

Boston High School

Spilsby Road, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 9PF

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- By the end of Year 11 students achieve standards that are well above national averages across a range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders' accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and their strong support for staff have ensured teaching is good in all key stages.
- Behaviour is outstanding. The students go out of their way to be polite and respectful of each other and adults. They feel completely safe and show exceptional attitudes to learning in all their lessons.
- The sixth form is good as students make good progress. It is led well and numbers have risen, with nearly half the current Year 12 students coming from other local schools.
- The school enjoys outstanding leadership that is rapidly bringing about improvements in teaching and achievement, following a period of previous instability in the leadership of the school.
- The new headteacher, along with a new additional deputy headteacher and other members of the school's senior leadership team, has quickly gained the confidence of staff, students and parents.
- Governors know the school well and make an exceptional contribution to its leadership. They have a thorough understanding of the issues currently facing the school and actions taken to improve its ethos, know how finances are used and offer robust challenge to the headteacher.
- The development of the curriculum and arrangements for assessment are very secure. This reflects the good work of staff at all levels and is bringing about rapid improvements in teaching and in the numbers of students gaining the higher grades in all subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always consistently challenge the most-able students to ensure they achieve the highest GCSE grades in all subjects, especially in art and religious education.
- Although leaders have been successful in making improvements to the teaching of science there are still variations in the quality of teaching across the department.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school’s documents on safeguarding, and the school’s view of its own performance and plans for future improvement. They also looked at the school’s information about how well students are doing, records relating to teaching, behaviour and attendance, and documents used by leaders to plan the curriculum and check how well the school is doing.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 25 lessons and visited two assemblies and tutor periods. One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher. On the second day of the inspection, the inspectors made brief visits to every lesson being taught in the school for students in Years 7 to 11.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and looked at their books. Students were observed and talked to at breaks and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school. Discussions were held with three governors, as well as senior and subject leaders.
- Discussions were held with four groups of students about how well they are doing in different subjects and to gather their views on behaviour and safety in the school. Students brought their books to show inspectors as part of the discussion.
- Inspectors considered the 95 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, as well as the comments individual parents made to the inspection team. A Year 7 parents evening was held on the evening of the first day of the inspection and the 50 parent responses to this were provided to the team. In addition other parent questionnaires carried out by the school were considered.
- Responses were also considered from 56 staff.
- In addition, the lead inspector asked the headteacher and deputy headteacher questions relating to a separate Ofsted survey on provision for the most-able students. These questions do not form part of the evidence base for this inspection.

Inspection team

Anne Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Myers	Additional Inspector
Mark Cordell	Additional Inspector
Anne White	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a selective grammar school for girls, selecting the top 25% of the ability range. The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The sixth form of the school is mixed. There are currently about 150 students in Year 12 and 100 in Year 13. The number of sixth form students who come from other local schools is rising and is about half in the current Year 12.
- The local area has previously experienced falling school roles; as a result, the school is not full in the current Year 10.
- Almost all students are White British but an increasing number of students are from Eastern European countries.
- An additional cohort of boys entered the school in September 2009 and completed their GCSE examinations in July 2014. This was in preparation for a previously planned merger with the boys' grammar school which was cancelled in spring 2010. As a result, no further cohorts of boys were admitted in Years 7 to 11.
- The school opened as an academy called 'Boston High School' on 1 January 2013. When the predecessor school, also called Boston High School, was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2009, it was judged to be 'good'.
- The new headteacher was appointed in the summer term 2013 and started at the school in January 2014. A new additional deputy headteacher, also appointed in summer 2013, started in September 2013 as 'acting headteacher' for a term.
- At 4.3%, the proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- At 8.0%, the proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Three students attend the local Pilgrim Hospital School. No students are educated wholly off site or in alternative provision. No students are eligible for the Year 7 catch up funding.
- The school has received the following awards: Healthy Schools, Let's Get Cooking, Teacher Learning Academy School, Career's mark, Arts Council Silver award, and Young Enterprise centre of excellence.
- The school is part of a local consortium of 16 Lincolnshire grammar schools which coordinate each school's admission arrangements in partnership with the local authority. The school is part of a charitable 'Umbrella Trust' together with the local boys' grammar school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at GCSE.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - consistently challenging the most-able students so that they make rapid progress and achieve the highest grades at GCSE, in all subjects, and especially in art and religious education
 - ensuring the teaching of all science subjects is as effective as the best teaching in the department.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has rapidly gained the commitment of staff, leaders at all levels including middle leaders and governors with an unrelenting focus on securing even better outcomes for all students. He has established an ethos in which there are high expectations of students' behaviour and achievement and in which students can flourish. The school's motto 'Leading Learning Together' pervades all aspects of school life.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work to prepare students for life in modern Britain. Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it is at the centre of the school's aims to develop fully rounded students not only in their academic results, but also through opportunities to perform, play sport and take on leadership roles. For example, in getting ready for a whole school assembly, student leaders were providing reminders to their peers and to staff as to things to remember and announcements to be made.
- Leadership of teaching is very strong. The school has a very accurate understanding of the quality of its teaching. Teachers and leaders at all levels are clear on what is expected of them. Arrangements to develop teachers and provide them with accurate feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve are carefully managed, robust and effective. Teaching in the science department has improved and leaders are providing further guidance support to improve it further.
- The curriculum has been changed so that results across a range of academic GCSE subjects including science, humanities and languages, improved considerably for all students and also for disadvantaged students in 2014. It is now an excellent curriculum. Almost all students stay on in full-time education to 18 and beyond, with 90% going to university, many of these are the first in their family to do so. Advice on careers and next steps is very strong. Destinations are tracked and more students enter employment by the age of 19 than is the case nationally, with very few students having destinations that are not known.
- The school provides extensive opportunities for students to study languages in Years 7, 8 and 9, with German now being offered as well as French and Spanish. As a result, students can take up to three languages in Years 10 and 11 and uptake has improved both at GCSE and at A level. The curriculum has also improved in science; the current Year 10 all take three separate science subjects. This is also improving the choices available to students when they move into the sixth form.
- The school has responded diligently to the changes in the new National Curriculum and has established new assessment arrangements in Years 7, 8 and 9. Leaders have introduced a new student performance tracking system, which has considerably improved the feedback for students and reporting to parents.
- The school very carefully monitors its spending for disadvantaged students 'pupil-by-pupil' and assesses the impact on students' progress in detail. As a result, 100% of disadvantaged pupils achieved 5A*-C at GCSE including in English and mathematics in 2014.
- The school commissions external support where it is needed, to excellent effect. External reviews of the sixth form and the science department carried out last year have been acted upon and improvements seen as a result of swift actions taken, for example strategies are in place to improve the leadership structure in science.
- Middle leaders, including in the sixth form, have contributed to and embraced the rapid changes that have been made as a result of clear communication and strong consultation arrangements within the school. There is a clear sense of purpose in the school, with teacher and leaders at all levels being clear that the changes are both meaningful and manageable.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with the majority, who responded on Parent View, saying that they would recommend the school to others. A few parents made comments about the turnover and quality of some teachers in mathematics and science but inspectors found evidence that these concerns have already been successfully addressed by the new leadership team. School leaders and

governors are acutely aware of variations that remain in the quality of science teaching and have robust actions in place to bring further improvement.

- The school's arrangements to safeguard students meet statutory requirements and are of a high quality. All necessary checks are in place and up to date. Regular checks are made on the progress and welfare of individual students who attend, for example, the hospital school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective as a result of honest communication by both school leaders and governors and their commitment to a shared and strong ethos for the school.
 - Governors, together with leaders, have greatly improved links with local primary and secondary schools and expanded the sixth form.
 - Governors are very well organised. They maintain clear records of the key decisions taken, policies reviewed and evidence considered, including what still needs to be tackled.
 - Governors have a very comprehensive picture of the use and impact of all finances including the amount spent on teaching and staffing. They ensure the arrangements for the performance management of teachers are effective and that teachers are rewarded only where there is clear evidence of their impact on achievement.
 - Governors use performance data to offer appropriate challenge to the school, for example they have challenged over the quality of the teaching and results in science and some subjects in the sixth form.
 - Governors are clear on the priorities for allocation of resources both within the main school and especially for the growing sixth form.
 - Governors make sure that all statutory policies are in place, including safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Students, including those in the sixth form, are unfailingly polite and go out of their way to check that their peers, teachers and others have everything they need. They move round the school sensibly but without being 'policed'. Movement into and out of assemblies is led by older students not teachers.
- Students display excellent attitudes to learning at all times. They show their love for learning in extra work that they take on in some subjects, and in their commitment to reading which has a high priority in the school. They are always well equipped for lessons. Some subjects use the funding for disadvantaged students to ensure all students have all the equipment they need, especially for practical subjects.
- Older students act as academic mentors for younger students. Students can request or be referred for additional tuition from a student mentor if they feel they need extra help.
- Students understand that teachers need them to work in different ways at different times. They respond immediately, positively and with maturity to their teacher's instructions, working successfully in groups or on their own, with friends, or with those chosen by the teacher.
- Students accept that some aspects of learning are hard work and say that their teachers make it clear to them that they have to master key facts and concepts before they can tackle more interesting and often challenging topics or demanding pieces of work. They thrive on the hard work and rise to the challenges they are set.
- Attendance remains consistently high and students are punctual to school and to lessons. A few students are persistently absent. The school agrees that there is room for improvement by personalising the actions being taken and tracking the impact on the attendance of the few students concerned.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Students have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, on the internet and social media. They also have a broad

understanding of risks in the wider world, for example child exploitation. Programmes to extend students' awareness of how to stay safe are led very effectively by the school and good use is made of specialist agencies including the police.

- Students, staff and parents say that the school ensures excellent standards of behaviour and safety and inspectors agree. Students have a strong understanding of different types of bullying. They say that should they feel concerned or unsafe, they know who to go to and are sure of an appropriate response. School records show that incidents of bullying and racist incidents are extremely rare.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well by the school. A very strong sense of respect and tolerance are promoted. Students quickly develop fundamental values, such as tolerance and understanding of the challenges facing others, as well as skills they need to contribute fully to life in modern democratic Britain.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across most subjects and key stages, including the sixth form, is good. Teaching is consistently strong in English, geography and business studies and has improved markedly in mathematics, biology, history and physical education. The school has identified the need to further improve aspects of teaching in the science department so that it is all as good as the best in the department. Leaders are also fully aware of the need to ensure that teaching enables the most able students to reach the higher GCSE grades in all their subjects and especially in art and religious education.
- Teachers have high expectations of students in the way they set out and organise their work. Students respond well, showing a pride in their work and, when needed, responding to teachers' comments to improve their work. A recently introduced, but already well-developed, system of formal and systematic assessment is used very effectively to track students' progress and help them improve. Teachers' consistent approach to target setting, assessment and feedback ensures all students know their current performance, their targets and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers make very accurate use of subject specific vocabulary and ensure students explain their understanding and respond fully when asked questions. Teachers use questioning well to highlight common errors and to enable students to challenge their own assumptions. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students had to work out and explain to the whole class the steps needed to solve some multi-step problems involving complex areas, which they did very confidently.
- Literacy has a high profile in the school with a strong marking policy for grammar, punctuation and spelling. Reading is promoted well and is systematically developed in Years 7 and 8. Teachers increasingly involve parents and other adults in supporting their child's reading, so that reading is seen as a shared activity.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Students' accuracy in mathematics is encouraged at all times, as well as their understanding of the importance of, and the need for, 'mastery'. As a result, students make good use of their mathematical understanding in other subjects.
- Teaching for the most able is good but not outstanding as not all of the most able students make the same rapid progress as other students in the school. They are not consistently challenged to work at the highest level in all subjects.
- The provision and teaching is strong for the small number of students identified as having a disability or special educational needs and they are well supported by the additional adults who work with them, as a result they make good progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 about half a level above national standards. They make good progress

and by the end of Year 11, students are about one GCSE grade above national standards with almost all students leaving Year 11 with five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics.

- Students achieve well in English and mathematics over time, with outcomes improving in mathematics in 2014, although falling slightly in English. In both subjects the proportion achieving the highest GCSE grades of A* and A is double the national proportion. They achieve similarly well in business studies, geography, sociology, food and music.
- The proportion of students gaining the higher grades increased in 2014 in biology, history and physical education. However, some subjects do not do as well in ensuring enough students reach the highest grades, for example, art and religious education.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged students in the school make good progress and perform well above other students nationally achieving results that are a grade and a half ahead in English and a grade ahead in mathematics. The gap between disadvantaged students and others in the school has narrowed to about a third of a GCSE grade in mathematics. All pupils reach equally high standards in English.
- Progress made by students who have English as an additional language is outstanding as a result of the careful early diagnostic assessments when these students start the school. These are then followed up with specific and personalised targets for each student that are used very effectively by class teachers.
- The small number of students who are identified as having special educational needs make good progress. The careful attention to the individual needs and the effective assessment on entry to the school ensures they make good progress. The very small number of students who attend the hospital school make good progress.
- In 2013, about half of Year 11 entered GCSE mathematics early. While results overall were well above national averages, not all pupils who started with a Level 5 achieved the highest GCSE grades of A* and A and so this policy has been reviewed.
- The most-able students make good progress and most gain the highest grades, notably in English. However, in some subjects, including art and religious education, not enough of these students achieve the highest grades.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form has increased in size in recent years with the proportion of students coming from other local schools rising from about a third in 2013 to a half in 2014. As a result of these changes, attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly in line with national averages. From this starting point students achieve well.
- The school has maintained a 100% pass rate at grades A*-E at A level, with no students leaving before completing their examinations in Year 13. As a result of effective advice and guidance, about 90% go on to university, and a higher proportion than nationally are in apprenticeships.
- Target setting in the sixth form is effective with realistic but challenging targets for students. Subject leaders carefully evaluate data in relation to the outcomes achieved and the accuracy of teachers' predictions. As a result, of this strong leadership, results have improved for the higher grades at AS level.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good because the level of challenge is high and topics encourage students to think deeply about what they are learning. For example, in a sixth form biology lesson, students had to make a model of the lock and key mechanism for enzymes and then show the induced-fit hypothesis. Along with the use of text books, online sources and academic journal articles, students are taught how to make their own high quality notes.
- Sixth form students have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills both within the curriculum

and in additional activities. Sixth form students have prefect roles as well as being academic mentors to younger students. The sixth form lead aspects of whole school programmes, including the work of the student council, the 'Young Journalists' scheme and the whole school assembly programme.

- Behaviour and safety in the sixth form is outstanding. Sixth form students show their commitment to learning through their positive attitudes, good attendance and punctuality and in the good use they make of their time outside of timetabled lessons.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139140
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	448654

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	718
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martyn Chambers
Headteacher	Andrew Fulbrook
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01205 310505
Fax number	01205 350235
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