

Bourne Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120661
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313707
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	947
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Briggs-Fish
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Maddox
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	South Road Bourne Lincolnshire PE10 9JE
Telephone number	01778 422288
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Age group	11-18
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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

Bourne Grammar school is a similar size to other secondary schools, but with a larger than average sixth form. Very few students are from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. Very few students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a well below average proportion are eligible for free school meals. The school operates in an area where there is a system of selection by ability. Students come from a wide rural area as well as from Bourne itself. Since September 2007 the school has held specialist status in performing arts. Investors in People status was awarded in October 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which is constantly evaluating its performance and seeking to improve. The school has made many improvements under the very strong leadership of the headteacher and his senior leadership team. They are using the school's recently acquired specialist status in performing arts to increase students' confidence and raise standards. Already new ideas in teaching and learning are being tried and students speak very favourably of the increased enjoyment and interest this brings to their lessons. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor the performance of subject departments using the extensive data on achievement that the school collects. As a result, their self-evaluation is accurate and they have tackled areas for improvement with great success. A high proportion of parents took the time to complete the questionnaire for the inspection. Almost 90% of the responses were completely positive about the school and their views are reflected in these words from one of the questionnaires: 'The school gives the impression that it wants every child to achieve the best they possibly can whilst still producing well-rounded individuals. I can only commend how well they succeed.'

Achievement is outstanding. The standards, which students have achieved when they enter the school, are well above average. By the time they reach Year 11 they have made excellent progress so that their results in GCSE examinations are exceptionally high and rising. The vast majority of students achieved five GCSE passes at grade C or above including English and mathematics. Many more achieved the top two grades at GCSE than seen nationally.

An outstanding curriculum reflects the academic nature of the school and meets the individual needs and preferences of the students. It is supplemented by an extensive choice of additional activities ranging from astronomy to musical productions. Every effort is made to ensure that each student has the opportunity to progress at a rate, which is suitable for his or her level of ability. For example, those who are able to progress more rapidly than others are able to embark upon AS level studies in computing in Key Stage 4. Enterprise activities give the students opportunities to develop skills that will help them in their working lives.

The school provides an excellent level of care and guidance, which results in excellent personal development. Students are confident and mature, or as one parent commented: 'I have always felt that my son was supported and inspired to do well. Any issues were dealt with compassionately and firmly. He has become an aspiring and hardworking student'. They greatly enjoy school as shown by their excellent attendance. Their behaviour is exemplary. They appreciate the school's efforts to provide healthy food options and take part in sport regularly. Students told inspectors how safe they feel and relationships are excellent. They show exceptional empathy and concern for others.

The overall quality of teaching is good and the school is working hard to raise it all to that of the best. Teachers generally motivate students with activities which challenge them. They make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons. In some lessons, teachers restrict opportunities for students to be independent in their learning. Many teachers use questioning well to help students to think more deeply about topics and is of particular benefit in challenging the most able.

The school is exceptionally well led by leaders at all levels. The governors provide exceptional challenge and support. Improvements since the last inspection show that the school is very well placed to continue its development and it provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is highly effective. Students' personal development is exceptional. They have mature attitudes, a strong sense of responsibility and impressive leadership qualities. Consequently, many take considerable responsibility for younger students. Relationships are excellent. Students are highly motivated to achieve their best in academic work and do so successfully. Practically everyone completes the courses that they begin. Effective teaching and an extensive choice of advanced courses contribute well to students' outstanding achievement. They reach high standards on AS- and A-level courses. Most continue to higher education, and some attain highly competitive university places. Students are extremely appreciative of the excellent care, support and guidance that they receive from teachers. Staff give their time freely to help students manage their work and plan successfully for the future. Opportunities to enrich their learning are excellent. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent and ensures that each student's needs are recognised and met. The restructured management system shows considerable promise, but it has not yet run long enough for its impact to be fully evaluated.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the excellent practice in teaching more widely across the school to increase the proportion that is outstanding.
- Accelerate the influence of specialist status into all areas of the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

These are outstanding. Students' attainment on entry to the school is well above average. They make outstanding progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. Consequently, standards are exceptionally high throughout. Results in the national tests for 14 year olds put the school in the top 5% of schools nationally in 2007. Almost all students gain at least five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C and above. Many achieve considerably more than this: over half the grades awarded last year were at grade A or A*. Students' A level and AS results are consistently higher than those attained nationally and the vast majority of students go on to higher education establishments. The school effectively removes barriers to progress for the small number who require additional support with their learning. There is no significant variation between genders. Standards have risen steadily in both key stages over time because the school sets challenging targets and rigorously monitors progress. School data indicate continuing improvement in performance in the three specialist subjects towards the targets set.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are exceptional. This school clearly succeeds in its purported aim 'to produce well-rounded individuals who are prepared for the challenges of adulthood and a future in a competitive and rapidly changing world'.

The overwhelming majority of students say they enjoy school. Relationships show warmth and mutual respect. Attendance is exceptionally good. Behaviour is exemplary. Exclusions, both permanent and fixed-term, are extremely rare. Students say they feel safe, that bullying is very rare and any incidences are effectively managed. Arrangements to help new students settle in are outstandingly well developed, and the 'peer listening' provided by older students helps them to feel secure. Many aspects of school life successfully promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and enrich their aesthetic and creative, as well as their academic development. They make an outstanding contribution to both the school and to the wider community. This has been further strengthened through the impact of the school's specialist status. Students take part in regular physical exercise and know the importance of healthy lifestyles. Students show tolerance and understanding of people from a diversity of backgrounds.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning in the main school are good. The students are keen to learn and their behaviour is very good. Sixth form students benefit from teachers' considerable subject expertise and, in the best lessons, lead the learning activities.

Teachers plan lessons to make good use of the time and resources available. They know their students well and expectations are appropriately high. Teachers have access to a wealth of assessment data and are thus able to ensure that students strive to achieve challenging targets. A significant strength of good teaching is the high quality questioning techniques, which provide an effective challenge, particularly for the very able students. In many lessons, teachers use imaginative strategies including information and communication technology (ICT) to engage students. There are varied activities and confident communication. Students readily identify with teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, and interaction in these lessons is often lively. Teachers in the school's specialist subjects are leading helpful training initiatives to enhance teaching and learning across the school.

Students' work is regularly marked, often with constructive comments that will help students to improve, but this is variable. Parents are kept well informed through regular reports and through the student planners.

In the small number of satisfactory lessons seen, teachers spent too much time on a single activity or dominated the discussions and so students did not have the opportunity to develop their learning independently. In some lessons, there is not enough consideration given to students' different styles of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students benefit from outstanding curriculum provision. The school offers a balanced curriculum which is very closely tailored to the needs of its students. It is regularly and very thoroughly reviewed to ensure it keeps abreast of current developments. Issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. Some students told inspectors that they would like the chance to study

an even wider range of subjects although resources have precluded this up to now. However the school works closely with the nearest secondary school in order to plan as efficiently as possible for future developments. Students' education is greatly enriched by the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. The range of sports, musical and cultural activities, charitable work, visits and foreign exchanges is particularly impressive, and participation levels are exceptionally high across all age groups. Public speaking and a range of challenges such as the mathematics and physics Olympiads, increase students' confidence. Enterprise activities and the chance for all to undertake work experience ensure that students are well prepared to transfer to working roles or the next stage of education. Sixth formers have a good choice of advanced academic courses, and impressive enrichment opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Provision for the care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding and the inspectors agree with the school that it is a particular strength. High levels of commitment by form tutors and subject teachers ensure the well-being of all pupils. Rare cases of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Sixth formers support younger students as learning mentors in some subjects and as form prefects. Procedures for child protection and for all aspects of health and safety are meticulously observed.

The school has introduced a very thorough and detailed system for setting targets and monitoring students' attainment. Students' work is regularly assessed, indications of under-achievement are quickly identified, and effective intervention put in place using an exemplary range of strategies. Students know their challenging targets and what they have to do to achieve these. The school also monitors student attitudes and effort by analysing merits and sanctions they receive and this provides tutors and parents with a very clear picture of how well they are progressing. Students identified as gifted and talented are well provided for both in lessons and in a range of extra-curricular activities. Those students receiving extra support achieve very well because of careful consideration of, and appropriate provision for, their particular needs.

The school provides excellent individual advice and high quality careers guidance, so that the choices students make are appropriate for their on-going education and future economic well-being. Excellent arrangements to support students as they transfer from primary school ensure they settle in quickly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leaders of the school have set a very clear vision for future developments and all members of the school community share this. They have set a clear agenda for raising standards and developing the students in the school as well-rounded young people within an academic environment. Leadership and management of the school's specialist status are well structured and much has been done in a short time to influence the quality of education in the school and in the community.

Rigorous systems to monitor the work of the school include the regular inspection of subject departments that take the views of students into account. Regular observation of teaching and a thorough analysis of data on student progress are also included in the process. Heads of departments and year teams regularly monitor the work in their areas. The effectiveness of this self-evaluation has enabled the school to build on what was an already high level of achievement and to address all the issues from the previous inspection.

The buildings are well cared for and through the imaginative use of funding are being developed further to include a fitness suite and in time extended sixth form facilities. As the budget is limited, this represents outstanding value for money. A range of outside agencies support the work of the school and there are arrangements with other schools in the area to enable an extended range of subjects to be offered.

Extensive use is made of ICT both within the school and across the community to improve communications. Many parents spoke favourably of the improved amount of information available to them on the progress their children are making. Recent new posts have been created to strengthen leadership at all levels. Governors are very effective in challenging and supporting the school. They give generously their time to visit regularly the departments with which they are linked or for other support, such as assisting in interviews.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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?	1	1
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bourne Grammar School, Bourne, PE10 9JE

What a pleasure it was to meet you all and may I thank you all on behalf of myself and the other inspectors for the welcome you gave us. You shared with us your thoughts on the school in a most mature and thoughtful way. We could tell how much you enjoy and appreciate all that is offered to you.

We found many things about your school that make it outstanding. For instance:

- You make excellent progress in learning in Years 7 to 11 and then in the sixth form.
- There is a very wide range of opportunities to take part in trips, visits, sporting, musical and other interesting activities. The majority of you take part in some of these.
- The headteacher and his colleagues lead the school extremely well.
- You benefit from good quality teaching.
- The school cares for you and guides you extremely well, which helps you to develop your personal qualities and to become extremely mature and confident young people.
- The way you all care for and support each other.
- The school makes you aware of how well you are doing in your work and gives you targets to improve it.
- The specialist subjects are helping to increase even more your enjoyment of your time in school and we were impressed with how regularly you attend and how well you behave.

We think that your school can improve further by making sure more lessons are as good as the very best ones. We want them to speed up the way the benefits of being a specialist performing arts school are improving the work of the school.

Thank you again for your help in the inspection and for reading this letter. I hope many of you will read the full report I have written which gives more details of our findings.

Elaine Taylor

HMI