

Corby Business Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135306
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	364390
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1021
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kerry James
Headteacher	Dr Andrew Campbell (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Academy Way Gretton Road, Corby NN17 5EB
Telephone number	01536 303120
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 lessons, led by 41 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Board and members of the academy's staff including the Principal and the executive Principal, who is also one of the trustees. A discussion with the School Improvement Partner was held by telephone. Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised a wide range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, students' performance data, the academy's records of lesson observations and its self-evaluation documents. In addition, questionnaires were analysed from 105 parents and carers, 200 students and 44 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent teaching is good enough to bring about rapid improvements in learning
- Whether students understand what they should do to improve their work
- How regularly students attend.
- The progress students make in their work in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Corby Business Academy opened in September 2008 serving an area in which there had previously been low educational outcomes. It is built on a greenfield site four miles from the centre of Corby, but its catchment area is that of its predecessor school. A fleet of buses transports most students to and from the academy. The academy is part of a partnership with two other local academies.

The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion who are from minority ethnic groups is in line with the national average, and there is a higher-than-average number who speak English as an additional language. The academy includes a local authority designated special educational needs base for students who have moderate and severe learning difficulties, as well as a base to support students with autistic spectrum disorders. Partly as a result of this, there is a higher-than-average proportion of students who have a special educational needs and/or disabilities and of those who have a statement of special educational needs.

The academy has the Student Council Platinum Award, the ECM (Every Child Matters) Quality Mark, and Healthy Schools status. It was shortlisted for the Suzy Lamplugh Safer Schools Award. Its specialisms are business and enterprise.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The academy's overall effectiveness is satisfactory because students' progress in their learning is good, but their attainment, while improving strongly, is below average. In the sixth form, outcomes and provision are satisfactory.

Students make good progress in their learning because of the good quality of teaching they receive, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the work ethic that the academy's leaders have successfully established. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress overall with some variation between subjects.

Lessons are well planned. It is clear to the students what they should be learning about. As a result, they know what they need to concentrate on in lessons although assessment does not always help students understand how to improve their work. A good range of activities is used to sustain their interest. Expectations of what students can achieve are high. Leaders put into practice their belief that what a student studies should be related to their abilities and not rigidly determined by their age. For example, a Year 10 student studies dance in a sixth form A level class. A girl who speaks English as an additional language is studying A level mathematics in her Year 11 class. Courses are run by external providers which give good opportunities for students whose interests and aspirations lie outside academic work.

A large majority of the lessons observed were good or outstanding although some lessons were below this level. The rapid improvements in teaching, and other aspects of provision, are the result of how effectively leaders make sure that the accurate and detailed evaluations of provision lead to sustained improvement. There are regular and robust analyses of the work of subject departments, for example. These provide candid appraisals of strengths and weaknesses. A very rigorous and effective means of improving teaching quality is in place and there is a strong expectation that all teaching should be regularly good or outstanding. The good quality of teaching is reflected well in the improvements in students' behaviour. One year ago it was satisfactory, it is now good. The main difference is students' much improved attitudes to learning. The interest they show in lessons is now much greater than it was.

Students' learning is further enhanced by the considerable efforts to ensure that all students attend regularly. A rapid improvement from low attendance to close to the national average has been achieved. At the same time, the proportion of students who are persistently absent has been halved. This is now in line with the national average.

The impact of the business and enterprise specialism is profound. Physically, the building resembles that of a modern hi-tech office, which helps to emphasise that the business of the academy is work. This is accentuated by the short breaks and lunchtimes, the clear glass office walls so that working adults provide a model for students, and the business-

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style dress for all. Relationships between students and adults are good and purposeful. Business and enterprise are well represented in the curriculum. The rapidity of the development of the academy's work and the extent of the improvements it is bringing about demonstrate that the capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment by:
 - ensuring that where there is inadequate or satisfactory teaching, it is improved so that it is at least good
 - ensuring that in all lessons, students understand what they need to do to improve their work
 - increasing students' attendance so that it is better than average
 - in the sixth form, ensuring that the different rates of progress made by students in different subjects are reduced and by offering a broader curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The standards the older students had reached in their work when they began their secondary education were exceptionally low. The standards of the younger students much more closely match national averages. In the examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2010, standards remained low, but the progress made against challenging targets was good. The proportion of students who achieved five or more higher grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, exceeded the national minimum target. Current data suggest the proportion will increase further this year, bringing about a doubling in two years. Good progress is made by all groups. There were some differences in the standards reached by different groups last year, for example boys reached higher standards in mathematics than girls, while the reverse was true in English. The academy's leaders are aware of this and have taken steps to remove the differences. In lessons, good progress was observed in the large majority of lessons by all groups. This includes the students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who benefit from the academy's special provision, for whom the academy meets the very large majority of targets. It is also true of the students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who speak English as an additional language.

Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the building. Students readily set to work in lessons and their desire to learn is clear, for example from the way they work sensibly both individually and in groups. They also show a readiness to ask the teacher questions about their work. This, along with students' good understanding of business and enterprise, is an important contributing factor to the good preparation students are making for their future employment. In one quarter of lessons observed, students' behaviour was outstanding. Bullying is a rarity, as are racist comments, and students report that they feel safe at the academy, a judgement with which a very high proportion of parents and carers agree in the questionnaires.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The pace of learning is good because of the good quality of teaching. Teachers' questions are good: in one music lesson, for example, well-targeted questioning ensured students of all abilities were challenged to think for themselves. There is some variability in the helpfulness of marking in showing students how to improve. While there are some good examples of this, there can also be some less well-developed practice even within the same subject department. However, students are often given very good advice on the criteria by which their work will be assessed. They use this well, for example in an English lesson, to raise the quality of their work. The best lessons include a range of approaches to learning such as pair, group and collaborative work, research and independent learning. There was some outstanding practice seen in the teaching of the least-able students in smaller groups.

The curriculum is flexible and is adapted well for the range of abilities and interests of students. There is provision for higher-attaining students to take GCSE examinations in Year 10. Literacy skills are further developed during tutor time. There is a good mix of academic and vocational courses. There is also a good amount of extra-curricular activity. The academy provides good support for students who wish to take part in after-school clubs by providing late buses to get them home.

The rapid improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour are a consequence of outstanding care, guidance and support. Firm action is taken to improve students'

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attendance. The academy's leaders are able to demonstrate several very good examples of where students' previously challenging behaviour, negative attitudes to education and poor attendance have been overcome and the students are now very positive about education and benefiting well from it. Good arrangements are made for when students join the academy from primary schools and this includes extra support for those who are vulnerable. The importance of finding a suitable career or course is given very good emphasis: every student in Year 11 receives personal advice.

The special provision for some of the students with special educational and/or disabilities is good. The quality of teaching for these students is good and there are high expectations of learning and behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are exceptionally effective. Responses to the questionnaire show that the overwhelming majority of the staff are in agreement with the aims and approaches taken by the leaders. There is considerable foresightedness and, at times, courage, shown by leaders in developing an institution which has such high expectations of students both academically and in their personal development. Leaders help students to achieve by the very effective steps they take to ensure that the provision they receive is of high quality. In support of this, self-evaluation is thorough and robust. It is highly successful in bringing about rapid improvement. Subject leaders are both supported and challenged very effectively. Their evaluations of their areas of responsibility are detailed and frank. Effective steps are taken to provide support where improvement is needed. The governing body provides very effective support and its work is overseen well by the trustees. Strategic planning is outstanding, rapidly identifying the opportunities for further development and improvement. Parents and carers are well-informed about the progress of their children.

The thoroughness of the leaders' approach extends to the safeguarding of students, which is outstanding. The commitment to providing equal opportunities for all is clear and achieving success, as shown in the way, for example, gender gaps in attainment have been reduced. The academy's work in promoting community cohesion is very strong in some respects, for example locally. There are also good links with other countries, providing students with a better understanding of other cultures. However, the work done to help understand the nature of multi-ethnic Britain is less well developed.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form is developing rapidly. It has grown from five to over 100 students in a year. At present, outcomes are satisfactory, with some variations between subjects. The teaching observed ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Sixth form students contribute to the academy well. For example, all students support tutor groups as mentors and students undertake a range of other responsibilities. The curriculum is adequate, and leaders have responded to demand, for example by introducing an A level chemistry course. Some subjects are taught through an arrangement with a local college. The means of monitoring students' progress is increasingly rigorous and it allows interventions to be made where there is evidence of underachievement. Partnerships with individual parents is strong, and advice is provided to both parents and students about higher education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers that responded to the questionnaire is in line with the national average for academies. A very large majority of parents' and carers' responses are supportive of the academy's work. A larger-than-usual proportion disagreed that the academy helps them to support their child's learning. Inspectors followed up this point and their findings are given in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Corby Business Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 965 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	38	56	53	9	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	45	55	52	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	46	48	46	8	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	40	55	52	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	30	64	61	8	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	29	55	52	15	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	23	63	60	12	11	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	30	55	52	11	10	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	31	62	59	8	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	30	58	55	9	9	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	28	64	61	7	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	40	53	50	5	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	45	47	45	10	10	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Corby Business Academy, Corby, NN17 5PH

Thank you for your help when we inspected your academy. We spoke to a good number of you, and read all the questionnaires you submitted.

We found that the academy has many strengths. The quality of teaching you receive is good, your behaviour is good and has improved well, your attendance is satisfactory, but improving rapidly. We also found that the curriculum is good. We were pleased to see that, in the questionnaires, a very large majority of you say that you learn a lot in lessons. The special provision that the academy has for some of you provides well for your needs and it is helping you to make good progress. The progress made by all groups of students is good. However, outcomes are still low by the end of Key Stage 4 and, for this reason, we judge that the academy is satisfactory.

One of the reasons that the academy has such strengths is that it is very well led. The Principal and the other leaders have a great determination that the academy should offer you the best and, in the short time it has been open, it has made great strides towards doing that.

We have suggested some improvements. These are to do with raising achievement in Key Stage 4. To do this we have suggested that the academy ensures that all teaching is at least good; you are given advice more consistently on how to improve your work; and your attendance should be further improved. We have also said that the sixth form curriculum should become more broad.

You can help by making sure that your attendance is as good as it can possibly be.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector

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