

# Corby Business Academy

Academy Way, Gretton Road, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 5EB

## Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2018, the progress made by pupils across a range of subjects by the end of key stage 4 was below average, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- Some tutor time is used neither efficiently or effectively to deliver the school's curriculum for personal development. This contributes to some pupils not valuing or benefiting greatly from this aspect of their education.
- Students in the sixth form do not make the progress of which they are capable. Progress was below the national average in 2018.
- The range of non-qualification activity in the sixth form is narrow. Not all students benefit from participation in work experience.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Some teaching does not sufficiently enthuse or inspire pupils about their learning.
- Teachers do not all have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils lack confidence in their ability to use subject-specific vocabulary.
- Sometimes, teachers move learning on too quickly before ensuring that pupils' understanding is secure.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who are regularly absent from school, while improving, remain too high.

### The school has the following strengths

- The work of the heads of school and executive principal is respected and valued. Since taking up their posts in September 2018, their determination has brought rapid improvements to morale and to the culture of the school.
- The resource base for pupils with profound and complex learning needs is highly effective in supporting the learning of those who attend. They are making good progress.
- Leaders have achieved marked improvements in behaviour and attendance this year. Behaviour is now good and attendance above average. Pupils are well mannered and helpful.
- The governance of the school is increasingly strong. Members of the local governing body are ambitious for the school and have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and the priorities for further improvement.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that the expertise of subject leaders is developed so that all are fully effective in leading and sustaining improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and in eliminating weaker practice, particularly in science.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by ensuring that:
  - learning consistently enthuses and inspires pupils so that they want to find out more
  - expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high, particularly in supporting the development of their written work and use of specific-subject vocabulary
  - learning meets the needs of different groups of pupils so that they make stronger progress, particularly boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able
  - pupils' understanding is secure before moving on to new learning activities.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - ensuring that tutor time is used effectively to promote pupils' learning and well-being
  - further reducing the proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are regularly absent from school.
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by:
  - ensuring that all teachers plan engaging learning which enables students to apply their knowledge and understanding so that they make at least good progress
  - developing the range of non-qualification activity, including work experience for all students, so that students are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The recently appointed heads of school, with the strong support of the executive principal, lead with determination. Their ambition for rapid school improvement is having a positive impact on standards and this is improving pupils', parents' and carers' confidence. As one parent put it, 'The new leadership at the school is a positive direction and the school is on the up.'
- Leaders have a sharp and incisive understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of rapid improvement. Their accurate self-evaluation was used to construct a comprehensive school improvement plan which communicates a strong vision for the future direction and success of the school. This vision is understood by staff, and morale is high.
- The academy trust has made available the resources necessary for rapid school improvement. Trustees acknowledge that support was initially slow. However, in the current school year, they have arranged training for leaders and experienced members of staff and strengthened subject leadership. Trustees are now monitoring progress closely.
- The leadership of the curriculum is effective. Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have taken decisive action to restructure the school's curriculum, particularly at key stage 3. The length of lessons has also been reviewed, along with the school day, to help improve pupils' engagement in learning. Leaders have plans in place to bring further improvements.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's systems for setting targets for pupils' achievement and the processes for monitoring their progress. The progress of current pupils is showing signs of improvement across most subjects, although there are concerns about how effectively pupils are supported in science.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is strong, particularly in the specialist resource unit. Here, pupils with profound and complex learning needs receive highly tailored teaching and support. Pupils attending the unit are making good progress and are cared for exceptionally well. Parents describe the unit as a 'distinctive asset' to the school and are highly positive about the work of the adults. Parents are involved and kept well informed through the school's SEND enterprise initiative. The progress of pupils with SEND across the main school is beginning to improve because of the teaching and support these pupils are now receiving.
- Subject leaders now know what leaders expect. They say that they are well supported and that the processes to hold them to account for the impact of their work have become more rigorous. Inspectors' scrutiny of leaders' records of the quality of teaching and learning confirms their view. Subject leaders are working to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, although they recognise that there is more to be done. They are benefiting from wider subject support provided by the trust.
- A well-planned programme of professional development is now in place. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on the

accuracy of assessment. Teachers say they value these opportunities. However, it is too soon to see the impact of recent initiatives to secure consistently good progress for all pupils across all subjects, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able. Newly qualified teachers are very positive about the support they are receiving, particularly the access to professional learning and mentoring support.

- The leadership of safeguarding has improved rapidly. The processes now in place ensure that appropriate actions are taken to keep pupils safe from harm. The school embraces an inclusive culture. This is illustrated by the school's distinctive provision for pupils with complex learning needs and the support provided for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils, for example. Displays around the school site are well maintained and promote themes such as bullying and Black history. Collectively, these examples support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The implementation of new approaches to managing behaviour has had a positive impact. Pupils, staff and parents report that behaviour has improved compared to the previous year because the new systems are more consistently applied. However, leaders have yet to ensure that tutor time is used effectively to deliver the planned personal development curriculum.
- Leaders' actions are beginning to ensure that the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is having the desired impact on pupils' outcomes. These pupils, while showing signs of improvement, have underachieved for too long. Leaders have also reviewed the spending of the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy, and this is beginning to have a positive impact.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governance of the school is increasingly effective. The local governing body has recently been strengthened and governors are skilled and knowledgeable. Recently, governors have been provided with very high-quality and accurate information by school leaders. Together with regular visits to the school, governors hold senior leaders stringently to account. The records of their meetings reflect the higher level of challenge which is now in place.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They care deeply for the school and are ambitious for rapid school improvement. They use their expertise to check that the school's development priorities are appropriate and are being delivered, within a culture of high support.
- Members of the local governing body point to improvements in safeguarding practices, improvements in pupils' behaviour and the targeting of the pupil premium as a measure of their success this school year.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders are rapidly establishing a culture of vigilance at the school. Pupils report that they feel safe in school.
- Since September 2018, leaders have worked with determination to strengthen the quality of record-keeping, ensuring that the needs of vulnerable pupils at risk of harm

are met and that they are well cared for and supported. These records demonstrate that prompt action is taken when necessary to keep pupils safe.

- The designated safeguarding lead is very well supported by a team of well-trained staff, including a governor who retains oversight of this aspect of the school's work. Leaders keep parents fully informed about safeguarding arrangements. Parents have access to online toolkits to support pupils at home with concerns regarding self-harm and anxiety, for example.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which enable pupils to extend their learning in different ways. Pupils and parents say that these opportunities are valued and appreciated. Examples include a variety of sporting and music groups, a book club, a film club, cookery, robotics, computer coding and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- The school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and provides clear protocols of how staff should respond to safeguarding concerns. Together with enhanced safeguarding training, all staff understand what to do should they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. Leaders have ensured that all staff have been trained about local safeguarding issues, including radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders and governors ensure that all required checks are made when recruiting staff and vetting the suitability of visitors to the school. This includes the suitability of temporary staff to work with pupils.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent within and between subjects. Pupils across all key stages say that their enjoyment of learning is variable depending upon which teacher they have, particularly when teaching is provided by temporary staff. In the current school year, leaders have taken successful action to improve the quality of teaching.
- Some teachers do not make full use of their subject knowledge to stimulate pupils' interests. Consequently, pupils are not as enthusiastic in some subjects as they are in others.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do are not consistently high enough, particularly for boys and the most able pupils. Many pupils complete the same type of activities and teachers do not routinely plan learning based on pupils' prior attainment to ensure that they are effectively challenged.
- Sometimes, teachers move the learning on too quickly before ensuring that all pupils have a clear understanding of what has been taught. In the most effective examples of learning, teaching successfully challenges their thinking. Questioning is used well to check the understanding of all pupils. This was observed in mathematics and English literature, for example. This is not always the case, however. Where learning is less effective, for example in science, pupils' attention and enthusiasm wane, resulting in a loss of concentration and some low-level disruption to learning.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils respond to, or learn from, feedback, in line with the school's policy.

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their understanding in extended pieces of written work. Pupils' confidence in their ability to apply key subject vocabulary in written work is highly variable, particularly for boys. The quality of the presentation of pupils' work is also variable.
- The setting of homework tasks is inconsistent. The broad range of teachers' expectations for the setting of homework is a source of frustration for parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey.
- Reading is well promoted in school, particularly in the school's library. A number of strategies have been introduced to stimulate pupils' interest in reading, including weekly 'drop everything and read' sessions, World Book Day and the book addicts' club.
- Subject leaders, many having been recently appointed, are improving the quality of curriculum planning. Significant support has been provided by the trust to further this work and provide teachers with greater direction. As a consequence, the quality of teaching is improving, although it is too soon to see the impact of this work on standards by the end of key stages 4 and 5.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Although leaders have a clear tutor programme for pupils' personal development, it is inconsistently delivered by teachers. While some tutors use this time well to further pupils' personal development and build relationships, inspectors found that, in many sessions, tutor time is not well used. For many pupils, tutor time is wasted time and this contributes to pupils not being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have implemented a well-resourced programme to enhance pupils' understanding of how they can keep themselves safe from harm. This includes the use of assembly time and visits from external speakers such as the local police. Issues covered include gang culture, knife crime and online safety. Pupils have also explored how to keep themselves safe from child sexual exploitation. Teachers give pupils increased opportunities to lead presentations about key safety messages, such as the safe use of social media.
- The implementation of the school's 'well-being centre' to support pupils with any worries or concerns they have is beginning to have a more positive impact on pupils' emotional and mental well-being.
- Although the incidence of bullying has been high in the past, school records show that the number of reported occurrences is currently low and has reduced considerably since the previous year. Pupils confirm that incidents of bullying are low and that they are confident any issues would be swiftly dealt with by teachers. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agree.
- A small number of pupils have taken the lead in promoting the importance of respect,

tolerance and diversity through the school's LGBT+ group. The maturity and commitment of this group are a credit to the school and it is a positive model of inclusion for all members of the school's community.

- Leaders have implemented a planned programme of careers education and guidance across key stages 3 and 4, which ensures that pupils have access to impartial advice and guidance throughout their time at school. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who move on to the next stage in education or training is above the national average. Leaders have comprehensive plans which illustrate how this aspect of personal development will be further strengthened, particularly at key stage 3.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have responded very positively to the school's higher expectations of behaviour and conduct. Pupils and teachers report that behaviour has improved rapidly compared with the previous school year. Pupils wear their uniform smartly, which reflects their improved attitudes.
- The vast majority of pupils are helpful and well mannered, showing respect for their peers, their teachers and the school. They demonstrate good conduct in the dining area, corridors and outdoor spaces at break and lunchtime. Most teachers apply the school's new behaviour policy consistently and, as a consequence, the school is a calm and orderly environment.
- The proportion of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions has been high in the past but this has reduced significantly in the current school year. The proportion of pupils receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion has also reduced considerably. Rates of exclusion are now below the national average. Similarly, leaders' use of the school's internal isolation facility has also reduced significantly.
- Leaders' determined action has led to rapid improvements in pupils' attendance. Overall absence has been high in the past but is now below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils regularly absent from school has also reduced rapidly and is below the national average. However, the proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND regularly absent from school, while improving, remain too high.
- The small number of pupils who follow an alternative curriculum away from the main school site receive good care and support. Leaders ensure that these pupils follow appropriate courses and make regular checks on their well-being. These pupils are attending and behaving well.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2017 and 2018, the attainment of pupils by the end of key stage 4 was below average across a range of subjects compared with pupils nationally. In 2018, there was a marked decrease in attainment compared to the previous year.
- In 2018, the progress made by pupils across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, was below average. Pupils made weak progress in subjects which form

the English Baccalaureate, in science and humanities in particular. Progress in mathematics was relatively stronger, although below average.

- The progress made by boys and disadvantaged pupils was well below that made by other pupils nationally in 2018. The progress made by the most able pupils was also below that of which these pupils are capable.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning indicate some improvements in the progress pupils are making. However, progress is not yet strong enough for pupils to reach the standards they should by the end of Year 11. This is consistent with the analysis of the information collected by leaders.
- Pupils with SEND are beginning to make better progress than in previous years in key stages 3 and 4. Pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans attending the school's special resource base make good progress because of the strong teaching and tailored support they receive.
- The progress made by pupils whose first language is not English was very strong in 2018 across all areas of the curriculum. This continues to be the case for current pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the support provided for pupils who have fallen behind in their development of literacy and numeracy skills by Year 7. A new package of support has been established and, while in its infancy, targeted pupils in Year 7 are beginning to catch up with their peers more quickly.
- The proportion of pupils securing placements that meet their needs for the next stage in education or training is above the national average. This has been the case for at least the last two years.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form requires improvement because it is inconsistent. Students report that their enjoyment of learning varies widely because of this inconsistency. They say that learning in subjects such as mathematics and history is stronger compared to learning in science subjects, for example. Inspectors' observations of learning found that, while the subject knowledge of teachers is generally secure, the extent to which students' knowledge and understanding are deepened varies too widely within and between different subject areas.
- The progress that students make on A-level courses was below average in 2018. Students made weaker progress in vocational courses and this has been the case for the past three years. Leaders cautiously expect some improvement for current students, although progress remains below average overall.
- Most students who had not secured a grade 4 or better in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 4 are successful in doing so during their time in the sixth form.
- The range of non-qualification activities which students can participate in is narrow. Leaders have not ensured that all students participate in meaningful work experience, for example. Consequently, some aspects of the 16 to 18 programme of study are only partially met. However, a small group of students have enjoyed their participation in

the Young Enterprise programme.

- The school's programme for personal development in the sixth form is underdeveloped. There are too few opportunities for students to engage in activities to prepare them for life beyond their sixth-form studies.
- Leaders are developing a coherent programme for careers education, advice and guidance. Students are especially positive about the help and advice they receive for applications into higher education. However, the information available about the range of options open to them, including apprenticeships, is rather narrow.
- The leadership of the sixth form is strengthening. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of sixth-form provision. Their planning illustrates a determination to rapidly secure the improvements required.
- The proportion of students completing their courses is good and above the national average.
- Students' conduct and behaviour are good. They are polite and helpful and have a strong desire to see the sixth form develop. Relationships are positive and they are appreciative of the individual support received from the head of sixth form and tutors.

## School details

Unique reference number	135306
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10087371

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,091
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Richard Morrison
Heads of school	Simon Underwood and Nicola Treacy
Telephone number	01536 303 120
Website	<a href="http://www.corbybusinessacademy.org">www.corbybusinessacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:sunderwood@corbybusinessacademy.org">sunderwood@corbybusinessacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

## Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the Brooke Weston Multi-Academy Trust, which opened the school in 2008. The senior leadership of the school was restructured for the beginning of September 2018, comprising two heads of school supported by an executive principal.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an EHC plan is well above average. The school includes a unit offering specialist resource-based provision for 71 pupils with SEND.

The unit caters for pupils with complex, moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND in the main school is slightly below average when compared to national figures.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the Complementary Education Academy based in Corby.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 parts of lessons across key stages 3 to 5 and in a wide range of subjects. Many of these visits were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also visited a number of tutor-time sessions and two assemblies.
- Inspectors spoke with six groups of pupils across most year groups, including the sixth form, and members of the school’s pupil-led LGBT+ support group. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed them at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a large sample of pupils’ work across a wide range of curriculum subjects.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school improvement plans, pupils’ performance information, behaviour records, a range of policies and the minutes of meetings of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the executive principal and heads of school. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and four members of the local governing body. Discussions were held with leaders responsible for the curriculum, teaching and learning, behaviour and personal development. Inspectors spoke with the coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND and the leaders of the school’s special resource-based provision. Discussions were also held with leaders who have oversight for the spending of pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding, and with leaders for pastoral care. A discussion was also held with the school’s designated leaders for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector evaluated the 94 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, and the 87 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey. There were no submissions to Ofsted’s pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Kate Beale	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Shepherd	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Howes	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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