



Boston Spa School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108091
LEA Leeds
Inspection number 277900
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Clifford Moor Road
School category	Community		Boston Spa
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 6RW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01937 846636
Number on roll	1880	Fax number	01937 841069
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Stephen Hall
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2000	Headteacher	Dr Alun Rees

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Boston Spa is a popular comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-19 years old. It is much bigger than other secondary schools with 1,880 students on roll, including 350 in the sixth form. The school is located in a largely rural and semi rural area, approximately 4 miles from Wetherby. The school community is predominantly white British; the largest minority ethnic group is Indian and Pakistani. The students come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Approximately 11% of students are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. Students entering the school have achieved results at primary school which are above the national average. Just under 9% of students have been identified as having specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is well below average. Very few students join or leave school at times other than in Year 7 or at the end of Year 11

The school was awarded specialist sports college status in 2000 and successfully achieved re-designation of this status in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Boston Spa School is satisfactory with some good features. Many students enjoy the benefits of being at a sports specialist college. They show an excellent awareness of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle and many participate in a range of activities which help develop their confidence and team working skills.

The school judges itself to be satisfactory and inspectors agree with this judgement. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall pass rates are above national averages. But this masks some underachievement; from above average attainment on entry to the school, students' progress by the end of Year 9 is inadequate. By the end of year 11 most students catch up and make the progress expected of them although pupils of lower ability do not make sufficiently good progress. There are many strategies in place to address underachievement and some of these are now beginning to have an impact. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory; the school provides many good opportunities for cultural development, but the behaviour of some students is detrimental to the learning of others. Teaching and learning in the main school are satisfactory overall. Although much teaching is good, there is too much variation in the overall quality of lessons. Marking of students' work is inconsistent and students are not always clear about what they have to do to improve. Data is beginning to be used effectively to set targets and monitor students' progress, but this is not yet sufficiently well embedded in all areas of the school. The curriculum is satisfactory, as is the care, guidance and support provided for pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions to improve the school's performance have been taken, and some are effective, but they are not always monitored or evaluated well enough in order to assess their impact. Since the last inspection, all of the key issues identified have been addressed. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form is good. It is well led and managed. The curriculum offers an extensive range of academic courses and a growing number of vocational options which meets students' needs very well. Personal development in the sixth form is good. Students enter the sixth form with average attainment. They achieve very well because of the good teaching they receive and their very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is good and the number of students who complete their courses is generally high, though this varies from subject to subject. Nearly all students progress to higher education at the end of Year 13.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor, evaluate and review more carefully all strategies used to raise achievement and standards and use the results to set more challenging targets.

- Ensure that best practice in teaching, learning and assessment is shared with all teachers.
- Continue to ensure that student review systems are implemented rigorously across all departments.
- Apply the behaviour policy more consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Results in tests at the end of Year 9 and examinations at the end of Year 11 are above average. In all years, the most able students achieve standards at least in line with those expected, and this is reflected both in formal tests and examination results and in work seen in lessons. Some do not do as well as they should; in 2005, pupils of lower ability did not make sufficiently good progress compared to their prior attainment. However, the school has a track record of providing effective additional support to groups who underachieved; for example, boys of average and above average ability. Consequently there has been measurable improvement in this group's results over the last two years. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make similar progress to other students.

Results in English and science in both Year 9 and Year 11 improved in 2005. Although recent mathematics results were significantly below expectations in 2005, better strategic planning and management is having an impact on standards and this is already seen in the classroom. Inadequate provision for information and communication technology (ICT) leads directly to unsatisfactory achievement. The system for tracking students' progress and identifying more widely those in need of support is not yet fully embedded. This, together with modest rather than challenging whole school targets, has inhibited students' progress until recently.

Achievement and standards in the sixth form are good; from average attainment on entry to the sixth form, most students achieve results better than those predicted by their GCSE scores.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some significant strengths. Through personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and subjects across the curriculum, students' develop a good sense of right and wrong and learn about the role of the citizen. Cultural development is good. There are particular strengths in the expressive arts and in foreign exchanges. Spiritual development is satisfactory. There are many opportunities in religious education, but spirituality is not promoted coherently across the curriculum and there are insufficient opportunities

for students to ask their own questions and be creative. Social development is only satisfactory because of disruptive behaviour in some lessons. Attendance is satisfactory.

Students say they feel safe in school. There are no significant problems with bullying or racist behaviour and most students know that problems are dealt with effectively and quickly. Students are conscious of safety issues and have an excellent awareness of what a healthy lifestyle involves. The school has the Sportsmark Gold Award in recognition of the breadth of extra curricular sporting activities and there is a good uptake of healthy food options. Students make a good contribution to the community through a range of activities including charity fundraising, community work, the developing school council and the Junior Sports Leader Award. Skills for life after school are satisfactory overall. Although there is a skills development programme, there have been weaknesses in students' numeracy and ICT skills.

Sixth form students have very positive attitudes. They take their work seriously and many are able to work independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Many teachers generate a lively pace that keeps everyone on their toes and provide a variety of well planned tasks that engage and challenge their students. Activities are well matched to their needs and interests and most students respond well. But there are also lessons which fail to inspire students because they are dominated by too much talk by the teacher and students are not encouraged to take an active role. Low level misbehaviour by a small but significant minority impedes the progress of some students. There is much good teaching, but the best practice is not adopted consistently by all teachers in the school.

Assessment practice is satisfactory overall. Whilst there is good practice in many subjects, in others, the quality of feedback in marking does not always give students a clear understanding of how to improve the standard of their work. In some cases, students' progress is adversely affected.

In the sixth form teaching is generally good. Most teachers provide clear guidance on how students can improve their work and reach their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. In keeping with a school with sports college status, more time is given to physical education than in most schools and this makes a valuable contribution to students' health and well-being. The school provides

effective support to students with literacy difficulties. In Years 10 and 11, the provision of separate sciences and statistics alongside Mathematics satisfies the needs of more able students. The school also provides a good vocational programme for a small group of students. However, the allocation of less than 23 hours per week of teaching time inhibits students' learning. For example, in Year 9, students do not have enough access to ICT lessons in order to reach the highest levels. The school is currently undertaking a curriculum review in order to address this issue and provide better course options for all students. A wide range of enrichment activities enhances the personal development of students and participation in these is generally good.

In the sixth form the curriculum is good and offers an extensive range of academic and an increasing number of vocational courses to meet the needs of its students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is satisfactory, but with significant strengths. Good attention is paid to health and safety matters, and there are thorough arrangements for child protection. Students receive comprehensive guidance on making options choices at different stages in the school and careers education is good.

Arrangements to track and monitor students' progress have been strengthened; a new computerised system enables data to be more readily available to all staff. Students' progress is now tracked more frequently, offering the scope for earlier intervention to tackle underachievement. However, the process is not yet fully embedded and the school knows that more work needs to be done here. Reports to parents have been revised, providing better information about what students need to do to improve. Mentoring systems have been expanded in recent years, and the school now provides on-line support for all year groups through educational programmes. Overall, progress of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, although it is good for some groups in the lower school.

Sixth form students are well supported. Systems to track and monitor their progress are effective. They receive good support in their applications to further or higher education or to employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully raised awareness of the need to improve students' achievement and has strongly promoted their health and well-being. Senior colleagues help shape the school's development, and an increasingly confident middle management team displays a common sense of purpose. This has been achieved through the creation of new opportunities for responsibility and monitoring, and well focused training. The school

shows a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Actions have been taken to address many weaknesses, but the schools' approach sometimes lacks cohesion and the impact of actions is not sufficiently evaluated.

The school's national recognition as an exemplary specialist sports college is a major success. However, the general improvement in achievement is only satisfactory and areas of inadequacy persist. Subject leaders and those with pastoral responsibility are assiduously seeking ways of matching provision to students' abilities and aspirations. The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved and has successfully increased the amount of good or better lessons. But there are insufficient opportunities to share best practice and too much of the teaching remains satisfactory. Governors are strongly committed to the school and show satisfactory knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. However, they have not been sufficiently challenging, especially about weaknesses in achievements and standards.

A recently established school council has improved the way that students' views are considered and the school works hard to maintain good communication with parents and carers and other external partners. All of the key issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed, including much improved accommodation for science, and this demonstrates the school's capacity for improvement. Resources are generally well deployed.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good; the high standards identified in the previous inspection have been maintained and students speak highly of the support they receive.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school. We appreciated the time many of you gave to talk with us and to let us know your views. The purpose of our visit was to find out what your school does well and the areas that need to improve.

- The Headteacher and staff have been successful in helping many of you to improve your exam results at all levels. However, many of you do not make as much progress as you should, especially between Years 7 and 9. You need to try harder to achieve the best results possible and you should ask your teachers to help you with this so that they can show you how you can improve your work.

- In some subjects we have asked the school to improve the opportunities you have to do well and help you to reach the highest levels of your ability.

- Teaching is good in some areas of the school, but some of your lessons do not give you the chance to be involved in different activities that will help you to learn and make progress more quickly.

- Boston Spa School cares well for you, and encourages you to lead healthy lifestyles. Many of you could take good advantage of the opportunities to participate in sport.

- Your behaviour around the school is generally fine, but quite a few students are disruptive in lessons and this stops others from making as much progress as they could. The school will be looking at ways to encourage everyone to be more responsible and have better attitudes towards each other in lessons so that everyone has the chance to do their best. It is important that you help your teachers by showing respect for each other in lessons.

- Students in the sixth form make good progress. The school has worked really hard to provide you with a good range of subjects to choose from. Students like the atmosphere in the sixth form and feel well supported.

Finally, please can we thank you again for welcoming us into your school and being so friendly and polite. We wish you every success for the future.