



Boston High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120640
LEA LINCOLNSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280860
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Pam Haezewindt LI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Spilsby Road
School category	Community		PE21 9PF
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01205310505
Number on roll	757	Fax number	01205350235
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Andrew Wallis
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2004	Headteacher	Mrs. Helen McEvoy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Boston High School is a selective, smaller than average secondary school for girls and has a smaller than average sixth form. It takes boys into the sixth form. The very large majority of students are of White British background. The school has a much lower than average number of students eligible for free school meals or identified with specific learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection team agree with the school that Boston High is an effective school which provides good value for money. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Almost all parents and carers think the school is now doing well. Standards are high and progress is now good. Students' personal development is excellent and the care, guidance and support they are given, which were unsatisfactory in the previous inspection, are now outstanding. Teaching is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. There remains some less good teaching, in particular in information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages (MFL) and occasionally in other subjects, which results in poorer progress. There are good examples of marking to ensure improvement but the overall quality is inconsistent. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers guidance are now good but citizenship still needs development. Leadership and management have improved greatly since the last inspection. There is now a strong lead from the top, ably supported by senior leaders, governors and most middle managers, and rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluation at all levels. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school has very good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students are provided with a good range of mainly academic courses that are well suited to their needs and aspirations. As a result, virtually all students complete their courses and are well prepared for their future studies and employment. Within a well structured learning environment, students benefit from much good and sometimes outstanding teaching. In the best lessons, students are actively engaged and respond well to questioning that challenges and extends their thinking. But in some lessons, students are too passive and over-dependent on their teachers. In discussion, students expressed concern about provision in ICT and the school is tackling this issue. Students are provided with excellent care and support. Their progress is carefully monitored and prompt action is taken to provide additional support where necessary. This makes a significant contribution to students' progress and high standards. Students' response to the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school is excellent. They take leading roles in the many school, house and community activities and participation rates in the very good range of enrichment activities are high. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development, which is outstanding. Through their positive attitudes and commitment to the well-being of others, sixth form students provide excellent role models for younger students and are outstanding ambassadors for the school. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teaching further in each phase to ensure that all students are challenged well and actively engaged in learning, and that marking is carried out consistently well to help students improve. - Ensure greater consistency in learning in some departments, particularly ICT and MFL. - Improve provision for citizenship.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Learners now achieve well. Standards on entry to the school are well above average. The school achieved the targets set for 2005 and results in the Year 9 national tests and Year 11 GCSE examinations were high. These results represented at least satisfactory achievement for this cohort of pupils when standards on entry were taken into account. There were no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or physical disabilities. However, there were differences in students' achievement in the core subjects. In the tests and examinations, progress in science and mathematics was better than the progress made in English. Inspection evidence indicates that the progress being made by students in Years 7 to 11 is now good. Central to the drive to raise achievement is the more effective use of assessment information for monitoring students' progress so that prompt action can be taken if a student is underperforming. The school has identified the need to ensure that more students achieve the highest GCSE grades and end of key stage levels and this is reflected in the school's challenging targets and the progress now being made. Measures have been put in place to improve English and these were evident during the inspection. Students make good progress in the sixth form and standards are high. This applies to those who have been in the school since the age of eleven and those who join at 16. Similar strategies to those being implemented in the main school are helping to ensure that students achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Almost all students really enjoy coming to school. Attendance is well above average. Behaviour in lessons is generally excellent although there are a few incidents of inattentiveness, where the occasional lesson does not provide sufficient challenge. Students appreciate and enjoy the opportunities and encouragement offered to them by the school to eat healthily and participate in sporting activities. Students feel very safe at school and any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff, although such incidents are rare. The new tutor group system, combining students from all year groups, is effective. Younger students feel very well supported by the older students and they in turn are able to develop useful skills. The House system is good. The work of the School Council is not fully understood by some students, particularly younger ones, and its role needs development. The number of students who continue their education in the sixth form is extremely high. Students of all ages prepare well for future studies and employment.

Students' moral and social development is now good, and excellent in the sixth form. Spiritual development has improved greatly since the last inspection and is now good, although the use of 'Thought for the Day' in tutor time is inconsistent. Good efforts are being made to prepare students for living in a multicultural society. They show an awareness and understanding of the needs of others and contribute enthusiastically to fund-raising events for local and international charities. Many of these events are organised very confidently by the older students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence showed that the school is correct in its judgement that teaching is good and learners are making good progress. However, there is still some teaching which results in a few lessons which are only satisfactory or in extreme cases unsatisfactory. This tends to be in specific subject areas, for example ICT and MFL. Equally there were a few lessons which were judged outstanding in all aspects and several good lessons which had outstanding features. Characteristics of good or outstanding lessons included very good planning, the right amount of challenge and very good starter and end of lesson activities. Teachers were knowledgeable, enthusiastic, managed time well and formed very good working relationships with students. All these factors ensured that students were engaged well. In lessons which were unsatisfactory, and in one or two satisfactory lessons, the pace was too slow, planning failed to take account of students' abilities, management of the rare instances of potentially disruptive behaviour were weak, and sometimes students were allowed to be passive for too long. The school is very aware of where teaching needs to improve and provides good support to try to improve it. Assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection. The analysis of information to determine individual progress and needs is very good and there is good evidence that many teachers use this well to plan lessons. The focus is much more on individual student's progress than it was at the time of the last inspection. Students know their levels and grades they are working towards and in many cases they are clear what this means in their individual subjects. Many teachers are beginning to use good strategies to assess students' learning in lessons and help students assess their own learning. This was observed in Spanish and art. Although the school's assessment, reporting and recording policy indicates that when marking teachers should annotate students' work with clear points for improvement, this is carried out inconsistently. Students themselves said that it would be helpful to have more consistent information about what they need to do to improve written on their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in the main school and in the sixth form. It meets statutory requirements. Although the range of vocational courses is very limited, the curriculum

overall is well matched to the needs, aspirations and capabilities of students. Provision for the small number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities has improved significantly. Provision for students who are gifted and talented is improving, for example, in English and history. There is a wide range of academic courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form leading to GCSE, advanced subsidiary and advanced level accreditation. There are plans to broaden this range further. Provision for non-examined work-related learning has improved, and careers education is good. Work experience is well managed although students consider that a placement of one week in Year 10 is too short. There are plans to introduce a small number of vocational courses, for example, applied ICT, and to extend links with other schools and colleges for vocational education. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is good. The curriculum for personal, social, and health education has improved. It provides good support for students' personal safety and healthy lifestyles. Students can also opt for a GCSE in physical education, and for a double GCSE in health and social care. Almost all students in Year 11 gain the Junior Sports Leader Award. There has been a very thorough audit of the contribution of the curriculum to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Planning for citizenship still requires further development. There is wide participation in a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, especially in music, sport and drama. Additional support for students preparing for examinations is very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for students throughout the school is outstanding. They are well cared for by a very dedicated and committed staff. Students of all ages feel able to approach staff for help and advice with work and personal problems. Most staff know their students very well and are sensitive to their needs. Highly effective support is provided through 'drop-in' sessions in some subjects. Assessment systems are now good and the school is actively working to develop these further. The younger students like and benefit from the guidance and support given to them by older students. This also helps them to settle in very quickly when they start school. Students speak very highly of the strong 'family' atmosphere in the school. Guidance given, to help students make informed choices as they progress through the school, and beyond, is very good. Parents and carers receive good quality reports about their children's progress. Care is taken to ensure that all staff new to the school are trained in child protection procedures. These are now fully in place and are reviewed regularly. Very clear and effective arrangements for health and safety and risk assessments are in place. The students say that the school provides a very safe and secure environment for them and the inspectors agree with their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are good. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection two years ago where it was

unsatisfactory. Since the headteacher took up her post less than a year ago she has provided outstanding leadership for the school, which is now very successfully focussed on improving students' progress and their personal development and well being. The headteacher is very well supported by the senior leadership team and governors and together they have created a common sense of purpose amongst all staff since the previous inspection. Governors are now both supportive and challenging. For the most part middle leaders are providing good leadership, and the school's clear focus on leadership as well as management is helping this. The school actively encourages strategic development and some subject leaders, including most core subject leaders have completed national leadership courses. There is now effective monitoring and evaluation of students' performance which has resulted, alongside a continuous focus on improving teaching and learning, in improving students' achievement. Performance management is well linked to students' performance and teacher development. The school's monitoring of lessons is robust and regular but the observation form requires more explicit judgements on progress and learning. The school is effectively monitoring its own performance and demonstrates that it knows itself well. There is scope for involving parents and carers more in this process. The school development plan is good, comprehensive and well-focussed on the improvements it needed to make this year, including those in the post Ofsted action plan. There are staffing and development issues in ICT and MFL which the school is tackling. Planning for next and subsequent years is in hand. Resources are used well so that value for money is good. The inherited deficit budget is being very well managed with a good reduction this year. There are good links with agencies and universities, and developing links with neighbouring schools, all of which benefit students. Leadership and management in a very short time have ensured good improvement since the last inspection and provide the school with very good capacity to improve.

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
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

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently I would like to thank you for contributing to the inspection. We enjoyed talking to you very much and were grateful for your directions around the school. We were pleased to find that Boston High School is now a good school which provides you with a good education and excellent care and guidance. Some of its strengths are: - the way it is led by your headteacher, senior staff and governors - the commitment of staff to your education and wellbeing - you, the students, who want to do well and put your best into your work and out of lesson activities - the progress you now make - most of the teaching in most subjects - the work the school is doing to improve both teaching and your results - the curriculum which is appropriate to your needs - almost all parents and carers think the school is now doing well. We have asked the school to continue to improve teaching, and marking where it is not always helpful, and to ensure that you all get consistently good learning opportunities across departments, for example ICT and MFL, where this is not always the case. You can help improve marking by showing teachers or tutors the type of comments on your work that are most helpful. You could also make suggestions about how you learn best in different subjects. Thank you again for your welcome. We enjoyed visiting your school.