

Corby Business Academy

Academy Way, Gretton Road, Corby, NN17 5EB

Inspection dates 11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From below-average starting points, students make good progress in their academic and personal development.
- Teaching and learning are good in most areas of the academy and some teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and develop good working relationships in the classroom.
- Students enjoy being at the academy and their attendance is above average. They behave well in and out of lessons.
- The Principal is supported by a strong team of leaders who work well together.
- The academy trustees, governing body and senior leaders have a clear vision for improvement in the academy. They have worked relentlessly to remove weak teaching and to improve the consistency of practice.
- The sixth form is good. In the fourth year of its operation, teaching and learning are good and improving. It offers an increasingly wide choice of subjects to its students, who are making good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, teachers do not always set tasks at precisely the right level for students of differing ability or ensure that lessons proceed briskly throughout.
- Sometimes students' progress slows because they are not given enough opportunities to learn independently.
- The best practice in teaching is not fully shared across the academy, with the result that the progress students make in different lessons varies.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to other lessons and sampled students' work.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students and other students informally, academy senior leaders, middle leaders, the chief executive officer of the academy trust, members of the governing body and the academy improvement partner.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by staff, along with the 16 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of academy documents, including academy self-evaluation, academy development plans, behaviour records and documents related to the management of performance.

Inspection team

Keith Brown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Radford	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Julia Morris	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This average-sized secondary school opened in 2008 on a greenfield site and serves Corby and the surrounding villages. Most students travel to and from the academy on a fleet of buses. The sixth form opened in September 2009.
- The academy's specialism is business and enterprise education. It is part of the Brooke Weston Trust, along with six other academies and one free school.
- An above-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students from ethnic minority heritages and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is broadly average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The governing body manages a unit offering specialist resourced provision for students with special educational needs. This is a local authority designated base for 75 students with moderate and severe learning difficulties, including a base to support eight students with autistic spectrum disorders.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the strengths of teaching by:
 - planning learning activities which more precisely match the abilities and needs of each student
 - broadening the ranges of strategies to promote active and independent learning
 - ensuring that pace and challenge are provided throughout lessons
 - sharing the very best practice more widely across the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with attainment that is below average and in some year groups well below average. Students make good progress in their studies. Overall results at the end of Year 11 have steadily improved since the academy opened and the academy achieved its best ever GCSE results this year.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C in any subjects has been broadly average for two successive years. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has moved closer to the national average.
- Achievement is now less variable between subjects. There was a dip in GCSE mathematics and science results in 2011 but concerted action by the academy resulted in marked rises in 2012.
- The 2012 results show an improvement in the rate of expected progress in English and mathematics from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. An increased number of students made better than expected progress in 2012.
- Evidence from lessons, students' books and the academy's well-focused tracking system confirm that disabled students and those with special educational needs are currently achieving well. Their needs are identified early and work set is matched closely to their ability levels. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support students by demonstrating skills precisely, teaching vocabulary which is important in the subject and providing both challenge and encouragement.
- Students' results in GCSE, BTEC and A-level courses in business have steadily improved over the last three years. The academy has successfully incorporated business and enterprise education across many subjects studied from Year 7 onward and students are well prepared for the world of work. Enterprise skills exhibited in many lessons include team working, effective participation and self-management.
- The students supported in the unit with specialist resourced provision for students with special educational needs achieve well. They receive knowledgeable and sharply-focused help from both teachers and teaching assistants. Students in the unit are effectively integrated, wherever possible, with the rest of the academy's classes.
- The academy's leaders have developed clear strategies for the support allocated to students eligible for the pupil premium. Interventions, such as one-to-one tuition, additional English and mathematics teaching time and funding for educational visits are becoming more focused and effective in overcoming the barriers they face in their learning. As a result, gaps between these students' attainment and progress and that of their peers are closing.
- The academy has an ethos which is inclusive and there is no evidence of discrimination. Students who speak English as an additional language are supported well and make quick gains in their language skills. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress that is similar to other students in the academy.
- Learning and progress in the sixth form are good. Carefully chosen and varied activities promote independent thinking and enquiry well. All the students who applied gained places at their first choice universities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations, the academy's robust monitoring data and scrutiny of students' work show that teaching is improving. Teaching enables students to achieve well over time. There is some outstanding practice in all subjects but this not being shared widely enough across the academy to raise the overall quality of teaching still further.
- In a few lessons, teaching requires improvement because the challenge is insufficient and the pace of learning is not fast enough. This is typically because the teacher does not check carefully enough if students are finding the work too easy or too difficult, or parts of the lesson are too teacher directed. On a few occasions, teachers did not include opportunities for students to learn actively and independently.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make regular use of well-focused lesson objectives. Teachers create a positive climate in the classroom that encourages students to succeed and to share in one another's successes. Activities are well planned and work is carefully modified for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Teaching in the unit offering specialist resourced provision for students with special educational needs is consistently good. Teaching assistants are closely involved in lesson planning and the tasks set are highly effective in accelerating students' progress.
- The marking of student's work is usually thorough. Teachers praise high-quality work appropriately and provide clear guidance for improvement. Students assess their own work accurately and maturely.
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers have high expectations and use questioning effectively to check students' understanding. They provide well-focused feedback to the students. They set work to challenge students of different abilities, and ensure that the pace of learning does not slow at any point.
- Teachers are skilful at assessing how well students are grasping new ideas and intervening at just the right time to clarify a misconception or provide another example to reinforce a key message. For example, in a Year 10 physics lesson students worked on a range of carefully constructed tasks on work and energy. The teacher's questioning and use of practical examples and past paper questions helped students to learn imaginatively and independently.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and the use of assessment is rigorous. Class sizes are generally small and teachers take advantage of this to provide personal interventions and challenge whenever possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students, including those in the unit offering specialist resourced provision for students with special educational needs, are well behaved, courteous and friendly. Around the academy, behaviour is good and students are clearly proud and happy to be members of the academy. Students respect and enjoy the highly stimulating academy site, with its clear business and enterprise focus.
- In lessons, students are diligent and attentive; they contribute well to successful learning.
- Parents and carers are positive about behaviour in the academy. Fewer students now require internal isolation than was previously the case. Students understand and abide by the system of rewards and sanctions.

- Students have a clear understanding of the different kinds of bullying, including cyber- and prejudice-based bullying. They know how to respond appropriately to bullying, although in the academy such incidents occur rarely. Any occasional instances are logged appropriately and dealt with rigorously by the academy to avoid repeat occurrences.
- Attendance has increased, due to robust action by the academy, and is now above average. Students realise the value of good attendance and persistent absence has decreased. They arrive at lessons punctually.
- The very large majority of parents and carers agree that the academy keeps students safe. It provides a safe and secure environment that is valued and appreciated by all students, including those attending the specialist resourced provision.
- Sixth form students say they receive well-focused information, support and guidance. They note that their teachers are always willing to give individual help. Students in the sixth form have good opportunities to contribute to the academy, for example on the Academy Senate, as sports leaders, or as mentors to younger students.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and senior leaders provide strong leadership. Self-evaluation is broadly based and accurately identifies the priorities for the academy. The academy development plan sets out how the academy intends to reach its ambitious targets.
- Staff are proud to work for the academy and are highly committed to its success. Their questionnaires responses were almost all positive.
- Improvements in teaching have been achieved by establishing a rigorous programme of monitoring, backed up with well-focused professional development. Teachers have high expectations of their students. There is now a solid base of outstanding teaching for sharing more widely across the academy.
- The academy's regular tracking of students' progress has allowed resources to be deployed where they are most needed to prevent underachievement. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of students they teach, and leaders for their areas of influence. This is reflected in the approach to performance management, where discretionary pay increments have to be earned.
- The specialist resourced provision for students with special educational needs is led well. Students with moderate and severe learning difficulties and those with autism make sustained progress and their achievement is good.
- The sixth form is well led and managed. The choice of subjects is widening as the sixth form gets larger. The academy rigorously addresses any dips in the performance of BTEC, AS and A level subject areas.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs. It is central to securing students' positive engagement and good achievement. Students say they enjoy the regular enterprise days and recently students learned some of the business skills needed to successfully organise the Olympic Games.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of art, dance, music and sports activities, as well as visitors and visits, which promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

- The academy trust has played a pivotal role in challenging and supporting strategic leadership, particularly in raising student achievement and the quality of teaching. It oversees the academy's finances very effectively.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- provides a high level of strategic thinking and challenge for senior leaders
- ensures that there is a rigorous approach to performance management
- makes sure funds arising from the pupil premium are well directed to improve these students' achievement
- ensures that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

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	135306
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406597

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

Type of school	Academy
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	995
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kerry James
Headteacher	John Henrys (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2011
Telephone number	01536 303120
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