

Coombe Dean School

Charnhill Way, Elburton, Plymouth, PL9 8ES

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In this very inclusive school excellent leadership at all levels, including the governing body, is strongly focused on the ethos of helping all students achieve their academic, social and personal potential.
- Students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above average. Given their starting points they make outstanding progress between Years 7 and 11. Achievement is outstanding in both English and mathematics.
- Teaching is almost always at least good and much of it is outstanding. Teachers plan with precision to meet the needs of individual students in their classes. This ensures that all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special education needs, make outstanding progress.
- Students' outstanding behaviour makes an exceptional contribution to the safe and positive learning atmosphere. Students are respectful of each other's differences and behave maturely around the school.
- Rigorous monitoring of teaching gives senior leaders an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Performance management systems are extremely effective in driving improvements in teaching and students' achievement.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and improving strongly. Students make rapid progress in some subjects but this is not consistent across the curriculum. However, much improved monitoring, tracking and intervention are helping to rapidly close these gaps.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 41 lessons, taught by 40 teachers, of which five were joint observations with members of staff.
- An inspector made a number of short visits to lessons with the school's special educational needs coordinator to focus specifically on the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with students, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 59 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) that were received by the end of the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the 81 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including students' books, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, records related to the behaviour and safety of students, attendance, and assessment data.

Inspection team

Peter Sanderson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Emerson

Additional inspector

David Howe

Additional inspector

Joanna Peach

Additional inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Coombe Dean School is a larger than average secondary school.
- The school became an academy converter in April 2011.
- Nearly all students are White British. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below average.
- The proportion of students at school action and the proportion supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium is similar to that seen in most schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the very effective foundations already in place in the sixth form to further improve achievement, by raising achievement in all subjects to that of the best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is outstanding**

- Students enter the school with broadly average standards but below average attainment in literacy. A very effective phonic (linking letters and sounds) intervention programme for some students and an accelerated reading programme for all younger years in the school ensure that students make rapid gains in their literacy skills.
- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above the national average. Unvalidated results for 2012 indicate that virtually all students attained five or more A* to C GCSE grades. The percentage attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was also well above average.
- Given students' starting points they make outstanding progress between Years 7 and 11. Value added progress measures for the school indicate that students' achievement has been in the top 10% of all schools nationally for each of the past three years. Analysis of school tracking information and lesson observations indicates that achievement remains high across Years 7 to 11.
- Analysis of students' achievement over time shows that all groups of students make much better progress than their peers nationally in English and mathematics.
- The leadership team has taken effective action to increase the percentage of students attaining the higher A* and A GCSE grades. There was an impressive increase in the percentage of these grades attained across a range of subjects in 2012, but particularly in mathematics. This remains an area of focus for the school, reflecting the high aspirations of senior leaders.
- In-class support for disabled students and those with special educational needs, from both teachers and teaching assistants, is excellent, and as a result they make outstanding progress.
- The additional funding received by the school for those students eligible for the Pupil Premium has been spent effectively on in-class support from teaching assistants and 'out of classroom' interventions. As a result this group of students is making excellent progress.
- The percentage of students leaving school and entering employment, education or training is well above the national average.
- The sixth form is highly inclusive, admitting students with a broad range of abilities and learning needs. Pass rates at the end of Year 13 are similar to those seen nationally although the percentage of students attaining the higher A* to B grades is just below average, but increasing.
- Improved and very effective leadership of the sixth form is driving improvement in students' retention on courses and in their achievement. Retention of students on courses is now above that seen nationally. Given their starting points students make good progress on both the academic and vocational courses that they follow. There is some variation in achievement between subjects but these gaps are being rapidly closed and achievement is rising.

The quality of teaching **is outstanding**

- Teaching across the school is outstanding because, over time, it enables students to make rapid and sustained progress in their learning.
- Teachers use their high levels of expertise to good effect to foster excellent learning habits and to develop students' resilience and independence. They also develop excellent relationships with students, which builds their confidence and encourages them to participate.
- The very effective use of assessment data to set challenging targets ensures that the expectations of students' progress are very high. Teachers use this data to good effect to set work at an appropriately challenging level for all students.
- Teachers use information regarding the learning needs of disabled students and those with

special educational needs to plan very effective in-class support. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson the teacher liaised very effectively with the highly skilled teaching assistant before the lesson regarding the learning needs of students. The teaching assistant was provided with a prompt sheet covering all aspects of learning and given specific advice as to how to support those students with special educational needs in the class. As a result of this support these students made excellent progress during the lesson.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this well to plan interesting lessons with examples from everyday life to focus learning. Typically lessons actively involve students in learning although on a very few occasions teachers can talk for too long, slowing the pace of learning.
- Assessment is thoroughly embedded in everyday classroom practices with teachers regularly checking and assessing progress in learning as the lesson proceeds. Evidence gathered from a review of students' work showed that work is marked regularly with quality feedback given to students on how to improve. Students know their targets and what they have to do to reach them.
- Social and moral development is promoted effectively through well-structured group work and opportunities for students to discuss their own ideas. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 religious and cultural studies lesson students were engaged in highly effective group discussions about the difference between knowing and believing. This lesson made a very strong contribution to both their social and spiritual development.
- The school places a strong emphasis on developing students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. For example, intervention programmes in English and mathematics and the daily half hour reading session for all Key Stage 3 students support literacy and numeracy development well.
- Students spoken to during the inspection were grateful to those teachers who gave up their own time during school and in after-school twilight sessions to help consolidate and extend their learning. They judged this support had a very positive impact on their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, students display very positive attitudes to learning. They listen well to each other and the teacher, work well independently and contribute confidently to discussions. During practical sessions they carefully follow all safety precautions.
- There is a calm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere around the school. Students socialise well and behave with care and consideration for each other. Students stated that they enjoyed school and felt extremely safe. All parents and carers responding on Parent View judged that their children are happy in school.
- Incidents of bullying are very unusual and students say it is not a problem in the school. Students are confident that where bullying does occur it is dealt with promptly by staff. Students are aware of the different forms bullying may take, such as cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying, and understand how this may affect them.
- The very large majority of those parents and carers responding on Parent View felt behaviour in the school was good. The inspection found little evidence to support the concerns about behaviour raised by a very small number of parents and carers. Responses from staff were overwhelmingly positive about students' behaviour and safety.
- The learning support team makes an outstanding contribution to supporting those students identified as needing extra help with developing their social skills and improving their behaviour. The school can point to clear examples of where it has helped students to manage their behaviour better.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving and students are very punctual to school in the morning and to lessons during the school day. Exclusions from school are well below the national average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide the school with clear purposeful leadership. They refer to the 'The Coombe Dean way', a vision that is based on high expectations and on providing a high quality education for all students. This vision is shared by the whole school community and all staff completing the staff questionnaire indicated they were proud to be members of the school.
- Equality of opportunity is at the centre of this inclusive school's work. Both students and staff stated to inspectors that the school 'does not give up on anyone'. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and this is evident in the courtesy and respect that both staff and students demonstrate for each other.
- Systems for monitoring the performance of students and subjects are excellent and well established in Years 7 to 11 and all leaders are held accountable for students' achievement. This helps ensure that all groups of students achieve at an outstanding level and there is little variation in achievement between subjects in these years. In the past, the quality and effectiveness of monitoring and accountability were not so strong in the sixth form. However, over the last year a new leadership structure in the sixth form has established greatly improved systems and these are driving rapid improvement in students' achievement.
- Teaching is monitored robustly and accurately and so senior leaders are well aware of strengths and relative weaknesses in teachers' performance. A range of well-tailored professional development opportunities are in place to drive improvement. Performance management of teachers is rigorous and used well to support teacher development and inform salary progression.
- Accurate self-evaluation is used well by governors and senior leaders to define priorities for improvement planning.
- The curriculum is outstanding and provides students with a rich and broad range of opportunities. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form a wide range of both academic and vocational courses is available for students to study. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and refined in order to best meet current students' needs and as such has a very positive impact on their achievement. A very good range of enrichments and extra-curricular activities is also available to students. These deepen and broaden students' experience and make a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is extremely well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provides leaders and managers with a high level of support and challenge.
 - The governing body works closely with senior leaders to ensure that all safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and child-protection arrangements are extremely robust and fully meet all requirements.
 - Financial resources are managed very well to support improved provision and excellent achievement for students.

What inspection judgements mean

School

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136558
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	395689

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1095
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hanno Payne
Headteacher	Patrick Freat
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2009
Telephone number	01752 406961
Fax number	01752 482140
Email address	office@coombedean.plymouth.sch.uk

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