



**COWLEY**  
INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

# A GUIDE TO OUR OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT 2026



# Principal's introduction to the report

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the publication of our recent Ofsted report, I am writing to share a brief summary highlighting some of the key findings from the inspection, which took place in February.

This year saw the introduction of a significantly revised Ofsted inspection framework. The new framework is still in its infancy and is far more rigorous, with expectations and standards set higher than ever before.

During the inspection, a team of seven inspectors spent two days speaking with staff and students, visiting lessons, and observing social times. Inspectors consistently commented on how “delightful” our students were and how the students are incredibly proud of the College. They spoke very positively about what they saw and recognised the journey Cowley has been on over the past 12 months as we have responded to the challenges we face as both a school and a community.

We have made bold and dynamic changes during this time, and inspectors clearly recognised this, stating that “the school is undergoing rapid, purposeful and well-sequenced improvement” and that this is “rooted in a clear understanding of what pupils need.” As students, parents, and staff, we can all see the improvements that have been made over the last year. Ofsted echoed this, noting that: “actions are already having a tangible and positive impact on pupils’ daily experiences. This can be seen in improvements in attendance, behaviour, classroom practice and pupils’ learning.”

The true measure of a school is often found in the everyday experiences of its students. With this in mind, page 4 of this document is dedicated to the Ofsted report section ‘What it’s like to be a pupil at this school’. Here, we combine Ofsted’s insights with genuinely uplifting feedback from those who know our school best—our students.

As part of the Ofsted changes, they have introduced a new “Needs Attention” grade. In its public guidance, Ofsted is clear that “Needs Attention” is not a fail. Cowley has received some “Needs Attention” judgements, which simply identify areas where practice is still developing and where further focus is required. While we know there is more to do, feedback from staff, parents, students and now Ofsted confirms that we are moving in the right direction. We remain committed to working in close partnership with parents to ensure that every child can achieve, thrive, and belong.

While we will always strive to be even better, it is important to recognise that this inspection was conducted against a demanding national framework. The outcome reflects both the distance we have travelled and our strong commitment to becoming the very best school we can be. We are not there yet, but Ofsted has acknowledged our improvements, strengths, and clear trajectory.

I encourage all parents and carers to read the full report, which is available on our website. Thank you for your continued support as we move forward together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Cormack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Russell Cormack  
Principal



During their visit, and as part of their report, Ofsted Inspectors identified many strengths of the College, including the positive culture of learning and wellbeing of pupils, alongside the continued efforts to improve outcomes for our entire school community.

We'd like to share some of these key highlights with you.

“Pupils appreciate the work of the wellbeing team, which helps them to overcome any challenges they face. Pupils know who to turn to if they need support.”

“There is a newly created positive culture for learning. Pupils are rising to leaders’ increased expectations of their achievement and behaviour.”

“The school is undergoing rapid, purposeful and well-sequenced improvement.”

“The curriculum is broad and ambitious.”

“Pupils move calmly and respectfully around the school. They follow clear routines. Lessons begin promptly. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and their teachers.”

“Pupils learn better than in the past.”

“Well-designed careers advice and guidance includes links with a range of employers. This helps all pupils, including pupils with additional needs, to make well-informed decisions about their next steps.”



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

An important part of any Ofsted report is the section titled “What it is like to be a pupil at this school.” This section places students at the centre, capturing their experiences, voices and day-to-day realities, and offering a genuine insight into what life at Cowley feels like from those who know it best.

Inspectors spoke directly with students, who consistently shared that the school is a safe, calm, and welcoming environment, where they feel supported and valued. Pupils express strong confidence in staff, trusting them to listen carefully and resolve any concerns effectively. This sense of security allows them to focus on both their learning and wider development.

Pupils spoke with real enthusiasm about activities such as dance and rock school, alongside a wide range of trips and enrichment experiences available to them. These opportunities are not simply an addition to school life—they are a vital part of it, helping pupils to build confidence, discover new interests, and feel proud to be part of the school community.

The report states that “Pupils feel safe and are typically happy in this rapidly improving school.” It also notes that “They value the time they get to spend with their friends and enjoy their learning,” and highlights a “positive culture for learning.”

Students spoke confidently and eloquently to inspectors, offering positive and enthusiastic reflections on their experience at Cowley. Their voices painted a genuinely glowing picture of a school where they feel supported, valued and happy to learn.

“Pupils feel safe and are typically happy at this rapidly improving school.”

- Ofsted





## Link to Cowley's Ofsted report 2026

We hope that you found this document useful. We are pleased that inspectors recognised that Cowley is undergoing rapid, purposeful improvements.

While some areas have been identified as “Needs Attention,” these reflect aspects still developing rather than shortcomings, and feedback from staff, parents, students and now Ofsted confirms the College is moving in the right direction.

With a clear trajectory for continued progress and a strong commitment to working in partnership with families, Cowley is building on the distance already travelled and remains focused on becoming the best possible College for its community.

To read our full Ofsted report, [please click here](#)

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