

# Boston High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120640
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327329
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	707
Sixth form	209
<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>	15 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Spilsby Road Boston Lincolnshire PE21 9PF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01205310505
<b>Fax number</b>	01205350235

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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

This 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. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are eligible for free school meals are both well below national averages. The school has an Artsmark Silver award and Healthy Schools status. In September 2007 the school was designated as a specialist mathematics and computing college. Because of a falling roll, the school has entered into a federation with Boston Grammar School, with a single headteacher and governing body. The headteacher took up post as head of the two 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 High School provides a good education for its students. The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The school is thoroughly justified in its evaluation of its excellent contribution to developing students as individuals and as responsible members of the community. Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. A parent commented on being, 'very impressed with scholastic endeavour, but also with the pastoral support for students'. This reflects the views of very many parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates every aspect of school life. Students appreciate their own cultures and have high respect for other cultures. Exclusion rates are extremely low and attendance is high. Students' views are listened to, and their views taken into consideration. They have been influential in bringing about many improvements in the school, for example, in the development of the enhanced reward system for good behaviour.

Students attain high standards in national tests and GCSE examinations, including those relatively few students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from a range of different ethnic heritages. Students' overall progress is currently good. However, GCSE results in 2008 indicated that higher attaining girls did not make the expected progress. The school's tracking also indicated that this group of learners' progress lags behind that made by others in Years 7 to 9. The rigour shown by senior leaders in raising teachers' expectations is resulting in students making good progress now, but this has yet to be reflected in the 2009 results. Challenging targets have been set, including for the school's specialist subjects. If met, these targets will demonstrate that the improving trend is continuing. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where teaching is outstanding, the lessons challenge and inspire students. Overall, teachers nurture a work ethic in students, who respond very well to high expectations. Where work is marked thoroughly, students have a clear view about how to improve their work, but this level of marking is inconsistent across the subjects.

Students enjoy the curriculum and the additional activities provided, which are good. The provision of a wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities helps stretch the students physically and mentally. Although participation rates are good, there is some reluctance from girls to avail themselves fully of the opportunities. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is helping to raise standards in a range of subjects. It has also had a good influence on students' motivation and their attitudes to learning. However, weaknesses in the provision for ICT mean that standards are not as high as they are in other subjects at GCSE level.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher provides very strong direction and purpose and she is ably supported by senior staff and governors. There has been some instability in staffing, in part due to prolonged staff absence through illness. Senior staff have sought to minimise the impact of this, including in areas which have lacked subject leadership, with a good degree of success. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, notwithstanding the difficulties experienced with recruiting able staff. There is a concerted and shared drive now by all staff to ensure high achievement. Capacity for securing further improvement is good.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education. Standards at AS and A-levels are average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are higher in, for example, art and design, chemistry, media and sports studies. They are lower in biology, history, psychology and sociology. Leadership and management and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff now set students increasingly rigorous academic targets, which they review regularly. Teachers make some initial assessments of students' needs when they join the sixth form. However, students' knowledge from previous courses and their needs in future courses are not always examined in enough detail so that they can have the best chances of success. The range of courses on offer is limited largely to traditional academic subjects, although this is set to change as the school develops its curriculum for 14 to 19 year-old students. The school provides good enrichment activities comprising of sports, other fitness opportunities and work experience. Students have very good relationships with staff members. They are particularly appreciative of the levels of support and guidance that they receive, as well as the close and friendly relationships with their peers. Students have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Many play a leading role in house assemblies and fund-raising and have opportunities to act as academic and personal mentors to younger students. Adults encourage students to be self-reliant which gives them a strong grounding for life after school. The school is rigorous in preparing students for higher education.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the higher attaining students consistently make the expected progress so that they reach their potential.
- Raise standards in ICT by ensuring that provision better meets students' needs in Years 10 and 11.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

When students join the school in Year 7, their standards are well above average. Their standards in examinations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 have been high for several years. There was as a dip in 2008, although students had made satisfactory progress. Students are now making good progress towards their challenging targets and have done so since September 2008. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from an early identification of their specific needs and intervention arrangements result in them making good progress. Standards are highest in subjects such as English and geography. Standards have been lower in business studies, modern foreign languages and ICT. Although the school has specialist status for mathematics and computing, targets for students' attainment in these subjects have not been met because higher attaining students have not achieved well enough. Standards are on course to rise. The proportion of students expected to gain five or more GCSE A\* to C grades in 2009 is higher, as it is for those predicted to gain A\* and A grades. There is careful monitoring of students' progress, including that of the higher attaining girls, and swifter action is now taken where students are not fulfilling their potential.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students are very polite and courteous; they behave exceptionally well and enjoy their education greatly. They have a mature and meticulous approach to learning, are confident and show great respect for each other. They feel safe and secure. Staff deal effectively with the very rare incidents of bullying. Students know what is right and wrong and discuss moral issues with clarity and sensitivity. They treat the many and varied displays around the school with respect and appreciate the rich variety of cultures that make up British society. Students have a clear understanding of the factors contributing towards healthy living. They are helped to lead healthy lives through strong physical education and effective life skills provision. They enjoy the improved range of healthy eating options provided by the canteen, in particular on Thursdays when they can create their own bespoke deli sandwiches. Students are given many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, by serving on the school council or contributing to house activities. They raise substantial sums for charity. There is a strong sense of community, promoted through the house system. Each house has a chosen charity but recently all the school worked successfully together as a community for Operation Christmas Child. Students are developing the personal qualities well that will enable them to contribute effectively to the community and be successful in the workplace.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers are well qualified and their subject knowledge is good. The school can be justly proud of the continuing professional development of all staff. The effectiveness of teaching is borne out by students' improving progress and the attainment of high standards. The most successful lessons have clear learning objectives, are well paced, and have varied and interesting activities to which students respond with enthusiasm. This was exemplified in a well-executed Year 11 history lesson about the suffragette movement. All the students were fully engrossed in their learning and the pace of the lesson was such that all were challenged throughout. In a small number of lessons seen, teachers did not always challenge students sufficiently and expectations of what they might achieve were too low. This is particularly true for those girls who are able to achieve at the very highest level. Students' work is assessed regularly and challenging targets set. Assessments are recorded and monitored well both in subject areas and centrally and they form the basis of regular reports to parents. There is, however, some inconsistency in the quality of marking across the curriculum. While there is some exemplary practice, not all teachers mark students' work regularly and students are not guided to assess their work themselves across the full range of subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students. The programme for personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Improvement since the last inspection has included better provision for gifted and talented students and for citizenship education, which have enhanced students' understanding and enjoyment. The provision for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum helps to prepare students well for their future economic well-being, supported also by effective careers education

and work experience. Activities such as organising a bazaar give students the chance to be enterprising and show initiative. The school's specialist status has enabled better access to technology and its application and this assists learning across different subjects. Students' enjoyment and achievement are enhanced through a wide variety of activities such as clubs, visits and trips. Although many students take up the activities, a number of them do not participate in lunchtime activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with outstanding features. Support structures are in place at all levels and dedicated staff form strong links between pastoral and academic teams. The school has developed effective links with a number of external agencies who work closely with the school and students when required. Robust arrangements for safeguarding students, including child protection arrangements, are in place and reviewed regularly. The careful monitoring of health and safety checks results in creating a safe and supportive environment. The mix of students of all ages in tutor groups is a real strength. Sixth form students are particularly proactive and extremely successful in easing the transition of younger students into the school. There are effective systems in place to monitor students' progress at all levels. Students know what their targets are and are able to explain what they need to do to improve their work. However, the reinforcement of this through the marking of students' work is inconsistent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior leaders set high expectations and the identification of challenging targets for 2009, if met, will represent an improvement in students' achievement, particularly for the higher attaining girls who have not made the progress expected of them. The removal of barriers that have prevented students from making the expected progress is beginning to make an impact, reflecting rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Senior leaders have a sharp focus on teaching and learning and an accurate evaluation of its quality leads to improvement. Subject leadership is good, a result of strong performance management. Senior leaders listen to the views of parents and students and a range of other opinions to inform school improvement planning. There is good provision for community cohesion and good plans to evaluate and extend this provision further. Relationships between different groups of students are excellent. There are very effective links with primary schools and links with schools that serve a greater mix of ethnic groups are developing. Governance is good as shown by governors' effective contribution to school self-evaluation and improvement planning, ensuring that the right priorities drive the school forward. Governors' focus on students' performance enables them to be supportive, as well as to hold the school to account. This has also ensured that the school provides good value for money.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
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	3

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which 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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	3
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Boston High School, Boston, PE21 9PF

Many thanks for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were extremely impressed with your warm welcome, politeness and friendliness. We enjoyed talking with you. I would like to let you know what we found.

We judged that your school is good and the sixth form is satisfactory. You said very many positive things about how staff look after you and encourage you to develop as responsible citizens. Our inspection findings show that your personal development and well-being are excellent, as are the levels of care and support you receive at school. You say that you feel safe and we agree. Your high attendance and the very few exclusions reflect your great enjoyment and very good behaviour. The house system is very effective and you take an active interest in influencing what is provided for you. For example, the behaviour rewards system and the establishment of new information and communication technology (ICT) rooms for Years 12 and 13.

The curriculum meets your needs well and many of you enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities, although we think many more of you could be participating in these activities at lunchtimes. However, we were pleased with the way you make your own deli sandwiches on Thursdays. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. We also saw some outstanding lessons which inspire you and challenge you to make the best progress possible. Standards attained by you in national tests and GCSE examinations are high but we judged that the progress you make from Years 7 to 11 has been satisfactory until recently. Those of you who are very able have not been making the expected progress. Because of good leadership from the headteacher and other senior managers, this is changing so that progress is now good, reflecting also the good teaching. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that your progress continues so that you reach your potential. We have also asked that standards in ICT are raised in Years 10 and 11, because they are not as high as in other subjects. You can help by making the most of your talents and responding positively to the challenging targets that are now set for your achievement. Those of you who do not take part in lunchtime activities - think why not, and do something about it!

Best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Dilip Kadodwala

Her Majesty's Inspector