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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr J McHenry
Headteacher
The Boston Grammar School
South End
Boston
Lincolnshire
PE21 6JY

Dear Mr McHenry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Boston Grammar School

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the progress of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils
- ensure that all teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and provide them with work that is suitably challenging
- ensure that feedback to pupils helps them to understand where they have made mistakes and how to improve.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and history and two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority. I visited classrooms across a range of subjects in Years 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 with the assistant headteacher for teaching and learning. I spoke with pupils during these visits and looked at their work. I evaluated the school self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I reviewed a range of school documents and the school's single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes. A new deputy headteacher, with responsibility for achievement and standards, started in September 2016. Eight teachers have left the school, including four subject leaders, and eight new teachers have been appointed. Two other subject leaders have stepped down from their roles. There are now seven new subject leaders from September 2016. You have also appointed a non-teaching member of staff to support key stage 4 pupils and given an existing assistant headteacher responsibility for the sixth form.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and governors have taken appropriate steps to act on areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You have strengthened the capacity of leaders at all levels by your recent appointments of senior and middle leaders. You have joined the Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and brokered the support of a national leader of education. You have put together a coherent and appropriate school improvement plan. This is known and understood by all staff. You have a vision of 'excellence' for pupils and staff are in no doubt about your higher expectations.

The governing body commissioned an external review of governance. As a result, it is now much clearer about its role in supporting you, holding the school to account for government funding and checking the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes. The governing body is aspirational for pupils and has an accurate view of what the school needs to do to realise the full potential of every pupil.

You have taken prompt action to improve how you monitor pupils' performance and now have an effective assessment system in place. You have worked with other local schools to ensure that teachers' judgements on pupils' work are accurate. Consequently, you can now put in place more timely support for any pupil who is not making enough progress. You acknowledge that more pupils need to reach the

highest levels at key stages 4 and 5, and you have set pupils more ambitious targets to help achieve this.

Subject leaders are clearer about their roles. You have given them more opportunities to meet as a team and with senior leaders, which they have valued greatly. You have provided them with training on judging the quality of teaching and learning and using the new assessment system to monitor their subject areas. Senior and middle leaders now use a range of information to check on the quality of teaching and learning. They conduct short visits to classes, look at pupils' work and take into account the progress that pupils are making. Staff have a more accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in their subject areas and provide more appropriate support and challenge to teachers.

You have ensured that staff are focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. You have provided a range of training opportunities for all staff, both in school and through organised visits to good and outstanding schools. Staff have appreciated being able to share knowledge and discuss good practice. You understand that more work is needed to ensure that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide them with work that is suitably challenging. Leaders have also rightly identified that the school marking policy needs to be reviewed, to ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to use feedback to understand where they have made mistakes and how to improve.

Leaders of all levels have taken effective action to raise the expectations of the most able pupils and to ensure that teachers plan to meet their needs. All staff are fully aware of this as a school priority. Subject leaders have reviewed schemes of work and planned for more opportunities for pupils to develop higher-level skills. You have raised pupils' aspirations and ensured that they understand the importance of their learning through school assemblies. Your current data indicates that, while middle-ability pupils are making good progress, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, need to make more progress.

Leaders have raised standards and expectations in the sixth form. You have provided students with impartial career advice and guidance and ensured that they have the appropriate GCSE levels to follow suitable study programmes in the sixth form. Leaders made the decision to change from mixed-age tutor groups to year-group tutor groups. You feel that this has enabled students to receive more appropriate support and guidance during tutor time, particularly in the sixth form. You have also arranged for external visitors from industry to help students learn about different career options.

The assistant headteacher for sixth form works closely with subject leaders to check on students' progress and the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. She has also listened to pupils' views and suggestions. There is now much more timely support for any pupil who is falling behind. Parents are quickly informed and involved if this is the case. Subject leaders welcomed the introduction of supervised

study time in the sixth form and can now be assured that students will complete any additional work which they set. Leaders have reinforced the importance of good attendance for sixth-form students and have taken more prompt action when students miss school. Attendance has improved significantly as a result.

Your single central record meets statutory requirements.

External support

The school has drawn effectively on a variety of external support. Since the last inspection, you have joined the Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and work with a national leader of education. You have arranged for staff to visit an outstanding grammar school, where a high proportion of pupils achieve the highest grades at key stages 4 and 5. Subject leaders attend county subject networks, where they are able to share good practice and moderate pupils' work. You are being mentored by a headteacher from an outstanding grammar school. You told me how much you have valued working with external support to bring new ideas into the school to improve pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector