

Corby Technical School

Cottingham Road, Corby, NN17 1TD

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Students make outstanding progress from their different starting points in English and mathematics and make good or better progress across a range of other subjects.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make better progress than other students in English and the gap between them and other students is closing rapidly in mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently outstanding in English and mathematics and mostly good across a range of subjects. Teachers plan their lessons meticulously and have high expectations of their students at all times.
- School leaders have implemented a highly effective literacy strategy. Students demonstrate well-developed skills in writing, communication and reading. Students, especially boys, read widely and often.
- The support provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs or English as an additional language is comprehensive and strong.
- Students' conduct in lessons and around the school is impeccable. They feel safe, are highly positive about their school and are polite and respectful towards adults and each other.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored rigorously and is developed very effectively by school leaders.
- Students experiencing difficulties and at risk of falling behind are identified early because leaders have developed effective systems to capture reliable information about their progress and underachievement.
- The Principal has led the school with great diligence and determination; her vision for the school is consistently implemented by all staff.
- Governors and sponsors pursue their aim of achieving an outstanding standard of education at the school relentlessly. Their experience, knowledge and connections have provided the school with access to expert support and training opportunities that are directly relevant to the school's needs.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine parts of lessons taught by all members of the teaching staff; three of these were jointly observed with the Principal and another senior leader.
- The inspector also visited tutor periods, an intervention session and one assembly. Students' conduct was observed during break, lunch times and between lessons.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: safeguarding records, achievement data, the school's self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour logs, curriculum plans and governing body minutes. The lead inspector also examined external quality assurance reports, monitoring information about the quality of teaching, student intervention case studies, and staff pay-progression information.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, the business manager, other senior leaders in charge of teaching, behaviour and special educational needs, subject leaders, students, and members of the local governing body including the Chief Executive Officer of the Brooke Weston Trust.
- 22 responses from Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents and carers and 14 completed staff questionnaires were considered. The inspector also took account of the school's own student survey.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Corby Technical School currently only has students in Years 7 and 8 so is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The school opened in September 2012, as the first free school in Northamptonshire. It is part of the Brooke Weston Trust. The school occupies a new building which was opened in January 2014.
- The school currently operates a five term year, comprising of eight weeks per term, in line with the other schools within the Brooke Weston Trust.
- The majority of students are from White British heritage and a small minority are from other ethnic backgrounds. There are a small number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is broadly average compared to other schools. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average, whilst none are supported through school action plus.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently matches the best in the school, as exemplified in English and mathematics
- Increase opportunities for students to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures that make up modern British society.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students make rapid and sustained progress across the school. A high proportion of students meets and exceeds national expectations from their different starting points in both English and mathematics. In the current Year 8, for example, over 97% of students are on track to make nationally expected levels of progress in English and 94% in mathematics.
- The progress students make in most other subjects areas is generally good or better because of the school's strong assessment strategies and often excellent teaching.
- The most-able students make consistently good or better progress across a range of subjects because they are challenged appropriately in all lessons.
- Students' targets are aspirational; they all know and understand them and work hard to meet them.
- Students eligible for pupil premium funding make exceptional progress in English and their progress in mathematics compares favourably with other students. This is because the funding is used to provide effective support for those at risk of underachieving in the form of intervention sessions, after-school clubs and individual coaching.
- Students read widely and regularly; the love of reading is actively promoted by all teachers. Boys, in particular, show a genuine interest in reading for pleasure. The school's weekly book club is well-attended. Students who have received additional reading support have made rapid progress. As a result, the vast majority of students in the school are now reading at or above the standard expected for their age.
- Both boys and girls achieve equally well; this is because teachers encourage equal participation in all learning activities and everyone is challenged to achieve their potential.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress, especially in English, as do those with English as an additional language. Well-targeted extra support sessions and careful attention to students' needs have contributed to their rapid improvement.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Consistently good and frequently better teaching across most subjects has led to outstanding outcomes for most students. This is especially true in mathematics and English.
- Literacy is taught very effectively; students' reading, writing and oral communication skills are well-developed for their age and stage. In one Year 7 communication lesson, the teacher facilitated a lively and in-depth discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing techniques. Teaching was very effective because students could draw upon examples of effective writing in the wide range of texts they had previously read.
- Reading skills are taught effectively. Students read aloud, regularly and confidently, in class. The lead inspector noted that in a range of subjects, students could skim and scan pieces of text to extract important information and present their findings succinctly.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of students and this drives achievement, especially of the most-able. They plan their lessons effectively, making use of available information about

students' learning needs; this contributes to high levels of student engagement and participation. More-able students are quickly identified and consistently challenged across the school.

- Students who are at risk of underachieving, disabled students and those with special educational needs, receive tailored support both in and out of lessons. Teachers plan their learning activities to meet the needs of different ability groups and work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that targeted students make good progress. Without exception, students who spoke to the inspector, praised their teachers glowingly for the support that they provide.
- Teachers' marking and feedback of students' work are effective; the whole school marking strategy is used consistently. Students report that teachers provide them with helpful guidance so that they can improve; they value the opportunities to make corrections and improve their work.
- Where the quality of teaching is consistently outstanding, teachers' ambition for all students, especially the most-able is particularly evident. They demonstrate strong subject knowledge and are particularly skilled in adapting questions to develop learning for students of different abilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are consistently engaged in lessons and participate well in school activities both during and after school.
- Students display enormous respect for one another in lessons. This is because staff reinforce and model respectful behaviour throughout the school. Students feel safe in their learning environment and their social skills are well developed. They are able to work with each other collaboratively and give feedback to one another, when necessary, both honestly and sensitively.
- Incidents of low-level disruption in the classroom are rare. This is because teachers set high expectations for good behaviour and use praise and encouragement consistently well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students receive regular teaching about how to use the internet safely and this has been further reinforced by talks given by the community police in assemblies.
- Parents, staff and students agree that incidents of bullying are rare and are equally confident that staff deal would deal with these incidents firmly. Students are aware of different forms of bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber-bullying.
- A broad range of support is provided for students who may be experiencing difficulties; these include support from key members of staff in the school, outside agencies and local project groups. Fixed-term exclusions are well below national averages.
- Attendance figures are well above national averages. Incidents of lateness to school or lessons are rare.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal leads the school exceptionally well; she has maintained the drive and ethos of the school's mission statement, despite the upheavals of the relocation to a new building. Her small leadership team are working effectively to sustain and improve the already high standards as the school expands further.
- A key strength of the school is the comprehensive measures it has taken to ensure the reliability of students' assessment data. Regular moderation and standardisation exercises are carried out with other subject specialists within the trust. In addition to this, end-of-term tests are carried out to further evaluate students' learning; these are marked externally.
- Central to the school's success is the setting of ambitious and aspirational targets for students. Leaders have set the bar high and both staff and students strive to achieve these high expectations.
- Systems for capturing information about the quality of teaching are rigorous. They provide leaders with accurate and timely information about any possible underperformance; as a result, leaders employ successful strategies to support teachers to improve their practice.
- Staff, at all levels, undertake weekly professional development activities. All senior staff and middle leaders have been trained externally to observe lessons and give feedback. Subject leaders carry out their monitoring role effectively. Teachers benefit from learning from best practice from within the trust.
- The leadership of the systems for supporting disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those for whom English is an additional language, is strong. As a result of effective training to meet specific needs, teachers plan their learning appropriately, and these students make good progress.
- The school uses pupil premium and catch-up government funding effectively. As a result of a range of additional support opportunities and the employment of key staff, targeted students achieve very well.
- The school manages the performance of teachers very well; the Principal is strict about the criteria for pay progression. The targets set for teachers are closely related to the school's development priorities and the outcomes from the systems used to monitor teaching and achievement.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. External reports, including from the Department for Education, confirm school leaders' view of their own performance. Both staff and parents strongly support the leadership of the school.
- The curriculum provision for students is developing year-on-year as the school grows. Citizenship, the Beliefs, Philosophy and Ethics programme, tutor time and assemblies are used to promote students' understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of their education. However, students do not have a wide exposure to the cultures of other communities within Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meets statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The Brooke Weston Trust Board comprises experienced professionals from industry and education; between them they have a strong set of knowledge and skills which have helped to drive up standards and improve accountability.
- The Principal's performance is managed effectively and ambitious targets are set annually; she is held rigorously to account for the school's work through robust performance meetings with trust board members. She is supported by a fellow Principal of one of the secondary schools within the trust, who is acting as her mentor.
- Local governors have undertaken relevant training and visit the school regularly.
- Governors keep sound financial oversight of the schools' budget. They are kept informed of how pupil premium and catch-up government funding is spent and they have a good understanding of the impact of this spending.
- Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school and have recently helped to develop the school's performance management of teachers protocol, which closely aligns pay progression to the Teacher Standards.
- Governors ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding students, are met.
- Governors and the trust have been crucial in the school's success in achieving outstanding outcomes for its students; they are able to draw upon a wealth of expertise from within the trust to provide bespoke support for the school and ensure its future success.

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	138254
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	424945

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Campbell
Principal	Angela Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	01536 213100
Email address	enquiries@corbytechnicalschool.org

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