

The Boston Grammar School

South End, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6JY

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school is improving, but the full impact of the changes made by the headteacher is yet to be seen on the quality of teaching or the outcomes for pupils. The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school, he has the full support of the school community and staff morale is high.
- Teachers do not set work for pupils that is consistently well matched to their needs and abilities. It often lacks sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Although now improving, previously pupils have not achieved well enough in examinations. In 2017, the progress of pupils between key stages 2 and 4 was below average, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teaching, learning and assessment policies are not applied consistently. As a result, the quality of teaching varies between subjects.
- Teachers' questioning does not develop pupils' understanding as well as it should. It is variable in terms of quality.
- Absence and persistent absence remain high for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body took decisive action in September 2016 to ensure rapid improvements, including appointing a new deputy headteacher. The school is now well placed to improve further in the future.
- Behaviour is good. Leaders have established high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils work hard in lessons, are keen to do well and are polite and respectful.
- Students in the sixth form are now making good progress.
- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They are confident that any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The personal development of pupils is good. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects that are tailored to match the needs of pupils of different abilities and interests.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good in all subject areas, thus ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress, by:
 - ensuring consistent application of school policies in relation to teaching, learning and assessment
 - pitching work at a more demanding level and then, through careful planning, clearly demonstrating how to make strong progress, particularly for the most able
 - helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up with their peers by giving them additional support and resources that match their needs
 - eliminating variability between subjects so that current improvements in science are replicated across the curriculum
 - developing pupils' oral skills by giving them more opportunities to talk about their learning, debate issues and give their views
 - continuing to work with partner schools to enable pupils and staff to see inspiring, high-quality examples of work.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - evaluating promptly the impact of the school's actions to raise achievement, including those which support disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the skills of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' progress and developing the quality of teaching so that variance between subjects is reduced
 - improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
 - continuing to work with improvement partners to accelerate the sharing of good practice and to build the capacity of leaders at all levels to secure further improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is relentless in his drive and determination to provide the very best education for all pupils. Since his appointment, he has made changes that are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and increase the rate of pupils' progress. The school is in a strong position to improve further.
- Senior leaders provide strong leadership. They have high expectations of all staff, and a sharp focus on improving outcomes. Leaders are highly evaluative and are addressing the areas for improvement systematically.
- The headteacher has accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher and the governors work collaboratively, are self-critical and have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.
- The headteacher and his leadership team are addressing the most urgent issues facing the school, such as recruiting sufficient staff, strengthening and implementing whole-school processes and procedures, ensuring that performance management is in place and effective, and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- Senior leaders now check the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. This is a key development, allowing senior leaders to make sharper judgements of the quality of the school's work. It also allows leaders to take effective action where performance is below the raised expectations.
- Historically, the school curriculum did not meet pupils' needs. The headteacher and his leadership team have addressed this issue. Pupils now have access to an ambitious English Baccalaureate curriculum and the full range of academic qualifications. The curriculum is broad and balanced, taking into account pupils' needs and aspirations. It is now planned more effectively to ensure that pupils are better prepared for employment, education or training.
- Extra-curricular provision is strong. Large numbers of pupils attend extra-curricular clubs, activities and trips. Leaders track pupils' participation methodically to monitor their engagement in these activities.
- Ongoing training for staff is proving effective in improving teaching. Staff value these training opportunities. The subject leaders for mathematics, science, art and English are also involved in local networks. Consequently, staff now know and understand the new GCSE qualifications.
- The headteacher has embraced the opportunity to participate in a range of external partnerships and reviews of aspects of the school's work. The results of these reviews are studied meticulously by the headteacher and his leaders, and actions are taken to bring improvement.
- Pupils receive a broad range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Through external visits, the curriculum and assemblies, pupils are able to consider other cultures, religions and beliefs.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They understand the issues in the local area that may affect people's opinions. Pupils recognise the need to

respect others who may have beliefs different from their own.

- Some middle leaders have not made use of the information the school collects to ensure that they improve the progress of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able.
- The school does not receive any Year 7 catch-up funding but interventions are in place to develop pupils' numeracy and literacy. Those pupils receiving extra support are making good progress. The funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is also used effectively. Leaders are beginning to scrutinise the spending and impact of funding through the pupil premium.
- Leaders have worked hard to involve parents and carers more in their child's education. Many parents comment positively about their strong relationship with the school.
- There are some pockets of less-effective practice in a small minority of subjects. Leaders know where training is needed and are committed to using the extremely effective practice in school and the expertise provided by the Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance to ensure that teaching is consistently strong across the school.
- The school now has clear expectations of the promotion of literacy skills. The literacy strategy is rigorous but it is still new and not yet fully embedded. Opportunities for pupils to do more extended pieces of writing to develop their literacy skills are beginning to become more evident across the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved and is now much more effective. Governors are much more active in fulfilling their duties. They have recently undertaken training to help them analyse information and challenge school leaders about outcomes more effectively.
- Governors understand their responsibilities. They are ambitious for the well-being and outcomes of pupils.
- The governing body has recently conducted a governance review and is working closely with a national leader for governance. This has helped governors to fulfil their duties more effectively than was the case previously.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas requiring improvement at the school. They recognise that pupils, especially the most able, need to be challenged in lessons more consistently.
- Governors say that better outcomes for the most able pupils and improving the attendance for disadvantaged pupils are priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain detailed records of safeguarding concerns. They ensure that all leaders know the support that pupils who are experiencing difficulties have received. The records show the speed with which safeguarding leaders respond to safeguarding concerns, including the follow-up work that they undertake to check on pupils' welfare.

There are systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.

- Staff are trained regularly and are vigilant in identifying potential risks to pupils, such as sexual exploitation or radicalisation. Consequently, there is an effective culture of safeguarding at the school.
- Safeguarding leaders are sensitive to the needs of their pupils. When they have a concern about pupils' welfare, leaders provide effective support. They work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need.
- Safeguarding leaders are quick to identify any issues in the local area that may affect their pupils' well-being. They take effective action to bring such issues to the attention of the staff and the pupils. This enables pupils to know how to keep themselves safe.
- Those pupils inspectors met said that they feel safe at the school. They said that there was someone that they could speak with if they have a concern. They are confident that adults will listen to them and take effective action to support them.
- Pupils, staff and parents who expressed a view through the online surveys agreed that the school is effective in keeping pupils safe.
- Risk assessments are regularly carried out and, during the inspection, the site was safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent. The school's own records show that teaching is becoming increasingly more effective during the current school year. However, the improvements in teaching are not established in all subjects and it remains too variable. Leaders are aware that teaching and learning, marking and feedback policies are not being implemented consistently, and have robust plans to rectify this.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge but they do not always have high enough expectations of the quality and quantity of work that the pupils can complete, particularly the most able pupils. Consequently, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers' planning for learning does not take full account of the needs of some groups of pupils. Teachers do not routinely use information about pupils' performance to identify how to meet the needs of individuals, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Some teachers do not explain new concepts or demonstrate to pupils how tasks should be done well enough. As a result, some pupils struggle with new concepts and to complete tasks.
- Teaching in science is effective, with more pupils making better progress in lessons than in the other core subjects.
- Most teachers ensure good standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning. Consequently, pupils usually take care over their presentation of work, bring the correct equipment and behave well.

- Pupils and parents are aware of the importance of completing homework. Teachers generally use homework well to deepen learning.
- Regular reports provide pupils and parents with useful information and clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Most parents value this information.
- Teachers did not provide many opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning, debate issues and give their views. Consequently, pupils had limited opportunities to develop their oral skills in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school uses a range of approaches, tutor-time activities and lessons to prepare pupils for modern life and Britain.
- Pupils are taught how to identify dangers and stay safe online.
- Pupils have access to effective careers education, advice and guidance to support them in making important decisions about their options and the next stages of their education, training or employment.
- The vast majority of pupils and parents say that incidents of bullying are rare and leaders deal quickly and effectively should bullying occur.
- The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their understanding of a wide range of issues. These include being healthy, keeping fit and staying safe.
- Staff know the pupils very well. Strong relationships enable a positive approach to learning in lessons.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and conduct themselves well at all times. The atmosphere is calm around the school and on corridors during social times and between lessons. Pupils enter and leave the school site at the beginning and end of the day safely and responsibly. Staff supervision is a responsibility for all members of staff, including support staff, and, as a result, supervision is visible and effective.
- Derogatory language is rare. Pupils were keen to hold doors open for members of staff and visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils want to do well and try their best in lessons. Many of them take advantage of the intervention classes and other activities after school to deepen and extend their learning.
- Staff and sixth-form students set a good example for the behaviour that the school's leaders expect of all of the pupils. As a result, there are very few incidents of poor behaviour, including behaviour that may result in pupils receiving an exclusion from the school.

- Pupils value their education, and attendance is good overall. Leaders recognise that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils needs further improvement.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance. They wear their uniform well and look smart. Pupils respect the environment. Their care for their surroundings is evident in the absence of litter and graffiti. Leaders are visible and welcome pupils into school in the morning and at lunchtimes.
- Pupils are well behaved and very few incidents of low-level disruption were seen during the inspection. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils arrive to lessons on time, are greeted by teachers on arrival and are prepared to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017, across eight subjects at GCSE, higher-ability pupils made much less progress than other pupils nationally with similar results from primary school.
- Records provided by school leaders show that more pupils are now learning at a faster rate. The most able are making better progress in key stage 4, but the picture remains variable in lessons and in books. These pupils have not been stretched in the past and are not always set difficult work that helps them to achieve the highest grades. Despite improvement, outcomes remain inconsistent.
- In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have underachieved significantly. The impact of the leaders' response to the external review of the use of additional funding is starting to be seen. The school's assessment information indicates a noticeable improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils in the current Years 7 to 11. However, low attendance for this group of pupils remains a barrier to good progress.
- Middle-ability pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. This is because teachers provide these pupils with appropriately challenging work.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils take their learning very seriously. Leaders are working exceptionally hard to raise their aspirations. Pupils speak highly of the positive approach of the school and the cohesive working relationships with staff across a range of subjects and are ambitious to continue with their studies further.
- Aspirational targets are set for pupils and most are clear about what their targets are. In computer science, pupils had clear and precise guidance on how to improve their work to meet these higher expectations. Pupils told inspectors how much they valued this guidance.
- As a result of better teaching and careful checking of their understanding, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improving rates of progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Strong new leadership this year has introduced much-improved monitoring and tracking and a drive to improve teaching and learning and improve attendance in the sixth form. Leaders have been able to ensure that early intervention has enabled targeted support to those students who fall behind in their studies. As a result, current

cohorts are making good progress in most of their A levels, broadly in line with the school's expectations.

- Teaching is good in the sixth form and strong relationships and high expectations characterise most lessons. Subjects which have significantly underperformed in the past are improving. For example, in a Year 13 German lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and probing questioning skills facilitated challenging reflection and debate.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress in the sixth form. Their achievement is at least in line with that of other learners nationally and is often better. Well-structured programmes, higher expectations and more individual attention from their teachers support these students effectively.
- The small numbers of students who retake GCSE English or mathematics make good progress and improve their grades.
- Students report that they feel safe and that they are well looked after because there is appropriate support in place to meet their needs.
- Relationships between students in the sixth form are good. Their relationships with teachers and younger pupils are also very positive.
- Students are very positive about their sixth-form experiences. They enjoy being in small teaching groups and feel that studying in a school where they are already well known by teachers has benefited their academic and social development.
- Most students now remain in the sixth form to complete their two-year courses. This was not previously the case. The minority who leave before completing their studies at the school benefit from further careers guidance and from links with further education colleges and vocational centres.
- Information provided by school leaders shows that the proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who go on to further education, employment or training is above the national average.
- The high-quality safeguarding, pastoral care and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education evident in the rest of the school continue into the sixth form. Sixth-form students benefit from opportunities to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities and work experience.

School details

Unique reference number	139180
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10041573

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	155
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Phillip Bosworth
Headteacher	John McHenry
Telephone number	01205 366 444
Website	www.bostongrammarschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@bostongrammarschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 February 2016

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed several new leaders, including a new head of sixth form. In September 2016, the school also appointed a new deputy headteacher.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision for its pupils.
- The Boston Grammar School is a small secondary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 45 lessons. Some of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with a range of school staff and members of the governing body, including its chair.
- Discussions also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met with groups of pupils and informally with them in lessons and around the school. They observed pupils in tutor time, social time and three assemblies.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents relating to behaviour, school improvement, pupils' attainment and progress, teaching, learning and assessment, and governance.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were also scrutinised.
- The 79 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The responses from 31 staff online surveys of their views were also taken into account. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ash Rahman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Matthew Sammy	Ofsted Inspector
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