

Boston Pioneers Free School Academy

Fydell Crescent, Boston, PE21 8SS

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal provides very good leadership. She is highly respected by pupils, parents and staff and makes sure that the school is effective in serving the needs of this diverse and rapidly changing local community.
- Leaders and governors have a realistic view of the school. Through their regular monitoring visits they know the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve further. Leaders work effectively with other schools and external partners. The school is well placed to continue to improve.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are full of praise for the good work leaders do to keep their children safe and the encouragement given to parents to be part of the school and wider community.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They benefit from safe surroundings and an effective practical approach to their learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This helps them to provide effective marking and feedback which enables pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- The school promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for its pupils. It ensures that there are opportunities for pupils to prepare for life in their own community and further afield.
- Pupils are encouraged to do their best work at all times. They have good attitudes towards their learning and the presentation of their work is of a high standard.
- Pupils' learning benefits from opportunities to apply their knowledge to practical situations. This helps to deepen their understanding of subjects.
- Pupils benefit from learning about a broad and interesting range of topics and subjects, which are reviewed regularly by staff. This helps to ensure that all pupils are enthusiastic learners.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Subject leaders do not contribute fully to school improvement. This is because their leadership and management skills are not well enough developed.
- Not all groups of pupils, particularly boys, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve as well as they might do.
- The behaviour of some pupils is not as good at lunchtimes as it is during the rest of the day.
- Teachers do not set challenging enough targets for some pupils, or identify efficiently enough when they are ready to take the next steps of learning during lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in five lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the Principal. He observed the teaching of early reading skills and listened to pupils read during their lessons. He also talked to pupils about their school and looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of teaching over time.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, representatives of the governing body, directors and a representative of the multi-academy trust and an external consultant acting on behalf of the Department for Education.
- The inspector spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day. He took account of the 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and took note of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including: the school's own self-evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning; the school's most recent data on the achievement and progress of its pupils; information provided to families; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; the school's most recent data relating to the attendance of pupils.
- The inspector considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.

Inspection team

Stephen McMullan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Boston Pioneers Free School Academy opened as a new primary school in September 2013 and is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Currently, the school has only classes for pupils of Reception and Year 1 age and will expand by one extra year group each year until there is a Year 6 class. After a period in temporary accommodation, the school took possession of new purpose-built premises during spring 2015.
- The school is part of the Phoenix Family of Schools multi-academy trust.
- Children in Reception attend the school full-time and are taught in two separate classes.
- The school has a much higher than average proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. This funding provides extra support for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The gradual expansion of the school means that there is no published data relating to pupils' Year 1 phonics (sounds that letters make) outcomes, or end of Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 outcomes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly boys, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make the substantial and sustained progress required to secure outstanding achievement by:
 - identifying more efficiently when pupils are ready to move on to the next steps of learning during lessons
 - setting targets for pupils that are consistently challenging.
- Ensure that pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes is consistently as good as it is at other times of the day.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing the skills of subject leaders and ensuring that they make a more active contribution to the improvement of the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal is a determined and visionary professional. Her presence around the school means that staff and pupils are in no doubt about the high standards expected of everyone.
- Leaders ensure that staff have a good understanding of the changing nature of the local community. Consequently, staff work hard to give pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds the best possible start to their education. They encourage parents to be regular visitors in school and to take an active part in their children's education. The school promotes equality and diversity, and tackles discrimination through its actions and subjects taught.
- Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school and the education it offers their children. They believe that it is a safe and caring environment in which their children are treated with fairness and respect, regardless of their background. They report no bullying and are satisfied that school leaders will deal quickly and effectively with any concerns relating to their children. Parents who are new to the country particularly value 'The Bridge Project', in which the school works alongside The Salvation Army to promote the language development of parents and their children. There are also visits within the locality which support community relations. This helps parents to support the school's good work in preparing their children for life in Modern Britain.
- The school's curriculum is effective in meeting the educational and social needs of its pupils. It is based on a published scheme but leaders have used their developing understanding of pupils' abilities and past experiences to adapt this so that it meets pupils' needs and interests more effectively: for example, adapting themes and topics to support the need to improve the attainment of boys. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural education of the pupils is well catered for. This was illustrated well on two occasions; in an assembly which linked the curriculum topic on Knights to the importance of sharing and thoughtfulness towards others, and during a national minute's silence where the pupils' behaviour and respect for others were impeccable.
- The multi-academy trust supports the school well. The Principal is held to account by the school's governing body and the directors of the multi-academy trust of which it is a part. The actions of the Principal and the achievement of pupils are scrutinised and challenged to make sure that all school leaders have an accurate picture of what the school does well and what it needs to do next to improve further. There are increasingly close links with other schools within the trust, with expertise and initiatives being shared in an effort to continue to raise standards. The school also receives good support from an external consultant working on behalf of the Department for Education.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of their work is accurate and this informs their detailed plan for improvement. The improvement plan outlines realistic actions to be taken to improve the school and links clearly to the intended impact the actions will have on accelerating pupils' achievement.
- The impact of subject leaders on the development of the school is not as good as it could be. There is a heavy reliance on the skills of the Principal, although there is a small team of subject leaders emerging behind her. There are firm plans to share responsibilities further as the school grows in size.
- Leaders ensure that the school uses pupil premium funding (this is extra government funding to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils) very effectively. Additional targeted support is received by those who need it the most, and this is helping to raise the attainment of the increasing number of pupils covered by this funding.
- The school is making good use of the primary physical education and sports premium funding to widen the range of coaching skills within its staff and to offer a varied range of sporting and physical experiences to pupils at their early stage of development. As a result of the specific support the school has provided, one pupil has undertaken trials for the county gymnastics squad.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors work closely with the Principal and the directors of the trust. Monitoring records show that the governors and directors are regular visitors to the school and that they take a very active interest in all aspects of its development. Specific governors are linked to areas of the school, such as literacy, mathematics and the performance of disadvantaged pupils and this ensures that these key areas are priorities at all times. Records show that governors ask challenging questions of leaders and that they take their role very seriously.
- Governors have a good understanding of how the school uses its finances. They are aware of the spending and impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sports premium, and insist on regular updates from school leaders.
- Governors compare the school's performance with national data to ensure that pupils will match or exceed academic expectations and standards in the future. They use this information along with internal pupil performance data and school improvement plans to help set challenging performance targets for staff and to determine annual pay increases. Where underperformance is identified, it is dealt with through support plans which are quickly put in place and monitored regularly for improvement. Governors also provide information towards the Principal's annual performance management review, although this procedure is undertaken by the trust
- Governors meet their statutory duties, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. They are alert to the possible impact of wider safeguarding issues such as risks associated with extremism and the need to prepare pupils for life beyond the school's gates. This is assisted by the inclusion of a wide range of skills and backgrounds on the governing body.
- The governing body has a strong relationship with the directors of the trust. Both are supportive of each other and share the same vision and aims for the school. In most cases, governors and directors are clear about where the responsibilities of each body begin and end, although this is not always the case and work is underway to address this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They come to school excited, well prepared for the day ahead and ready to learn. Pupils and parents report that there is no bullying and this is supported by the school's behaviour records.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average and the school has effective systems in place to make sure that pupils attend as often as they possibly can. Where attendance shows signs of declining, school leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to address this so that persistent absences are relatively low. Where they do exist, records show that there have been very specific circumstances.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are most often good. Occasionally, where adults are slow to adapt teaching in response to pupils' progress in lessons, their interest and involvement drops and pupils make less progress than they could do.
- Most pupils behave well around the school. During morning and afternoon playtimes, pupils play peacefully together, taking turns to use climbing equipment and ensuring that rubbish, such as their fruit peelings, is placed into a bin. However, at lunchtimes, there are instances of over-boisterous behaviour, particularly by a minority of boys. Although this is generally dealt with quickly, the same issue can arise again within a short period of time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All adults place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and child protection record keeping systems are good. The Principal ensures that staff are made fully aware of updates in safeguarding practice and that policies and procedures are followed. Where issues over safety or behaviour come to light, the Principal acts quickly and decisively to address these.
- Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and how this can affect other children. They are confident that by telling an adult they will have their problem solved.

- Detailed risk assessments are in place for a range of activities. Leaders use the information from accident and incident records to make changes within the school and its grounds. These effective administrative systems help to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers generally plan lessons that take good account of the learning needs of pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to consider previous learning and identify activities which will support next steps in developing pupils' skills and knowledge. Lessons are often practical in nature and develop pupils' ability to use technology well, such as when pupils used mini metal detectors in a mathematics task to find coins hidden in an outdoor sand pit.
- Teachers encourage pupils to do their best at all times. The school's successful work to involve parents ensures that homework is presented on time. Examples of good quality homework and project work that pupils have completed are on display around the school buildings and it is clear that parents play a significant role in ensuring that these are completed to a very high standard.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and include simple messages in books to make sure that pupils know what to do to improve their work. However, the majority of marking and feedback to pupils is done verbally to make sure that they are clear about their next steps. The presentation of work in pupils' books is of a high standard and both joined handwriting and the use of pens are encouraged from an early age.
- Daily literacy lessons place a high priority on the teaching of reading and early phonics (the sounds that letters make). Teachers are imaginative in their approaches and this helps to engage the interest of potentially reluctant readers, especially boys. For example in a Year 1 lesson, pupils were given an opportunity to experience the seaside in the school's 4D classroom, before being asked to read a seaside story with expression.
- Mathematics teaching is effective. Much work is done to make sure that pupils have a good basic knowledge of calculation skills. More-able learners, in particular, are challenged as can be seen from the addition and subtraction tasks in their workbooks.
- The majority of teaching is at least good. This is reflected in the quality of work in pupils' books and the progress that pupils make during lessons. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are skilful in their questioning and expect pupils to use extended sentences and thoughtful word choices in their answers. As a result, pupils progress more quickly in these situations, particularly those who are more able.
- The school places high expectations on its pupils to achieve well. Teachers set targets for most pupils to make at least expected and often more than expected progress throughout the year and these targets are reviewed regularly. Disabled pupils and those with special education needs do not attain as highly and their targets are less aspirational than for other groups of pupils.
- In the majority of lessons, the deployment of additional adults helps pupils to learn quickly. They work with small groups of pupils to deliver plans set by class teachers. Where this works well, pupils are engrossed in tasks and enjoy their learning. However, adults do not always respond quickly enough to identify the next steps in learning for pupils as the lesson progresses. As a result, pupils sometimes lose interest and they do not achieve as well as they could do.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school's own data on pupils' performance suggest that, from their starting points, the achievement of the majority of pupils is at least good. These data also show that the rate of improvement in pupils' progress has increased as the current academic year has progressed.
- The majority of children enter the school at levels of development which are typical, or below that which is typical, for their age. A significant minority of pupils enter the school with no formal pre-school

experience and are from families where parents are new to the country and the English language.

- Published data show that, in 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development, by the time they left the early years classes, was in line with that seen nationally. Achievement is less strong in communication and language, particularly speaking, and in mathematics and understanding the world. Boys' development was significantly below that typically seen nationally in these three areas and also in literacy.
- Current internal data for early years show that children are making good progress across the literacy and mathematics elements of their development. Rates of progress have increased more quickly in the school's most recent analysis. This is supported by work in pupils' books which is of an increasingly high standard. Consequently, the school is successfully addressing areas which were initially weaker.
- Pupils make good progress in developing early reading skills from their different starting points. However, pupils' provisional results in the national school phonic screening check of Year 1 pupils in 2015 show that the proportion meeting the national standard will be slightly below the 2014 national average.
- The school's internal data show that most groups of pupil's progress well over time, particularly girls. The attainment of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and that of boys, especially in writing, is less strong, although their rates of progress are accelerating.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well over time with no significant gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- The Reception classes provide children with a good start to their education. For a significant majority of children and their parents, this is their first experience of formal education in an adopted country. The school understands this and works hard to make families feel welcome.
- Parents are expected to attend workshops prior to their child starting at the school. This ensures that they are aware of what to expect and what the school will offer them by way of support. After their child starts Reception, parents are regular contributors to individual and personalised learning journals which chart their child's development during their first year at the school. Parents are very positive about the good start their children make and rightly feel that their children are safe and well cared for.
- The leadership of early years is good. The leader has a good grasp of the strengths and areas for development required to improve the early years further. She ensures that the setting is safe and that children are not put at risk of harm.
- Children behave well and are respectful of each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well catered for. They enjoy learning about aspects of life in modern Britain through activities such as their seaside role play area, where they can sit in a deck chair by the sand or enjoy selling ice creams from a kiosk.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers generally match activities carefully to the learning needs of the children. They link activities covering different topics together well so that the children begin to understand the connections between different subjects, and are clear about the intended learning they expect from children. Occasionally, children are unclear about what they are expected to do and learn. Additional adults often work with small groups of children to support their learning. However, at times, some of the adults stick too rigidly to lesson plans and children lose interest in what they are doing. At these times, progress slows and children do not achieve as well as they could do.
- From their starting points, children make good progress over time. Leaders have taken steps to address areas where children performed less well in the past, such as communication and language, and understanding the world, by ensuring that specific activities are given to children to support their learning in these areas. As a result, an increasing proportion of children are ready for their move from the early years into Key Stage 1.

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	139597
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	450119

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Mariott
Principal	Jo Bland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01205353062
Email address	enquiries@bostonpioneers.co.uk

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