

# Boston Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313727
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kenneth Thomas

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	597
6th form	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Shaun McGarry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen McEvoy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	South End Boston Lincolnshire PE21 6JY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01205 366444
<b>Fax number</b>	01205 310702

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average boys' selective school, although girls are admitted into the sixth form. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and all speak English fluently. The overall socio-economic background is favourable. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well below average, including the proportion who have a statement of special educational need. Students enter the school with attainment that, although covering a slightly wider range than in most selective schools, is well above average overall. In addition to having technology college status, the school became a sports college in September 2007. As a result of a falling roll, the school has entered into a federation with Boston High School, with a single headteacher and governing body. The headteacher of Boston High School took up post as head of the federated schools in September 2007. It is planned that the schools will become a single school on a single site, with the first mixed intake in September 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Boston Grammar School provides a good quality of education for its pupils and gives good value for money. The very effective leadership of the headteacher, with good support from governors and senior staff, is characterised by a clear strategic view of the school's future, based on continuous improvement and high achievement for all. Parents, students and staff are justifiably proud of the school's long history and traditions. All concerned are committed to ensuring that these are maintained as the school proceeds to being one with Boston High School. Although some parents have reservations, the views of many were summed up by one who said, 'I believe that federating Boston's two grammar schools will be the improvement of what is already a very good school.' Students are educated in an environment based upon clear values and principles, which influence every aspect of school life, so that pupils feel secure, valued and respected.

Students make good progress and standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have been maintained at a high level since the last inspection. In 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was high in relation to the national average. However, there is some variation in students' achievement between subjects, particularly in mathematics where achievement at the end of Year 11 was well below what it should have been. Virtually all students, including those with particular learning needs, obtain five or more higher GCSE grades.

The headteacher has quickly identified where improvement is needed. The responsibilities of senior and middle managers for monitoring and evaluating work in their areas have been clarified and staff at all levels are more accountable for performance. However, the overall quality and impact of monitoring and evaluation is only satisfactory because there is too much inconsistency in this work by middle managers. Much has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there are many good and occasionally outstanding lessons. In these lessons, students make rapid progress because activities are challenging and allow them to take responsibility for their own learning. The school is improving procedures for assessing students' attainment and tracking their progress. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teachers' marking. While there are examples of very effective marking, in many instances marking does not provide clear enough guidance on the standard of the work. In other instances, marking does not let students know what they must do to improve.

Students' personal development is outstanding because the school's expectations of them are very clear and consistent. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. This has a positive effect on preparing students for their future economic well-being and their clear enjoyment of school, which is reflected in the excellent attendance rate. Underpinning students' good progress are effective care, support and guidance, and a curriculum that is well suited to their needs. The school has benefited from its specialist technology status and curriculum opportunities have been increased through the recently acquired second specialism of sport.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The effectiveness of this expanding sixth form is good. Over 80% of Year 11 students continue their education in the sixth form and these are joined by a large number of students from other schools. As a result, standards on entry are similar to those in most other sixth forms. The 2007

A-level examination results were average overall and value-added measures show that achievement was satisfactory. However, inspection evidence shows that standards are above those last year and the progress of students is now good. The school has identified weaknesses in tracking students' progress as contributing to the slower progress made in previous years. Changes have been made to ensure that students' progress is more carefully monitored and additional support provided when necessary. These changes, together with good teaching and learning, are contributing well to students' academic success. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Virtually all students complete their courses and are able to pursue the higher education courses or career options of their choice. Sixth form students serve as positive role models, display maturity in their behaviour and act very responsibly towards younger members of the school. The sixth form provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4
- Ensure that the ongoing assessment of students' learning is a feature of all lessons and that teachers' marking provides clear guidance on the standard of their work, and what they must do in order to improve.
- Ensure that procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance are firmly embedded in the work of all middle managers.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve high standards in national tests. In 2007, the proportion of students gaining Level 7 or better in English, mathematics and science was high in comparison with the national average. In 2007, the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C GCSE grades was also much higher than the national average, as was the proportion of students gaining the highest A\* and A grades. Taking account of these students' attainment on entry to Year 7, their progress and achievements were good and the school met its GCSE targets. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C GCSE with English and mathematics included was also much higher than the national average. However, while students made good progress in English, progress in mathematics was unsatisfactory. The school is implementing a number of well-considered strategies to tackle this issue and inspection evidence indicates that progress in mathematics is improving. The school's specialist status has contributed well to standards, particularly in science, but the overall targets set for the year group were not met. Assessment information shows that the majority of students, including those who have particular learning needs, are making good progress and are on track to meet the higher targets set for this year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Participation in an extensive range of sporting activities, healthy eating at lunchtimes and good advice on personal health ensures that students understand the need for healthy lifestyles. Students thoroughly enjoy school, attend regularly and feel safe. They display highly

positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour. It is rare for lessons to be disturbed and movement around the school and at lunchtime is orderly. This contributes to students' good academic progress and the development of the skills necessary to secure their future economic well-being. Students say that bullying is not an issue and that there is very effective support if they are ever worried or upset. As one parent wrote, 'There is a strong emphasis on controlling bullying or any other anti-social behaviour and this is very reassuring for parents.' Although some older students have reservations, many younger students feel that the recently introduced vertical tutor groupings have helped to 'bring the school together'. Students are articulate and confident in expressing their ideas. They have the ability to discuss spiritual themes with ease and conviction. Students demonstrate an awareness of cultural diversity and a mature understanding of issues such as racism. They make excellent contributions to the school and wider communities and regularly take part in a range of charitable events, such as Sports Relief.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The continued improvement of teaching and learning has a high priority and the benefits of this are seen in the many good and occasionally outstanding lessons. In most lessons teachers make good use of their strong subject knowledge to plan interesting learning tasks that enable students to analyse and discuss in small groups. Students enjoy these lessons and their excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning leads to rapid progress. In many of the satisfactory lessons, learning objectives are not clear and teachers talk too much, with the result that students are only passively engaged. The impact of the school's first specialism is seen in the effective use teachers make of interactive whiteboards as a stimulating learning resource. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment in lessons to check students' understanding and follow up with targeted support where necessary. Students' work is regularly marked, often with constructive comments that will help students to improve their work, but this is too variable. In many instances, marking is not designed to bring about improvement and requests for work to be completed are often not followed up.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is well suited to the needs and aspirations of students both in the main school and in the sixth form. The school's dual specialist status has contributed to the wider application of technology to support teaching and learning and extended the range of sporting activities. Since the last inspection, staff have recognised the need to personalise the curriculum to meet individual needs more fully. Consequently, they are exploring the possibility of broadening the curriculum through the introduction of diplomas. A well constructed personal and social education programme contributes successfully to students' understanding of responsible citizenship. Enterprise activities help to prepare students for their future economic well-being. The curriculum is complemented by an extensive range of enrichment activities. Large numbers of students participate in the many extra-curricular clubs and societies, and the excellent range of sporting activities. These make a strong contribution to students' excellent personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Parents speak highly of the good support available for students with particular needs or difficulties. Staff make all the required checks to ensure the safety and protection of students. Risk assessments are secure and the school insists that all trips and excursions are carefully planned to ensure the safety of all students and staff involved. New and more rigorous procedures for setting students academic targets and for monitoring their academic progress are being introduced. These are intended to provide students, teachers and parents with a much clearer understanding of how well students are progressing so that staff are able to identify and act on potential underachievement more quickly. The school works closely with a range of outside agencies. The local chaplain for migrant workers regularly takes assemblies and there is a well respected Muslim prayer group in school. Appropriate careers advice and guidance help to ensure students are given suitable information on further and higher education and employment.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher, with good support from the senior leadership team and governors, is providing the school with very strong leadership and a clear sense of direction. Together they are taking the school through the challenges of a falling roll and consequent reorganisation, with a strong sense of purpose. Expectations are being raised and more challenging academic targets set. Roles and responsibilities of staff with management duties have been redefined to enhance support for teaching and learning and ensure that there is clear accountability for performance. More rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance are being put in place and managers at all levels have a much clearer picture of what is required of them in order to build on strengths and tackle weaknesses. The school is aware that in order to boost the drive for improvement, these procedures need to be firmly embedded in all areas and the quality of middle management needs to be consistently good. The opportunities provided by the school's specialist status are managed well. Governors are well informed and bring a range of valuable expertise to their work. They are dedicated and proud of the school, providing effective challenge and keen support for its future development.

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## Annex A

## 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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
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	2
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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

2 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Boston Grammar School, South End, Boston, PE21 6JY

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your politeness and co-operation during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions and were very impressed with your enthusiasm and excellent attitudes to school.

Your school is giving you a good education. This is seen in the high standards that you reach and the good progress that you make through the school. Your excellent behaviour in lessons is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on helping you to learn. This is one of the reasons why you make such good progress from the time you join the school. There is a really friendly and positive atmosphere in the school and relationships between yourselves and the staff are excellent. The curriculum is enriched by the wide range of visits and after school activities that broaden your experiences. You know that staff care about you and work very hard for you. One of the ways in which teachers help you is by spending a lot of time marking your work. We have asked them when they mark, to give you more guidance on the standards of your work and the things that you need to do to make your work better. We have also asked that the very good systems that have been introduced to improve the school's performance are applied in all subjects and that the school does all it can to make sure that you achieve as well as you can in mathematics at the end of Year 11. Those of you in the sixth form are also making good progress. You provide good role models to the rest of the school and set a superb example in helping others.

The headteacher, governors and all staff are united in their determination to ensure that the federation is successful. We were very pleased to see that so many of you are very keen to make the most of the opportunities the school is providing for you. We wish you continued success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr K C Thomas

Lead inspector