 and 11 are on track to do better; they are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and have above average attendance, which has improved markedly since the last inspection. Parents remark on the warm and friendly relationship between pupils and staff and the community atmosphere. Pupils appreciate everything the teachers do on their behalf. Behaviour is good both in and out of lessons. Pupils know how to stay healthy, eating well and participating in more than the recommended two hours per week of physical activity. Pupils feel safe in the school and know that there are appropriate systems to deal with any incidents that might occur. They contribute to the community well through peer mentoring, which helps new pupils to feel secure and well supported when they join the school. They also take part in activities in the wider community such as selling poppies for Remembrance Day. Pupils' views are well represented through the student council and have resulted in improvements to facilities. Pupils' moral and cultural development is good. It is enhanced through the curriculum, particularly the well thought-out activities in personal, social and health education and citizenship, both of which the boys enjoy. Pupils' spiritual development is good; they reflect well during assemblies and the themes for the day in tutorial time and develop their sense of self-worth well. Pupils are prepared adequately for their future economic well-being through well structured work related activities and their satisfactory development of skills in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

As a consequence of good teaching and learning, pupils and students progress well in lessons. Teachers prepare lessons carefully and manage behaviour skilfully so that pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. This enables teachers to use the full lesson time productively. Teachers convey high expectations and clear learning objectives. They use a variety of good methods that raise pupils' self esteem effectively. Through good questioning backed up by strong subject knowledge they help pupils to develop their thinking. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to convey concepts and interest pupils.

On the occasions when teaching is satisfactory, pupils do not have sufficiently challenging work that supports the development of their independence. They spend too long listening or being supported through small steps. Also, assessment and observation during the lesson are not used well enough to check how everyone is getting on and make adjustments to the level of challenge for pupils.

The quality of marking varies, with the best providing very focused advice on how to improve and involving pupils well in assessing their achievements against clear targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of most pupils, enabling them to enjoy their education and achieve satisfactorily. Those in need of support in Year 7 are helped to adjust to secondary school through a curriculum that caters well for their needs. The school works in effective partnership with King's College School, a local independent school, to enhance the curriculum and raise aspirations for these pupils, and also for the gifted and talented. A small and decreasing number of vulnerable pupils follow alternative vocational courses off-site, while others benefit from support courses on-site. The school makes satisfactory provision for those for whom English is an additional language and recognises the need for more in-class support for them. The curriculum provides adequately for pupils' literacy and numeracy. ICT is used well to support learning in a range of subjects and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. As numbers in Years 10 and 11 are small, there is currently only a limited range of courses, but plans are in hand to increase the breadth of choice. The school provides an exemplary personalised curriculum for talented young footballers through a high-profile link with Fulham Football Club, and this contributes well to pupils' personal development as these youngsters serve as good role models. There are some good opportunities for trips and visits to places of interest. There is a limited range of clubs and extra-curricular activities apart from sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff know each pupil very well. They provide good care, guidance and support that underpin pupils' good personal development and well-being. They meet well the wide range of needs of pupils and students who join the school in Year 7 and afterwards, including in the sixth form. Vulnerable pupils at risk of disaffection are supported well, as are pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Guidance on options and careers during Years 9 and 11 involves both pupils and parents in ensuring the best decisions are made to support the ongoing welfare of each individual. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through regular reporting and parents' evenings. They attest to any problems being dealt with quickly through good communication with staff. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessments, are in place.

The ongoing monitoring and tracking of individual pupil performance by curriculum managers is a strength. It informs personalised intervention programmes and the setting of appropriately challenging academic targets that have helped to raise attainment. However, the evaluation of progress for all pupils and groups has not been as effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision of the high standards she wishes the school to attain, and has successfully communicated these aspirations to the whole school community. The leadership team work well together. Members are ambitious and committed to raising standards through improving the quality of care and education. Middle and senior managers are accountable for pupils' performance. They participate well in the effective programme of self-evaluation and planning which identifies appropriate areas for development, although the impact of some

initiatives is not analysed sharply enough. Monitoring of teaching is accurate. It has led to teachers benefiting from appropriate support and guidance on how to improve, but it is not informed routinely by evaluation of pupils' progress. Overall, there is a productive 'can do' atmosphere at all levels. Teachers feel confident of their ability to improve, and pupils are equally valued, informed and feel secure. Consequently they can concentrate on their learning. The good leadership and management have driven the good improvements the school has made.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. Work with outside agencies to support the school in promoting community cohesion is good. Governance is good. The governors are well informed and work effectively to fulfil their responsibilities, providing constructive support and strategic direction, though reporting to parents on statutory equality matters is not fully in place. Improved resources are used well. There is now a full complement of teaching and support staff that are deployed strategically to achieve good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 November 2008

Dear Students

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team so warmly when we visited your school recently.

We found that your school has improved greatly under your new headteacher since the federation. It provides you with a sound education. Your parents told us how confident they are in the school and how well the staff care for you. We agree. The staff know each of you well and provide good support to meet your needs. You get on well with each other, behave well and have good attendance. Your personal development is good and you feel safe. The staff help you to settle in well, whenever you join the school, and you enjoy it. Many of you help others through work as peer mentors, school or class council members or prefects.

The teaching is good and helps you to make good progress in lessons, but some of you who have been in the school a long time are still catching up and so progress by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. We have asked the school to help everyone do better, particularly in English and mathematics, and those of you who experience difficulties. In the sixth form you make good progress, especially in the vocational courses. The range of courses you can study is satisfactory. The school is planning to offer a wider range in the main school and sixth form, and we agree that this is important. Teachers keep track of how each one of you is getting on so they can help you to do better and set you targets. We have asked them to keep a closer eye on the progress you make and how well groups of you do.

Your school is well led and managed. The headteacher and the staff work successfully together to improve it. They know how good it is and what needs to be done to make it better. You can help, too, by thinking hard in lessons and making sure you meet challenging targets.

We wish you success at school and in helping your school to continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close

Her Majesty's Inspector