

Coombswood Special School

Address: Laborem Place, Halesowen, West Midlands, B62 8BH

Unique reference number (URN): 150053

Inspection report: 16 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

This is a very welcoming, friendly place where pupils accept one another and feel valued. This is because staff have an informed understanding of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff support pupils so they feel safe and secure.

Leaders maintain regular communication with parents and carers. They work closely and successfully with external professionals such as social workers and the local authority to ensure support for care experienced pupils. This means that staff have a secure knowledge of pupils' individual circumstances and backgrounds. They use this information extremely well to plan appropriate lessons and activities.

Regular staff training and updates about specific needs keep the school team informed and up to date. Leaders have a systematic approach to checking on pupils' progress, behaviour and levels of engagement. This approach supports staff to review the impact of their work and adjust it to meet any changing needs and circumstances. It also means that work to overcome pupils' barriers to learning is typically well informed and effective. From dramatic improvements in attendance to learning to read, leaders' targeted work enables all pupils to access learning and plan for brighter futures.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Consideration for pupils' personal development is woven throughout school life. Staff are kind and model valuable social skills that pupils learn from. Across the school, there is a quiet sense of high expectation that pupils will respect one another. This helps everyone to think about others and improve their own outlook on life.

A well-planned personal, social, health and education programme is taught weekly. There is a deliberateness about this programme. Crucial aspects, such as the fundamental British values of democracy and tolerance, as well as features of safe, healthy relationships are covered in appropriate depth. The programme is also flexible enough to respond to needs or events as they arise.

Outside of lessons, staff manage social times very effectively to support positive interactions. Conflict between pupils is rare. If it happens, staff successfully support pupils to find constructive solutions and understand the difference between right and wrong.

Trips and clubs make a marked contribution to pupils' wider learning. Lunchtime clubs, such as jewellery making, introduce pupils to new interests. Pupils routinely visit local parks, shops, places of worship, the theatre, museums and galleries. This helps them learn about culture and history. Independent living skills are also a high priority. For example, pupils learn how to buy cooking ingredients at the shops, open a bank account and plan a train journey.

Aspirational thinking is evident in the informed careers guidance provided. This is supported by links with local colleges and employers. Pupils participate in voluntary work and take on jobs at school, for example by acting as wellbeing champions or shadowing the site

manager for a day. Such activities empower pupils to take responsibility, develop empathy and build feelings of self-worth. These are markers of considerable progress for pupils. This school turns pupils' attitudes from 'I cannot' to 'I will try'.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils have typically had difficulties coping and achieving in other settings. They have often missed much education and, as a result, many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders get pupils back into the routine of daily attendance at school to improve their chances of success. Pupils follow pathways to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Beyond this, there are options to pursue GCSE courses and vocational qualifications.

The newness of the school means that very few pupils have completed key stage 4. However, pupils' current work shows they are making suitable progress across the curriculum. They are securing key basic knowledge and working towards achieving appropriate qualifications.

In addition, staff support pupils to improve their communication and social skills. This, together with the focus on literacy, numeracy and practical skills, means the school is preparing pupils well for their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils' attendance improves considerably once they join the school. Leaders' work to engage with families and to secure regular daily attendance has a marked, positive impact. It results in most pupils having high attendance. There is rarely unnecessary absence. This aspect is a notable strength.

Pupils behave well. This is because expectations for pupils' conduct are very clear. For example, in the morning, pupils hand in mobile phones and have breakfast together. Like lunchtime, this is a relaxed, orderly time that enables pupils to develop social skills. They move punctually to lessons and settle quickly. Established routines mean the school is a calm place. Pupils feel secure and no learning time is lost. In lessons, pupils get on with their work and usually do what they are asked, although some find it hard to sustain concentration as the day progresses.

Relationships between all in the school community are warm and supportive. Pupils are very accepting of one another. Disruptive behaviour is uncommon. If it happens, staff deal with it promptly and calmly. Bullying and unkind behaviour, both offline and online, are not accepted. Pupils know this and appreciate the consistent approach from staff to keeping them safe.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Most pupils have gaps in their learning due to a disrupted education. In response, leaders have designed a curriculum that accommodates pupils' varied starting points. There is a significant focus on securing basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff check how well pupils can read and support them with a structured phonics programme if necessary.

Beyond numeracy and literacy, leaders offer a suitably broad and inclusive curriculum with regular lessons in subjects such as food technology, physical education, art and science. In the main, staff have secure subject knowledge and adapt their approaches to keep pupils motivated. In the majority of subjects staff make their expectations very clear. Pupils generally respond well, with high levels of engagement. However, in a few instances, staff find it difficult to regain pupils' attention if they lose interest in the learning. Leaders are alert to this and provide ongoing training to build staff's confidence and expertise.

Alongside the academic offer, leaders provide lessons in life and employability skills. This programme is supported by trips to local venues, volunteering in the community, and input from other organisations such as the police. All of this helps pupils to develop life skills and understand the relevance of school work to their future lives.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

This school is well led. Highly visible, supportive and optimistic leaders have gained the trust and confidence of staff, pupils, parents and carers. Staff say they are well supported with training, welfare and workload. Parents say the school provides kindness, compassion and clear communication. Inspection evidence supports these views.

Leaders at all levels keep pupils' best interests at the heart of their plans and decision-making. They pay attention to pupils' progress, engagement, behaviour and welfare. Leaders routinely scrutinise the information they gather. This gives them an informed view of how well the school is doing in its work to help pupils. Leaders use what they find out to adjust provision and set development targets for further improvement. Looking to the immediate future, leaders know they could make even better use of the information they have to set sharper development points.

The proprietor brings an evidence-informed and analytical approach to checking on compliance and quality. They ensure that staff have access to relevant professional training that drives school improvement. In addition, they have reliable routines for external scrutiny to quality assure the focus and accuracy of their work. These systems ensure that the school continues to meet the independent school standards.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

To be a pupil here means belonging to a welcoming, friendly community where everyone feels valued and accepted. Staff take time to understand each pupil's individual needs,

strengths, challenges and circumstances. Because they know pupils so well, staff provide the right support to help them feel safe and to be ready to learn.

Most pupils arrive after experiencing difficulties in previous settings or long periods out of education. All have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff help them to rebuild confidence, re-engage with learning and establish positive routines. Pupils improve their attendance significantly. They develop better learning habits and begin to enjoy school because they experience success. The school places a strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics, while also providing engaging lessons in practical subjects such as food technology. Whether in class or interacting with others at social times, pupils are very well supported to overcome difficulties and achieve in lots of different ways. Importantly, pupils feel listened to and know that staff will help them when they have worries. During their time at the school, pupils learn to manage their emotions constructively and build resilience.

The school day follows established routines that help pupils feel calm and secure. Pupils' behaviour improves because expectations are clear and relationships are strong. Bullying and unkind behaviour are rare because staff promote kindness, respect and understanding. If problems do occur, staff deal with them quickly and effectively.

Personal development plays a central role in school life. Through lessons, clubs, trips and community activities, pupils learn important life skills and develop greater independence. The school's values of determination, respect, empowerment, appreciation and motivation shape everything it does. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility and believe in themselves. As a result, pupils become better prepared for their next steps, with greater confidence and higher aspirations.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen teaching so that all staff bring an appropriate level of challenge and support in lessons to maximise pupils' engagement with learning.
- Leaders should use the high-quality information they gather about the school's performance to bring an even sharper focus to school improvement planning.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008 and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal, other leaders, directors of the proprietor body, a local authority virtual school representative, staff and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Typically, pupils have autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. All have an education, health and care plan.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

The school is registered to admit 50 pupils.

The proprietor of the school is Coombswood Education Limited. The chair of directors is Tracey Storey.

The current yearly fees range between £49,150 and £77,900, plus additional services costs.

The school’s email address is: info@coombswoodschool.com.

Principal: Charlotte Alton

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information

Standards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:

Martin Pye, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspector:

Lesley Yates, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.



This data is from 16 June 2026

Total pupils

38

School capacity

50

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

38

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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