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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Simon Underwood
Principal
Corby Business Academy
Academy Way
Gretton Road
Corby
Northamptonshire
NN17 5EB

Dear Mr Underwood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Corby Business Academy

Following my visit to your school on 9 February 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

Context

Trustees appointed you as one of two joint heads of school shortly before the previous inspection. You were supported by an executive principal. In 2020, you became the school's principal. There have been several changes in the senior leadership team. You

have appointed new leaders and have restructured their responsibilities to focus on the school's improvement priorities. There have been some changes in subject leadership.

You have not allowed the pandemic to hinder the school's improvement over the last two years. It has, however, delayed some of your long-term plans for improvement. You have not been able to make as much progress in improving the quality of education in all subjects as planned. For example, design and technology teachers have not been able to implement their revised curriculum fully because of COVID-19 restrictions. You have successfully delivered your 'review and continue' curriculum this academic year.

You have adjusted your improvement plans to address areas that have emerged because of the pandemic. You are developing support for increased numbers of pupils who have fallen behind in reading. Overall absence is higher this year than it was before the pandemic. However, overall attendance is above the national average. You have employed additional staff to support pupils' well-being, welfare and safety. Leaders believe that the pandemic has strengthened the school's relationship with parents and carers and the local community.

Main findings

You lead with a strong moral purpose. Senior leaders work with a clear sense of direction to improve the school's provision. There is a strong sense of common purpose founded on the school's core values of 'commit, believe and achieve'. Improvement plans have appropriate actions to reach ambitious milestones. Leaders and staff understand the key priorities and they know the part they play in improving the school. Trust officers check to make sure that leaders embed improvements and are on track to improve further.

Senior leaders have improved the school's quality of education. The curriculum is broader in its scope than was the case when the previous inspection took place. Senior leaders have prioritised the development of subject curriculum planning. Leaders have brought about greater consistency in the quality of education. Leaders are prioritising the development of reading, particularly for pupils in key stage 3. They have plans to develop reading skills across all subjects, but the pandemic has delayed this development.

Subject leaders have been supported with professional development to improve their leadership skills. They understand the roles they play in improving the quality of education. They have developed ambitious and well-sequenced curriculums in most subjects. The revised science curriculum is planned to be challenging and reflects the ambition of the national curriculum. Learning is appropriately sequenced. Pupils regularly revisit and build on their previous learning. As a result, pupils know more and remember more over time.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the specialist unit continues to be a strength. The unit is an integral part of the school. Provision for pupils with SEND in the main school is improving. Staff recognise and identify pupils' needs well. There are clear expectations in place for teachers to make sure

that pupils receive the correct support that they need in lessons. These expectations are currently being embedded.

Leaders have reviewed and developed the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum for pupils in all years. This includes a well-structured careers, information and guidance programme that enables pupils to explore a range of opportunities available to them at the end of Year 11. Leaders adapt this curriculum to address local issues as they arise. Tutors are supported with training to teach sensitive issues such as relationships and sex education.

Leaders have improved the sixth-form provision. They have strengthened the range and quality of subject curriculums. They have improved the experiences and opportunities for students' personal development. Teachers have high expectations of students. Sixth-form students speak very positively about the way the school is improving. They recognise that the quality of education has improved in many subjects. They appreciate the remote learning that the school has provided.

Leaders have maintained a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities. Safeguarding leaders take decisive steps to support pupils when needed. They work well with external agencies and are prepared to challenge professionals when additional help is needed. Leaders complete the necessary pre-employment checks before adults start working with pupils. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They are mindful of the well-being of leaders and staff. They appropriately support and challenge leaders. They check on the school's work and do not rely solely on what leaders tell them. They work well with trust officers and support the strategic leadership of trustees.

Additional support

The school receives support from the Brooke Weston Trust. The trust has strengthened leadership across the school. Officers and subject leaders work closely with the school and provide effective support. They have supported the appointment and development of senior and subject leaders. Trust subject specialists have helped several subject leaders to develop their curriculums and teaching. Staff gain from training provided by the trust's teaching school hub. Leaders and staff value the trust's support.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer, other trust officers, the chair of the governing body and other governors to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection.

I met with the subject leader for science, safeguarding leads, the special educational needs coordinator, leaders of the SEND unit, leaders for PSHE education, the literacy

coordinator, attendance officers, sixth-form leaders, the careers leader and groups of pupils.

I visited lessons and looked at some workbooks. I evaluated the school's development plan and self-evaluation form. I reviewed a range of policies, curriculum plans and safeguarding records.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Brooke Weston multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies
Her Majesty's Inspector