

13 February 2019

Miss Jo Bland
Executive Headteacher
Boston Pioneers Free School Academy
Fydell Crescent
Boston
Lincolnshire
PE21 8SS

Dear Miss Bland

Short inspection of Boston Pioneers Free School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school very well. The vast majority of parents and carers and staff regard your leadership highly. You have ensured that leadership roles are much more effectively shared than at the time of the previous inspection, and subject leaders are now making an important contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects. The Boston Witham Academy Trust provides a high-quality source of challenge and support for the school. Governance at trustee level and at the level of the local governing body is also effective. The governing body is well organised and knows about the school in detail.

You have ensured that all leaders are fully aware of exactly where further improvements are needed and where to focus their efforts to make the school better. Regular checks are carried out, so that other leaders and class teachers know which particular pupils are at risk of not doing as well as they could in their learning. Leaders ensure that additional support is provided for those pupils who need it most. You have established strong procedures to keep a close eye on the progress of groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils or the large proportion of pupils who joined the school with little spoken English. All groups of pupils make good progress in their learning as they move through the school.

Pupils are very polite and helpful to one another and to adults. They work hard and concentrate in lessons and take their learning seriously. They show respect for the safety of other pupils and act safely themselves. The school is a very caring school

and is closely focused on the needs of all pupils. Staff make a great deal of effort to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for. Pupils enjoy school and respond well to the strong procedures established to ensure that they attend regularly. Rates of attendance are gradually rising. This year, attendance was a little higher than the most recent national average.

The quality of teaching and the use of assessment are good. Pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and how to move their learning forward. Some teachers are highly skilled at drawing on pupils' mistakes and misconceptions to present and explain knowledge and concepts in a way that is easier for pupils to understand. This is a key factor in helping pupils to make good progress.

The school's focus on helping pupils develop their skills in speaking and listening is helping to develop their general confidence in their use of English. The school teaches reading well. Good-quality phonics teaching in younger classes and daily reading sessions help pupils to develop their reading skills well; pupils enjoy reading. Pupils respond well to the rewards you provide for reading regularly. Although pupils mostly make good progress in their writing, their attainment is not as high in writing as it is in reading and mathematics. This is particularly the case in Year 5, where standards of writing are below those expected for pupils of this age. The work you are doing to improve standards of writing is beginning to bear fruit. More pupils are on track to attain greater depth in their learning than in previous years. This is especially the case in Year 2.

Because provision in early years is good, children enjoy their learning in Reception and make good progress. They are responding well to the school's efforts to raise expectations. Children play and learn happily in Reception and behave well and do as they are told. Standards of care and safety are high, and the Reception classroom areas provide a good-quality learning environment for the children. On occasion, adults do not sufficiently use what they know about the learning of individual children to move their learning forward quickly, for example by asking carefully tailored questions when children are working independently.

Almost all the parents I spoke to regard the school very highly and the school's recent survey of parents' views supports this view. The pupils I spoke to were very proud to be 'Pioneers' and older pupils said that they wished there were a 'Pioneers' secondary school that they could go to when they leave.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements and are fit for purpose. Record keeping is meticulous, and records are detailed. A strong culture of safeguarding is evident throughout the school. Because training is effective, all staff understand their responsibilities and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe in school. The governing body, staff from the Boston Witham Academy Trust and the school administrator and senior leaders all carry out their safeguarding roles effectively. Regular checks are carried out that

safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective.

Inspection findings

- The strong emphasis on teaching phonics in the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 has paid dividends and Year 1 pupils progress well to attain the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils in Year 2 this year are progressing well in reading, writing and mathematics and more pupils are achieving greater depth, particularly in their reading and mathematics. Achievement in writing is not quite as strong.
- In key stage 2, pupils also make good progress, especially in their reading and mathematics. Pupils' work and the school's accurate assessments show that the proportion of pupils attaining standards expected for their age is growing. However, in Year 5, standards, particularly in writing, remain below those that are typical for pupils of this age.
- Disadvantaged pupils do particularly well due to effective use of the pupil premium funding. The individual support provided for disadvantaged Year 1 pupils who are behind with their reading has been beneficial. Many pupils who received this support made very good progress in their reading and caught up with other pupils.
- Teachers assess pupils' work carefully and accurately. They provide good-quality guidance to pupils on how they should improve their work. Some teachers are not as skilled as others in carrying out the school's policy of identifying misconceptions and mistakes in order to help pupils avoid common errors and to learn from their mistakes.
- The approach to monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching has been effective in identifying where improvement is required. Staff have responded well to feedback and training to improve their practice. Senior leaders are demonstrating good capacity to continue to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in the future.
- Staff appreciate the good-quality guidance they receive on how to continually improve their skills in teaching. You not only provide high-quality coaching for staff personally, but also help other leaders improve provision in their areas of responsibility. You have ensured that staff continually hone their skills as teachers and learn from one another.
- You have been very effective in ensuring that staff assess pupils' learning accurately. Staff not only work with other staff in the school, but also work with teachers in other schools, to check that they assess work accurately. You keep a continual check on the accuracy of teachers' assessments and this means that your school records provide an accurate picture of the progress pupils make in their learning.
- The changes you have led in early years are beginning to bear fruit and children are achieving better than previously. There is, however, more to be done to provide the best quality of support for learning through play, when children are working independently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff throughout the school continue to focus on improving attainment in writing, particularly in Year 5
- in early years, all staff use assessments to inform their interventions when children are learning independently.

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

Yours sincerely

Roger Sadler
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Before and during the inspection, I analysed the performance of the school in comparison with other schools nationally. During the inspection, I evaluated the school's own records of pupils' attainment and progress. We jointly observed teaching and learning in classes. I also looked at past and current work of pupils of different abilities and compared pupils' work with the school's assessment records. A meeting was held with two members of the governing body. I analysed documents, including plans for the school's improvement and reports showing the school's view of its own performance. I looked at recent reports on the school's effectiveness. I met the school's external improvement adviser. I evaluated the school's website. Safeguarding documents, policies and records relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour, welfare and safety, and attendance were inspected.

I analysed the 28 responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also analysed the results of the 78 returns to the school's own survey of parents' views undertaken in October 2018, and spoke to 41 parents of 61 children outside the school on the day of the inspection. Pupils' views were gathered through a pre-arranged meeting and informally around the school.