

Inspection of The Boston Grammar School

South End, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6JY

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an inclusive, welcoming school, with a popular sixth form. The curriculum is broad. Pupils can select from a wide range of courses. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and expectations are high. Subject leaders have improved the curriculum so that pupils learn the key information they need at the right time. Most pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, are achieving better than they have done previously. Achievement in the sixth form has similarly improved. However, support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is inconsistent.

Relationships are positive. Pupils are happy at the school and say that they feel safe. They wear their uniform smartly. The school is a calm and orderly place. Most pupils behave well. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. Pupils say that bullying rarely occurs. They feel confident that staff will address any issues that occur. Pupils are well cared for.

School assemblies are thought-provoking. They give pupils opportunities to think about issues such as equality, including Black History Month. Pupils can take part in many enrichment activities, including sports, music and robotics. They can join in with the school's links with over 20 European countries.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors have created a positive school culture. They have a clear and ambitious vision, rooted in the school's 'golden principles', that pupils should achieve highly. Leaders have sustained their determination to improve the quality of education during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

The curriculum is ambitious. Subject leaders have received high-quality training to help enhance their plans about what is taught and when. Dedicated time for training has been used well. As one member of staff said, 'The curriculum is "streets ahead" from where it used to be'. This is particularly the case in subjects such as mathematics, science, art and physical education. In subjects such as design and technology, pupils' practical knowledge is recovering quickly following the recent restrictions.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Most teachers use this knowledge to question pupils and check levels of understanding. Teachers use a range of methods to check the depth of pupils' learning. However, in several subjects, some teachers do not routinely check that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving learning on. When this occurs, some pupils leave their work incomplete.

Sometimes, pupils do not challenge themselves to think about concepts and ideas in greater depth. This is especially the case in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). There is a wider variation in how well pupils discuss issues during tutor time. This includes topics such as the mental health and well-being of men, for

example. In contrast, pupils' learning in life skills sessions and in the sixth form is preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

The recent appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has strengthened leaders' oversight of the quality of education for pupils with SEND. However, support for these pupils is inconsistent. Leaders have not checked the effectiveness of this support.

The support given to pupils who struggle to read is also at an early stage of renewal after the recent restrictions. Leaders know that it is important that these pupils can read fluently as quickly as possible.

Pupils feel well cared for. They receive impartial guidance as part of the school's careers programme. This programme meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which under the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 (as amended) requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. The guidance for students in the sixth form is particularly strong.

Leaders ensure that they look after pupils with protected characteristics well and that these pupils feel safe in school. A new group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils is helping to raise greater awareness about diversity. Pupils of different faiths have a dedicated space for prayer. Pupils in all year groups have many opportunities to enjoy extra-curricular activities. Experiences such as a pilgrimage to Lourdes and a recent visit to the Imperial War Museum add to pupils' cultural development.

The behaviour of most pupils is good. Levels of attendance since the recent national restrictions have recovered quickly. Leaders are taking steps to improve attendance by pupils who are regularly absent, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use exclusions appropriately, as a sanction of last resort.

Governors are effective in holding leaders to account. Leaders consider the well-being of staff. Morale is high. The large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding. All staff complete a package of online training. Staff understand their responsibilities and the procedures for reporting concerns. Fortnightly meetings help leaders to identify any concerns and act promptly to keep pupils safe. In this, leaders work with external agencies when appropriate. Leaders respond swiftly to support pupils at risk of harm, including harmful sexual behaviour. Leaders' knowledge of local risks informs the teaching of safety. Risks include substance misuse and extremism, for example. Pupils know that they can speak to an adult if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, particularly PSHE during tutor time, there is variability in how some teachers check what pupils know and remember from what has been taught. When this is the case, pupils sometimes opt out of completing tasks. Sometimes, they do not participate in discussions as fully as they might. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to check accurately that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, have a secure understanding of the concepts and ideas taught before moving learning on.
- Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. However, the support these pupils receive is inconsistent. There is variability in how well teachers adapt the curriculum for some pupils with SEND. When learning activities are not precisely tailored to meet their needs, these pupils can be left with gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that new systems recently introduced to support and monitor pupils with SEND swiftly help these pupils to achieve well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139180
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10200140
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	812
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phillip Bosworth
Headteacher	John McHenry
Website	www.bostongrammarschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 February 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, the school was not using any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with leaders of the sixth form, careers education

and provision for pupils with SEND. Inspectors also met with the coordinator for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

- A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English; design and technology; mathematics; and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, scrutinised the work in pupils' books, and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.
- To check the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding leads. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were evaluated. This included a review of the school's single central record and the school's processes for recruiting staff.
- We spoke to several groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form. We also spoke with pupils informally around the school site.
- The lead inspector considered 77 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the 69 responses to the free-text service. The 33 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 58 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey were also considered.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Sweeney	Ofsted Inspector
Vondra Mays	Ofsted Inspector
Keval Thakrar	Ofsted Inspector

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