



Brooke Weston City Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 122153
 Local Authority Northamptonshire
 Inspection number 292326
 Inspection dates 16 November 2006
 Reporting inspector Joan Greenfield

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

Type of school	City Technology College	School address	Coomb Road
School category	Independent		Great Oakley
Age range of pupils	11-18		Corby
			Northamptonshire
			NN18 8LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01536 396366
Number on roll (school)	1156	Fax number	01536 396867
Number on roll (6th form)	257		
Appropriate authority	Corby City Technology College Trust	Chair of governors	Mr P Hedges
		Principal	Mr P A Simpson OBE
Date of previous school inspection	12-16 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
11-18	16 November 2006	292326

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brooke Weston CTC is larger than the average secondary school. It is a popular and oversubscribed school. Most students are of White British heritage. Attainment on entry is well above average and the college selects students for entry according to Department for Education and Skills (DfES) requirements for City Technology Colleges to ensure a balanced intake. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and disabilities or eligible for free school meals are much lower than average. The college's specialist areas are science and technology, with the recent addition of vocational education. The college has a much longer school day than most other schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Brooke Weston is an outstandingly successful college that seeks excellence in all that it does. The close attention paid to students' individual needs and the college's very high expectations help to promote excellent achievement in their academic and personal development. Standards are exceptionally high in Years 7 to 11 and are well above average in the sixth form. These high standards have been sustained over several years in Years 7 to 11, but more recently in the sixth form, and are still improving. Students make excellent progress in all years because of the consistently high quality of the teaching. Students are rightly very proud of the college and what it does for them.

There are numerous reasons for the college's success. One of the most important factors is the outstanding leadership of the principal, supported by a very effective senior leadership team. Together they provide the vision, drive and energy to ensure consistency of approach across the college, especially in maintaining the college's distinctive ethos. This ethos, enacted in its daily life, pervades the whole college and can be summed up as a 'can do' attitude. A key strength of the college is its teamwork and the commitment of its staff.

One of the distinctive and defining aspects of the college, recognised by students, staff and the governors, is the outstanding quality of the relationships between students themselves and with staff. Students are unstinting in their praise of the high quality of the care, guidance and support they receive. 'We are all considered equal in this school' was a view shared by many students and several gave examples of how individual teachers had helped them personally and academically. Staff see themselves and students as 'a group of learners moving forward together', a view that is reinforced by the daily use of shared working spaces and eating areas which are very well cared for.

The extended college day, which embraces the outstanding curriculum, provides many opportunities for students to enhance their experiences and personal development. Tailoring the curriculum to meet individual needs, the strong commitment to enterprise, the frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT), and developing their independent learning skills prepare students very effectively for the future. The college's specialist areas are reinforced well in all areas of its work. Although currently under review, the arrangements for the curriculum do not ensure that all students in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form study religious education.

The college's outstanding provision and ethos ensure that students' personal development and well-being are excellent. Confident, lively and enthusiastic, students clearly enjoy being in the college and their behaviour is exemplary. Attendance rates are very high, including in the sixth form. Students have an excellent understanding of how to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. They make a strong contribution to the school, where their views are listened to and acted

upon, and to the wider community, although their understanding of the issues relating to life in multicultural Britain are relatively weaker than other aspects of their excellent cultural development.

Senior staff and the governors have an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and future priorities through its rigorous evaluation systems. A commitment to improvement, innovation and sharing successful practice is reflected in all of its work. As a result, the college's contribution to working with others to improve the quality of education is extensive. The college's outstanding leadership and management and its tireless pursuit of excellence give it outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form Grade: 1

Students receive an outstanding quality of education in the sixth form. The college operates a policy of open access to the sixth form. This means that students' attainment on entry to some courses is wider than the college's GCSE results would indicate. Students make first-rate progress in Years 12 and 13 and their achievement is outstanding. Retention rates are particularly high. Standards are well above average, and in some subjects they are very high. All students gained at least one pass grade in the A-level examinations in 2006 and almost a half attained the highest grades of A or B, an improvement on the previous year. The A-level results are slightly stronger than the vocational results, but the college is tackling this discrepancy robustly and successfully as well as the variations in subject performance at the highest grades. Students do so well because of the high quality of the teaching, the careful tracking of their progress and the high levels of care, support and guidance they receive. The quality of this support is exceptional, going well beyond the taught curriculum and the college day. Students make a strong contribution to the college community and set an excellent example to others.

What the school should do to improve further

- As part of their cultural development, prepare students more effectively for life in multicultural Britain.
- Ensure that all students in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form study religious education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students' outstanding achievement reflects the college's high expectations of and aspirations for them. Standards are exceptionally high and have been consistently so for several years, especially in the Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE examinations. Standards in the sixth form, which are rising, are well

above average. The national tests and examination results have improved steadily since the last inspection.

Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well above average. Students make excellent progress between Year 7 and Year 11 and often exceed the ambitious targets they are set. For the past two years, students have taken the national tests at the end of Year 8, a year earlier than in most schools. This change has not affected students' performance and the college's results have been maintained at the very high level of previous years. By Year 11, standards are exceptionally high. Of particular significance is the proportion of students gaining five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics. At 89% in 2006, this figure is well above the national figure and demonstrates the college's commitment to ensuring that its students leave the school well prepared for their future careers. All groups of students do well, with the lower attaining students and the small number with learning difficulties and disabilities doing particularly well. The college is working diligently and successfully to increase the proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades of A* and A in a few subjects to bring them up to the level of the best.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 1

Students thrive in the positive atmosphere engendered within the college, with the result that their personal development is of a consistently high order. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their moral and social awareness is particularly strong, an outcome of the college's high expectations and encouraging ethos. Their spiritual and cultural awareness are also highly developed, although their understanding of cultural issues relating to life in multicultural Britain is less assured.

Students thoroughly enjoy being in college, participating in all that it offers with enthusiasm and a real sense of purpose and commitment. Students are extremely well prepared to meet the challenges that they will encounter as they grow older, especially in the development of their enterprise skills. Through their exemplary behaviour, the quality of relationships and the college's supportive ethos, students display an outstanding regard for their own and others' safety. They feel very secure in the college, and have great confidence that staff will respond quickly if a need arises. They act responsibly, eat healthily and make a considerable contribution to the college and wider community. They have a strong voice in the college's development. Students speak enthusiastically about the range of opportunities available to them beyond the formal curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Central to the impressive progress made by students throughout the college is the high quality teaching and guidance they receive from staff. The unstinting support given beyond the college day and the outstanding teaching in lessons reflect the college's commitment to ensuring that all students do as well as they possibly can. Staff at all levels work incredibly hard to help their students, a factor recognised by many students. 'Teachers help you get motivated' said one student who feels he has benefited considerably from a teacher's sustained support at a time of great personal difficulty. Others, who identified themselves as 'really bad students in the past', acknowledged that they would not now be where they currently are, for example taking a large number of GCSE courses, without the teachers' continued concern for their well-being and progress.

Common features to the teaching include the teachers' strong subject knowledge and the quality of their planning, which enable them to make the work interesting and demanding for students and ensure that it meets their differing needs. In addition, teachers assess students' work and their progress regularly and thoroughly against their ambitious targets, so that students know where they are at and what they need to do to improve. The strong bond that exists between students and their teachers throughout the school is an outcome of the mutual respect they have for one another and the warm relationships they enjoy. The result is that students soak up the opportunities and challenges they are given, becoming confident, independent and highly motivated learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The college's curriculum meets the needs of its students extremely well and is innovative in its approach. The taking of the Year 9 national tests early at the end of Year 8, which has been a successful strategy, is providing scope for the introduction of a broader range of opportunities in Years 9 to 11. The college is currently considering in a measured way how this additional time can be used to best effect to enhance students' academic and personal development. The college has gone further than most schools to tailor the curriculum to individual students and to broaden the opportunities available to them. For example, some students in the sixth form are following Open University degree short courses or taking an undergraduate course in enterprise in collaboration with a local university. Enterprise skills form a strong element throughout the curriculum and almost all students follow a vocational course. The use of ICT to support the curriculum and students' learning is particularly strong, reflecting the college's specialist areas. The extended college day includes a much longer

taught day than usually found as well as a very wide range of additional opportunities, which extends students' interests and personal development extremely well, and, together with the flexibility of a five-term year, is a key factor in the college's success. The revised 'Period 1' programme, covering personal, social and health education and citizenship, is very well structured and planned, and has a considerable impact on students' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students are valued highly as individuals and their excellent academic and personal standards reflect the exceptional support and guidance they receive. In discussions, students were very keen to emphasise the strong bond they have with their tutors, commenting that they have every confidence in asking for and receiving help from them. The support given to those needing additional assistance for personal or academic reasons is outstanding, particularly by those staff referred to as 'special friends'. Procedures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students are robust and the child protection arrangements are secure. Students receive excellent information and guidance to help them in planning their next stage of education. Very effective systems exist for tracking students' progress and identifying those who might benefit from additional support. The ambitious targets set for students and their success in reaching them are a clear testament to the high quality of the academic and pastoral guidance they receive from their teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Dynamic leadership and management are major factors in the college's undoubted success. The leadership of the principal, with the support of a very able senior team, provides clear educational direction and inspiration to the work of the college, with a strong focus on continual improvement, innovation and extending its involvement in the wider community. The college's priorities are clearly articulated in its development plan.

Governors make a very strong contribution to setting the college's strategic direction and in holding it to account. They have not, however, ensured that statutory requirements are fully in place for the provision of religious education in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form. Staff have great respect for the governors. Middle leaders recognise the enormous faith senior staff have in their abilities and undertake their responsibilities with determination and drive. Communication systems within the college are tight and lines of accountability are short. A 'see it, sort it' mentality pervades the school, so any emerging issues are tackled swiftly.

Staff share a common purpose and understanding of what the college is about, helping to make it into a vibrant learning community. The effective induction of new staff ensures that they settle in quickly to the college's distinctive ethos and working patterns. Systems for checking teaching and reviewing elements of the college's work are robust and systematic. This evidence enables the college to modify or change practice to ensure continued success, especially its academic performance and the students' personal development.

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Inspection Judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</i>	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

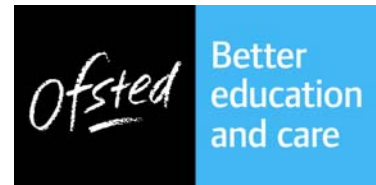
¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

17 November 2006



Dear Students

Brooke Weston CTC, Coomb Road, Great Oakley, Corby, Northamptonshire. NN18 8LA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited Brooke Weston recently. We enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work and the way in which the college helps you to do so well. We valued your openness and appreciated your views and opinions. This letter is to tell you what we found.

- You go to an outstanding college that helps you to achieve extremely well and reach exceptionally high standards.
- You work hard and make excellent progress in your learning because of the challenging teaching you receive.
- Your attitudes are extremely positive, shown particularly in your willingness to take on board the challenges and responsibilities of being key members of the college community.
- You are friendly and polite, showing high levels of concern for others, both in the college and in the wider community, and your behaviour is exemplary.
- The college gives you an outstanding range of opportunities to help you develop as mature young people and prepares you well for your future lives.
- The staff give you high levels of support and guidance to ensure that you get the most out of being in the college.
- The college is outstandingly well led by the principal, senior staff and the governors, who are committed to ensuring that the college continues to improve what it does and provide you with the best possible opportunities to be successful.

The college has many strengths and relatively few areas for improvement. We have asked the college to do two things to improve the curriculum:

- enhance your cultural development by extending your understanding of some of the issues relating to life in multicultural Britain
- provide a programme of religious education for all students in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form.

We hope that you will continue to do your very best to help the college improve even further and wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Joan Greenfield
Lead inspector