

# The Boston Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358830
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Riddiough HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	508
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Phillip Bosworth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Marsh (acting head)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	South End Boston PE21 6JY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01205 366444
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<b>Email address</b>	South-end@bostongrammarschools.co.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 32 teachers in 32 lessons, two tutor groups and two assemblies. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, groups of students, members of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at progress tracking, performance data, students' work, whole-school and subject development plans, numerous policies, school documents and case studies. Completed questionnaires from staff, students and 161 parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well have leaders at all levels ensured rigorous use of evaluations to bring about improvements in the rates of progress that students are making?
- To what extent is leadership at all levels securing improvements in teaching and learning?
- How well is assessment used to promote the progress that students make?
- To what extent does the curriculum, at all ages, meet the needs of the students?

## Information about the school

The Boston Grammar is a smaller than average boys' selective foundation school with a mixed sixth form. The school population is largely White British and very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is also well below average. In addition to having technology college status, the school became a sports college in September 2007. As a result of a falling roll, the school began the process of amalgamation with Boston High School with the intention of moving to a single site; this plan was reversed resulting in the re-establishment of autonomous schools on separate sites with a common governing body under the auspices of The Boston Grammar Schools Federation.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

The Boston Grammar is a satisfactory school with strengths in the quality of care it provides. Students' academic progress is satisfactory but improving. Although standards in national tests and examinations are high, results fell last year and some targets were missed. This happened at a time when the school was subject to major re-organisation and some uncertainty as to its future. Recovery from this position has involved the consolidation and re-organisation of staffing, redefined roles, winning back the confidence of the wider community and a drive to restore student numbers. Under the leadership of the acting headteacher and the re-formed governing body, much has been accomplished and the school is once again directing its attention and efforts to tackle the main school improvement priority of raising achievement. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Unvalidated results of the 2010 GCSE examinations show better progress this year than last. Evidence from lesson observation and students' work suggests good progress is now being made in some subject areas, but not all. Weaker areas have been identified, including the sixth form. A further more general area of weakness is assessment and its use to support good learning.

The good quality care provided ensures students safety and many enjoy school. Their attendance is good and many are keen to contribute to the school community and the vertical tutor system facilitates this. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is also good. The boys at the school enjoy the school's strong cultural traditions and are proud of its heritage, which they have successfully campaigned to retain.

Most of the teaching is satisfactory, resulting in the satisfactory progress seen in the majority of lessons. Progress is no better than this because teachers do not plan activities that are sufficiently interesting and challenging for students of differing attainment levels, particularly higher attainers. Pockets of more effective teaching exist but are not shared widely between staff. While the system that tracks the progress of students has been overhauled, it is not yet used by teachers to inform the planning of work closely geared to students' learning needs. The specialist status contributes positively to the teaching of science, mathematics and physical education, but has been less effective in promoting high performance in design and technology.

Leaders and managers are working increasingly well as a team. The right improvement priorities have been identified but the actions to secure these uniformly across the school are not yet consistently carried out. While leaders at all levels observe lessons regularly, they are not always sufficiently evaluative and focused on the less effective aspects of teaching and learning to secure improvements. Sixth form leadership is satisfactory; however, the monitoring and evaluation of provision and the tracking of students' progress are not yet systematic or rigorous enough to bring about improvement. The governing

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body has shown determination and commitment to secure the school's future and it holds a clear vision for the school. It is now re-focusing its efforts to tackle identified weaknesses where there is still much to be done. It discharges its statutory duties effectively.

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

- Improve the teaching and learning so that by December 2011 the majority is good or better by:
  - ensuring that all staff in the school use assessment data and regular checks on learning in lessons to provide consistently high levels of challenge, so that all students make the greatest progress possible
  - providing clear advice and guidance to students in class and through the marking of their work, on how to accelerate their progress
  - engaging students in their learning through the use of varied and stimulating activities
  - sharing the good practice in teaching and learning across all departments to reduce the variability in the quality of teaching.
  - Raise achievement across the school by:
    - ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the subject leaders are rigorous and accurate and identify clear actions for improvement within specified timescales
    - improving provision in design and technology
    - ensuring that the monitoring of the sixth form provision is more effective in bringing about improvement.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Students start at the school with levels of attainment that are well above average and make satisfactory progress to reach high standards in national tests and examinations by the end of Year 11. Students with special needs and/or disabilities make similarly satisfactory progress to reach higher than average standards relative to their starting points when they leave school. There are few differences in the achievement of different groups of students in the school, but higher attaining students do not achieve the top GCSE grades that could be expected of them. In lessons students behave well. They make good progress when the lesson is interesting and the learning tasks and activities challenge them to think. However, in most lessons, reflecting the lack of challenge in the tasks presented to them, students work at a slow pace and are not fully engaged.

Students enjoy school and display positive attitudes. Students say that they feel safe and that if they experience problems they can approach any adult in the school with confidence that their concerns will be taken up. Students have good opportunities and

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encouragement to be healthy, for example, in taking healthy options in the canteen and in the high take up of extra-curricular sport. They make a positive contribution to school and community life through mentoring younger pupils to support both their academic and personal development, and in the charity work that is undertaken. There are some good initiatives to promote the school's contribution to its wider community such as in the work done by students to care for young people with disabilities in the town. Students take part in a variety of work-related experiences and enterprise activities to develop the skills that will contribute to their future economic well being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons are conducted in a relaxed atmosphere where relationships are good. Teachers have access to data tracking sheets providing information about students' progress and predicted grades. However, insufficient use is made of this information when planning and delivering lessons to ensure that all students, particularly the higher attainers, achieve their predicted grades. Frequently higher attaining students complete work rapidly and have nothing further to extend their learning. Teachers often talk too much, depriving students of the opportunity to develop independent thinking and take responsibility for their own learning. Frequently, too, teachers do not check students' understanding of key lesson objectives; in some lessons where this was the case students showed a lack of confidence and some disengagement. This is especially the situation in design and

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technology. Marking is inconsistent across subjects, particularly in advice for improvement and in follow up comments.

The school offers an academic curriculum, meeting the requirements of students and expectations of parents and carers. Students complete Key Stage 3 in two years, with three years in Key Stage 4 intended to maximise GCSE performance. Students with particular talents, for example national sports competitors, have an individually adapted timetable. The curriculum is modified appropriately to meet the needs of students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. However, the curriculum is not adjusted effectively to meet the needs of the high attainers and this is borne out by their relatively low levels of achievement. The formal curriculum is enhanced by a range of enrichment activities such as sports leader awards, theme days for gifted and talented students, and joint projects with the partner girls' school.

There is an effective transition at all key stages and a welcoming atmosphere is created for new Year 7 and for intending sixth form students. Careful attention is paid to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are fully informed about the difficulties faced by individual students and strive to ensure that they make progress through their support. Individual counselling is provided for students giving cause for concern. Option choices are carefully guided at all key stages; extensive interviews ensure that students in Year 11 are prepared for the change to sixth form study and that subjects are chosen appropriately. Close links with local universities help to raise students' aspirations.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has taken steps to improve the school, including restructuring the senior team with clear areas of responsibility. Middle leadership roles have also been restructured and are gaining effectiveness, although the impact on their areas of responsibility is variable. For example, while there are now procedures for monitoring the quality of marking, there remains significant inconsistency between subject areas. Whole-school improvement plans indicate that appropriate school improvement priorities have been identified, but the actions taken are not evaluated with sufficient rigour or accuracy to ensure that objectives are met. Expectations of all staff have been tightened so that accountability is clear. Staff development is linked to key areas such as leadership and teaching but, as involvement is voluntary, opportunities are missed to share effective approaches to teaching. Safeguarding procedures are good: procedures, policies and protocols are robust, closely followed and staff are appropriately trained. The inclusion of

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all students is reflected in policies promoting equality of opportunity. However, the school does not ensure that high attaining students benefit equally across the full range of provision. The governing body actively supports the school but re-organisation issues deflected attention from other school improvement priorities. Governors are now focusing on these as a priority. Communication with parents and carers has improved and their confidence in the school has been restored now that there is certainty about its future. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. There is some strong local community involvement and the school has established links with organisations abroad. Work done to help pupils understand United Kingdom diversity is less secure.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form provides a satisfactory quality of education. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is just above average and students are offered a wide range of academic courses. Lesson observations confirm that generally students make satisfactory progress in lessons. Attainment at GCE AS and A level is broadly in line with national averages. Teachers' subject knowledge is commonly good. While teaching is satisfactory overall, the best lessons provide more opportunities for independent learning, requiring students to apply what they have learnt. In the less effective lessons there is too much teacher input, the learning activities are passive and students are not challenged sufficiently. Students have many opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school, for example mentoring younger students, leading assemblies and charity events. This contributes positively to their personal development. Students are well cared for and value the one-to-one support they receive on both academic and personal matters. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and they are well prepared for their futures. For the very large majority this means continuing their education at university. Leaders in the sixth form evaluate the progress students make in different subjects, and tracking systems clearly



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identify students who are underachieving. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision is not systematic. Outcomes are variable across subjects, and in some, the progress made by students is below expectations.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers were extremely positive, with the overwhelming majority saying that their children enjoyed school. Most who responded to the questionnaire also indicated that they felt that the school is led and managed effectively. Parents and carers also often commented that it was not just the academic success that was important but also the personal development. As one parent said, expressing similar views to others, 'Our son has dyslexia and has been well supported and cared for. We think the pastoral care is excellent.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Boston Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 161 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 508 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	29	110	68	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	35	101	63	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	62	39	87	54	8	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	37	88	55	8	5	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	25	111	69	7	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	19	105	65	22	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	20	101	63	23	14	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	24	94	58	11	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	27	102	63	10	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	24	96	60	12	7	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	14	101	63	14	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	47	29	88	55	16	10	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	38	89	55	8	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10 December 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Boston Grammar School, Boston, PE21 6JY**

Thank you for the courteous and warm welcome you gave to us and the thoughtful comments you made during the inspection. You have been very helpful in giving us a detailed picture of your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education overall, and some areas are good. Attainment is high, and you are making satisfactory progress in your lessons. You receive good guidance and support. Your attitudes reflect the school's strong ethos. You show a positive approach to your work and your attendance is good. This shows how much you enjoy school. Teaching is satisfactory but it could be better as many of you are not making the greatest progress possible; many of you find the work easy and lacking in challenge. You clearly enjoy a good range of learning opportunities in school and beyond, especially those in sport and physical education.

To help improve your school further, we have asked your acting headteacher, the staff and the governing body to raise your achievement in all subjects by:

- making sure that you experience consistently good teaching
- ensuring that your teachers plan carefully so that all of you make the greatest possible progress
- ensuring that teachers check regularly on your learning in lessons and provide good feedback on how to accelerate your progress
- making all your lessons interesting and stimulating.

I have also asked them to improve the provision that you are getting in design and technology and in the sixth form. You have a part to play and you can really help your school by ensuring that you do not settle for anything other than your best and that you follow up the comments and suggestions that your teachers make to help you to improve your work. I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at The Boston Grammar School.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough

Her Majesty's Inspector

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