

The Boston Grammar School

South End, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6JY

Inspection dates

9–10 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as highly as they should, particularly the most able.
- The proportion of high grades at GCSE is too low in the majority of subjects.
- Insufficient proportions of most-able pupils make rapid enough progress in a range of subjects at GCSE, including mathematics, science, geography and history.
- Leaders at all levels have an over-optimistic view of the school's provision, particularly of the quality of teaching.
- Governors do not always check the school's provision for themselves to ensure that their view of the quality of education pupils receive is accurate.
- Although improving, outcomes at sixth form are not good as too few learners achieve as highly as they should, particularly in English literature, economics and psychology.
- Subject leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching effectively enough to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Senior leaders' oversight of performance information is not precise enough to enable them to identify sufficiently quickly where pupils are not making the progress they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers at GCSE are closing rapidly, particularly in English and mathematics.
- A wide variety of opportunities enables pupils to develop their understanding of British society.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language receive effective support and, as a result, make good progress across all years.
- Pupils' relationships with each other and with their teachers are good. Pupils are proud to be members of this school.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the capacity of leaders at all levels to secure the necessary improvements to the school's provision by ensuring that:
 - all aspects of the school's self-evaluation and action planning are accurate
 - governors undertake activities that enable them to have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school's provision
 - subject leaders closely monitor all aspects of the quality of teaching
 - leaders at all levels monitor the achievement of all groups of pupils to identify any underperformance and provide appropriate support.

- Raise the achievement of the most-able pupils by:
 - ensuring that all leaders and teachers have high expectations of the most-able pupils
 - equipping teachers with the skills necessary to stretch and challenge the most-able pupils.

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that senior leaders and the head of sixth form work more closely in order to check the quality of teaching, improve learners' attendance and ensure that the advice and guidance pupils receive prior to entering the sixth form is effective.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Leaders at all levels have been too slow to improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils achieve as highly as they should. They have not had a precise enough view of the quality of the school's provision. This has prevented them from identifying key weaknesses in teaching. Consequently, since the last inspection, too few pupils have made the progress they should from their high starting points, at both GCSE and A level.
- Senior leaders have begun to take effective action to improve the quality of teaching and to raise pupils' achievement. The headteacher has raised the expectations of all pupils and staff. He challenges those staff whose performance does not meet these higher expectations. Consequently, the school's performance information indicates that achievement is improving. At GCSE, the majority of pupils are now making the progress that they should across a wide range of subjects. However, too few of the most-able pupils are achieving the highest grades across a range of subjects.
- Subject leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching has not been rigorous enough to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Subject leaders check the quality of teaching through visiting lessons and checking pupils' books. However, in too many subjects they have not ensured that teaching stretches and challenges all pupils in their learning, particularly the most able.
- Until recently, senior leaders' oversight of pupils' achievement has not been precise enough. Because of this, they have not identified sufficiently quickly those groups of pupils who are underachieving and provided the appropriate support. Consequently, pupils' achievement has not been high enough, particularly for the most able.
- Leaders of literacy and numeracy have begun to take effective action to ensure that pupils fully develop their communication and mathematical skills. School leaders have, for example, assessed the reading and writing skills of the current Year 7 pupils to identify those pupils whose skills are not strong enough. Leaders have put into place appropriate support, including literacy plans. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this support.
- Common weaknesses in teaching and achievement now more effectively inform the training which staff receive. To this end, the school has begun to work with another grammar school to provide more effective opportunities for teachers to share best practice. However, the training does not currently focus sufficiently on developing the skills teachers require to plan activities which stretch and challenge pupils, particularly the most able.
- Pupils receive effective careers guidance that enables them to make appropriate choices regarding their options when they leave the school. As a consequence, all pupils in 2015 entered appropriate forms of education, training or employment. However, the guidance that pupils who enter the school's sixth form receive is not as effective as it should be.
- The curriculum is well designed and provides pupils with opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across a broad range of subjects. Enrichment activities enhance this curriculum and help to deepen pupils' learning. These activities include educational trips, sporting competitions and whole-school activities related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- The effective development of pupils' appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of society enables them to deepen their understanding of the society within which they live. Displays around the school celebrate different cultures, particularly through art and music. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on fundamental British values through their assemblies and their life skills lessons. Consequently, pupils are able to develop a secure understanding of life in modern British society and recognise the need to respect people from different backgrounds.
- The school uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively, employing a wide range of strategies to support these pupils. These strategies include providing learning resources and using teaching assistants to work with disadvantaged pupils. The school also uses older pupils as mentors. Senior leaders regularly review the impact of the support which disadvantaged pupils receive and adapt the support as appropriate. Consequently, the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing rapidly, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- The provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is very effective. The teacher in charge of monitoring these pupils' progress provides a wide range of support to ensure that these pupils are secure in their learning, in particular in the development of their communication skills. Consequently, they make good progress across a wide range of subjects across all years.

- The management of teachers' performance is now more robust. Pupils' achievement and school improvement drive teachers' targets. Where senior leaders identify teachers who are not performing as highly as the school expects, they take swift action. Teachers receive close support to ensure that they improve their practice.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors, led strongly by the Chair of Governors, are committed to ensuring that the school's provision improves in order to raise pupils' achievement. To this end, they provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to senior leaders. They have increased the frequency of their meetings, for example, to ensure that they are checking the quality of the school's provision more regularly. However, the governors do not have a precise enough view of some aspects of the school's provision, particularly the quality of teaching. This is because they do not undertake activities that enable them to check for themselves that the information they receive from senior leaders is accurate.
 - Governors evaluate their own effectiveness as a body. They have completed an audit of their own skills to ensure that they contribute strongly to the strategic development of the school. They have recently received some training from an educational consultant to develop their skills. Governors recognise that they need to engage further in such training in order to secure these skills.
 - Governors are aware of their statutory obligations relating to keeping children safe. They have received training on safeguarding and know about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Governors involved in appointing members of staff to the school have received safer recruitment training. Governors are aware of the actions they must take where they have safeguarding concerns relating to the actions of an adult.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All teachers are aware of the actions they must take where they have concerns regarding the safety of a child or the actions of an adult. Senior leaders with responsibility for safeguarding work closely with external agencies and parents when they have a concern about a child's safety. Senior leaders provide close and effective support to vulnerable pupils. All staff have received training related to extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as not all teachers plan activities that meet the needs of pupils. As a consequence, not all pupils make the progress they should, particularly the most able.
- In less effective lessons, teachers do not plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils and engage them fully in their learning. Teachers do not use questioning effectively to explore pupils' understanding. Teachers do not always use assessment information to plan activities that stretch and challenge pupils, particularly the most able. On these occasions, as a consequence, pupils can engage in off-task behaviour. This can limit the progress they make.
- Teachers do not use homework consistently enough to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' communication and literacy skills is not precise enough to ensure that all pupils develop these skills securely. All pupils, for example, take part in a weekly reading exercise in their form time. However, school leaders do not monitor closely enough what pupils are reading to ensure that they are taking advantage of this time to secure their skills fully.
- Where learning is effective, teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and plan activities that engage with all pupils and provide them with appropriate challenge. Teachers ask questions that check and deepen pupils' understanding, and offer support to clarify any misconceptions. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to support and challenge each other. In a Year 9 physics lesson, for example, pupils worked together in groups and supported and challenged each other as they learned about acceleration.
- Teachers are making better use of other adults in the classroom to support pupils in their learning. Teaching assistants provide one-to-one support for those pupils who require it. They also offer support for small groups of pupils who are falling behind, as well as pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs. Consequently, the pupils who receive this support make good progress in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who met with the inspectors both formally and informally said that they feel safe at the school. All pupils said that there were staff they could approach when they were worried. A large majority of pupils who expressed a view through the online questionnaire agreed with this. Most of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their child was safe.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber, physical and homophobic bullying. Pupils who met with the inspectors reported that there were very few incidents of bullying. They said that where bullying may occur, the school deals with it effectively. Most pupils who expressed a view through the online pupil questionnaire agreed that the school dealt with bullying effectively on those occasions that it occurred. The school's records relating to bullying confirm that incidents of bullying are rare.
- Pupils know how to stay safe online.
- School leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to support those pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
- Pupils receive a wide variety of opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. The vertical tutor system (where each tutor group contains pupils and learners from across all years) provides pupils with the opportunity to support each other effectively and act as role models. The school council enables pupils to consider how the school can improve its provision. School leaders listen to the school council and act upon its recommendations. The annual rewards trips, for example, were a proposal that the school council put forward.
- Pupils are able to take advantage of a range of activities that enable them to develop their understanding of the society within which they live. For example, during assemblies pupils learn about respecting people's differences and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Posters around the school and in classrooms encourage pupils to develop an interest in the world, while pupils raise money for local and national charities. Consequently, pupils have a firm understanding of the need to respect people from other backgrounds and treat each other equally.
- Pupils receive advice and guidance from an independent careers adviser and take part in a careers day that takes place in school. As a consequence, pupils are aware of the opportunities available to them when they leave the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- On those occasions where teachers do not plan activities which stretch and challenge pupils, pupils can engage in off-task behaviour. This can limit the progress pupils make.
- Some pupils who met with inspectors said that there were occasions where pupils' behaviour in lessons could disrupt their learning. However, the majority of these pupils said that where such behaviour occurred, staff dealt with it quickly and effectively.
- Attendance levels are high and have consistently been above national levels. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils this year has declined and is below national levels for other pupils.
- Behaviour around the school site during social time and between lessons is calm. Pupils conduct themselves well and have strong relationships with their teachers and with each other. Pupils demonstrate pride in their school. The school's records show that incidents of poor behaviour are few.
- Rates of exclusion are very low. Where pupils are excluded, the school ensures that these pupils receive appropriate support on their return to school. Consequently, very few pupils receive more than one exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in pupils' achievement. Pupils have not achieved as highly as they should, particularly in English language and science. In 2015, pupils' achievement at GCSE did improve. However, the most-able pupils did not make the progress they should, particularly in English language.
- The school's performance information indicates that most-able pupils are now making the progress

expected of them across most subjects at GCSE. However, too few of the most-able pupils make more than the progress expected of them. Consequently, they do not achieve the highest grades in a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, science, geography and history.

- The proportions of pupils who achieved the highest grades at GCSE in 2015 were low across most subjects. The school's performance information indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades is increasing. However, the proportions are still below national levels in the majority of subjects at GCSE.
- School leaders with responsibility for literacy and numeracy have taken action to support pupils' skills where they are not strong enough, particularly the communication skills of pupils in Year 7. These actions are recent, however, and it is too early to measure the impact of this work on pupils' outcomes.
- The school's performance information for all Year 11 pupils indicates that pupils' achievement will increase further this year. The proportion of pupils who are making more than the progress expected of them is in line with or above national levels in some subjects, including in English, mathematics, science and history.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This is because of the support that they receive, particularly more recently from the teaching assistants.
- The achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally are closing rapidly, particularly at Key Stage 4. In year 11, disadvantaged pupils' progress in both English and mathematics is higher than that achieved by their peers nationally. This is due to the close support that these pupils receive from their teachers and fellow pupil mentors.
- Those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, science, geography and history. This is because of the close support that they receive from the teacher who monitors their progress.
- The proportion of pupils who successfully progress to the next stage of their education, training or employment is consistently above national levels. In 2015, all pupils moved on to some form of education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form is not as high as it should be. In 2015, too few learners achieved the higher grades at both AS and A level. Furthermore, in a wide range of subjects, too few learners made the progress they should. However, the school's performance information indicates that the proportion of learners achieving the higher grades at A level is improving and is now above national levels. Consequently, learners are now making better progress. However, there are some subjects where learners' progress continues to be too low at A level, including English literature, economics and psychology.
- Teaching requires improvement as the achievement of learners in some subjects is not good enough. In those lessons where learning is effective, teachers use their secure subject knowledge and questioning to check on and deepen learners' understanding. Teachers encourage learners to discuss their ideas and to work together in order to solve problems or develop their skills. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson, for example, learners worked together constructively to solve mathematical problems. However, in some lessons, teachers do not set activities which stretch and challenge learners, particularly in relation to learners accessing high-level thinking skills. In these lessons, learners do not make as much progress as they should.
- The head of sixth form does not have a precise enough view of the quality of teaching in the sixth form. She does not work closely enough with subject leaders to monitor the quality of teaching within the different subject areas. Consequently, there is too much variability in the quality of teaching in the sixth form that prevents learners from making the progress they should.
- The quality of advice and guidance prior to entry into the sixth form requires improvement. The proportion of learners who leave the sixth form at the end of Year 12 is higher than national levels. For many learners, this is the result of the advice and guidance which they received prior to beginning their AS-level course not being as effective as it should be.
- Attendance in the sixth form is below national levels. Senior leaders have taken action to ensure that learners attend more regularly. This includes communicating with the parents of those learners who do

not attend regularly enough. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this action.

- Those learners who inspectors met said that they feel safe. They said that they had staff they could go to should they be experiencing difficulties.
- The proportions of learners who secure a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics in the sixth form are above national levels.
- Learners' behaviour is good. They conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school site. They take advantage of opportunities to take on leadership roles, particularly through the prefect system and the vertical tutoring system.
- Learners are able to take advantage of a wide range of enrichment opportunities to enhance their learning and their personal development. All learners take part in weekly enrichment activities that include work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and sporting activities. These opportunities enable learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and prepare them for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Learners receive effective support from their teachers and the independent careers adviser as they prepare for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The majority of learners move on to higher education courses at university. Those who do not move on to university take up apprenticeships or enter employment. The head of sixth form continues to support learners after they have left sixth form and provides timely and effective support where it is appropriate.

School details

Unique reference number	139180
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10007589

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	School converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip Bosworth
Headteacher	John McHenry
Telephone number	01205 366 4444
Website	www.bostongrammarschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@bostongrammarschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 May 2013

Information about this school

- The Boston Grammar School is considerably smaller than most other secondary schools.
- A very large majority of pupils are of white British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and, therefore, supported by the pupil premium is considerably below average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is considerably below average.
- There have been many staff changes since the last inspection. Ten new teachers joined the school in September 2014, and two further new teachers joined in September 2015. The headteacher was appointed in June 2014.
- 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 24 lessons, eight of which were sixth form lessons. The lead inspector completed three joint lesson observations with the headteacher. During these observations, inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, groups of staff and groups of pupils and learners from across all years. The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body and spoke with the Chair of Governing Body separately.
- Inspectors visited a range of tutor groups during tutor period and observed a Year 10 and a Year 12 assembly.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, at breaktime and lunchtime, between lessons and after school.
- Inspectors took into account 56 parental responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 19 members of staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 33 pupils and learners who responded to the online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation of its provision and its improvement plan. Inspectors also considered documentation relating to achievement, behaviour and attendance, teaching and learning, safeguarding and governance.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jamie Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Connearn	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Wake	Ofsted Inspector

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