

Inspection of Coombe Dean School

Charnhill Way, Elburton, Plymouth, Devon PL9 8ES

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Teachers are passionate about their subjects and are enthusiastic in sharing what they know. They have high expectations of pupils in lessons. Pupils know they cannot 'opt out' of learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well so that they can access all subjects. Most pupils enjoy their lessons.

Pupils begin lessons promptly and move around the school calmly. They enjoy breaktimes and have access to play equipment and clubs during them.

Most pupils feel safe at this school. When bullying is reported, it is usually dealt with effectively. However, some girls are not confident that staff will deal with their concerns, and so do not always report them.

There are many opportunities for pupils and sixth-form students to develop well as individuals. For example, there are many sporting and music clubs. Others support intellectual development, such as the debate club and history group. Some clubs are pupil led or were requested by them. Students in the sixth form contribute effectively to the wider school community, for example by mentoring younger pupils as part of the Coombe Dean commitment to developing the 'whole student'.

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

The leadership of subject areas has improved since the previous inspection. The curriculum is now ambitious, well sequenced and remains broad for longer. Pupils build deep understanding over time. The way the curriculum is implemented helps pupils to make connections to what they have already learned. The curriculum takes into account the precise needs of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.

Teachers make suitable checks on pupils' progress. Pupils say that the feedback they receive helps them to know how to make progress in most subjects. However, in some subjects, gaps in knowledge and misconceptions are not always identified. This means that they persist for too long.

Leaders recognise the importance of reading. Younger pupils take part in a guided reading programme. This helps them to increase their vocabulary. Pupils experience many different authors and consider the issues they write about. There is appropriate support for those who are not reading at their expected age. This helps them to catch up quickly. Sixth-form students read challenging texts that go beyond their chosen subjects.

Poor behaviour rarely disrupts learning. Pupils appreciate the way the rewards system celebrates their positive behaviour and attitudes. The school is calm and orderly. Support for pupils who do not meet leaders' high expectations helps most to

improve their behaviour. Sixth-form students' conduct in study areas is respectful and considerate. However, some pupils say that they hear derogatory language around the school. This makes them feel uncomfortable and they are not always confident to report these incidents to staff.

Many pupils, including those with SEND or who are disadvantaged, take part in school clubs and activities. Most parents agree that the school supports their child's wider development well.

Pupils learn about personal, social, health and economic education and religious education in lessons, tutor periods and assemblies. However, some aspects of these curriculums do not help pupils to understand different faiths and cultures as fully as they could. Pupils say that they would value more teaching about these areas.

There is a structured careers programme in place. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Most sixth-form students move on to further education or work. However, some pupils in other year groups would value more information about future career options.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have a clear vision for the school. Leaders ensure that all staff have the training and support they need for their roles. Staff value the developmental opportunities that the trust provides. Leaders take account of staff's workload when introducing changes. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Governors and trustees work well with senior leaders to check the impact of their actions. For example, they are involved in the curriculum review process.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive suitable training so that they recognise signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. They know how to refer any concerns they may have. Staff feel well informed of the actions that leaders take to ensure that pupils are safe.

Leaders work well with other agencies and review their actions to ensure that they have responded appropriately. However, pupils are sometimes unaware of the actions that leaders have taken. Consequently, they do not always have confidence that leaders have dealt with issues raised.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some girls say they experience derogatory language directed towards them. They lack confidence in the school's ability to deal with this if they report it. Leaders should work with pupils to educate them on appropriate ways of interacting with each other and to build confidence in the school's reporting systems.
- Teachers' use of assessment does not consistently identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. When this occurs, the curriculum is not adapted well enough to help pupils to catch up. Leaders need to ensure that assessment is used effectively to support pupils to make progress through the curriculum in all subjects.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136558
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10217962
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1000
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Kevin Dyke
Website	www.coombedean.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account into their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors and trustees. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders, heads of year, teachers (including early career teachers) and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. Inspectors contacted the alternative provisions used by the school.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, history, geography, art, English and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior and curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the views of staff in Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Mather	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Rowe	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Lee	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jen Gibbs	Her Majesty's Inspector

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