

# Boston Spa School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108091
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	377699
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	John Rutherford 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,473
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	312
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Hall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Walsh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 April 2009
<b>School address</b>	Clifford Moor Road Boston Spa Wetherby LS23 6RW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 846636
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

John Rutherford  
Pamela Hemphill  
Lynne Selkirk  
Cathy Morgan  
Robert Birtwell

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. Inspectors spent over 23 hours observing 50 lessons taught by 51 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a School Improvement Consultant who is working with the school. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. During the inspection, they observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including those relating to students' progress, self-evaluation, improvement planning and safeguarding. Inspectors considered questionnaires returned from students and 131 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than most secondary schools. Students are drawn from a very wide area and the majority are transported by a fleet of school buses. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. A similar proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds; however, only a very small number speak English as an additional language. A below-average percentage of students are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The school is a specialist sports college and has achieved a wide range of awards including: Investors in People, Investors in Pupils, the International School Award, the Leeds Inclusion Charter Mark, the Stephen Lawrence Award, the Healthy School Award and Safe Mark. The school has met the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. The sixth form is good. The school has moved forward significantly since the previous inspection as a result of much hard work to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The reason for the school not being outstanding is that a small number of students are still underachieving. This is mainly because: a minority of teachers do not sufficiently adapt learning activities for groups of differing abilities and their teaching does not promote the development of independent learning skills; and the system for collecting information on students' progress does not always lead to timely identification of and support for some students beginning to fall behind.
- Students' achievement is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. It has been consistently good for some years in sciences, history and French. Historically, achievement in English and mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4 has not been at the same high level. However, because of the recent work to improve teaching, students are very close to making as much progress in these subjects as in all others.
- The quality of teaching is good. Students' progress in the large majority of lessons is good or outstanding because they are inspired by teachers who have a passion for their subject and who have imaginative methods for presenting new information.
- Students' behaviour is good and they have very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance has been below average in the past; however, the school is tackling this rigorously with the result that it is improving rapidly and is now much closer to the national average.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and the governing body show a strong determination to raise the quality of education. Their increasingly

effective monitoring and improvement of teaching and achievement are key drivers in moving the school's overall effectiveness from satisfactory to good.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement from good to outstanding by:
  - arranging for teachers to learn from the best practice in the school
  - improving lesson planning so that tasks are better adapted to meet the differing learning needs of groups of students
  - providing more opportunities for students to develop their skills in learning independently
  - reducing students' absence
  - improving the recording of progress data so that it enables more immediate identification of and support for underachieving students.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Students start with broadly average levels of attainment. They make good progress and, by the end of Key Stage 4, their standards of attainment are above average. Those who go into the sixth form continue to make good progress and this enables the vast majority to go to their first-choice university. An above-average proportion of all school-leavers go into some form of education, employment or training. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire say they feel their children are making good progress and the same level of satisfaction is seen in students' questionnaires. Their views are supported by the inspection evidence.

Students make good progress in the large majority of lessons. Their ability to concentrate hard and to work effectively with partners in order to master challenging tasks contributes significantly to this. Their progress in English and mathematics has improved considerably since the previous inspection because they have much better literacy and numeracy skills. This improvement is the result of leaders becoming much more skilful in identifying and supporting underachieving groups of students. For example, achievement in literacy has improved because middle-ability boys have been given effective additional support to extend their reading skills and these are now good. In both literacy and numeracy, disabled students and those with special educational needs have improved their progress to good because a new leader has introduced more effective methods for matching support to individual needs. More-able students are also making good progress in literacy and numeracy because their class organisation and curriculum have been adapted to ensure that the extra challenge in their work is sustained and there is less risk of coasting. While the targeting of additional support and challenge has improved considerably, there is still a small number of underachieving students. This is because they do not necessarily fit neatly into one group and the school's tracking system does not enable them to be identified as soon as they start falling behind.

## Quality of teaching

Teaching is good or outstanding in the large majority of lessons. This is recognised by most parents, carers and students who returned an inspection questionnaire. Where teaching is most effective, lively and stimulating, teaching motivates the students to pay attention and apply themselves fully to their work. Teachers extend their learning with imaginative approaches, for example illustrating chemical reactions by comparing them to celebrities' relationships or using physical activity to consolidate understanding of the food chain. Physical activity is used effectively to reinforce learning in a number of subjects because of work led by the physical education department as part of the school's sports specialism.

The majority of teachers know the differing attainment levels of their students and they use this information to plan learning activities that are suitably adjusted to help them all, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, to achieve as much as they can. In the minority of less effective lessons, teachers modify learning objectives in line with the differing students' needs; however, the learning activities are not sufficiently adapted to ensure that the students can all meet the objectives.

Teachers in all departments are increasingly using their subjects to extend literacy and numeracy skills. Some good examples of this were seen in science where teachers match lessons to students' work in mathematics and considerable guidance is given to students on how to improve their writing. Such work as this is not as fully developed in all other departments. Much teaching promotes students' personal development; for example, one focus for conversation in French lessons is alcohol abuse and many humanities lessons include a strong emphasis on social, moral and cultural issues, such as the historical struggle for human rights across the world.

Some marking of students' work is excellent in the way it provides additional challenges to help students improve their achievement. This is not consistent across the school. In many lessons, students effectively consolidate their understanding by assessing their own work and that of others. In the most effective lessons, plenty of time is allocated for pupils to work independently on challenging problems, experiments or research tasks. This makes a significant contribution to their good progress while, in those lessons where there is more teacher-talk than independent learning, students' progress slows.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

According to the majority of parents, carers and students who returned an inspection questionnaire, behaviour is generally good. A sizeable minority disagree with this. However, the inspection evidence confirms the view of the majority: there are only occasional instances of disruption. Students are keen to learn and this makes a strong contribution to their academic progress. They work very well when not under direct teacher supervision. A key strength in the school's work is the support given to students with significant behavioural and emotional difficulties, which helps the vast majority of them to make the same good progress in their school work and personal development as other students.

There is very little disagreement among parents, carers and students that the school provides a safe learning environment and the inspection evidence supports this view. Students feel safe from all forms of bullying because adults take their concerns very seriously and ensure that any threat is thoroughly investigated and quickly removed. Anti-bullying is given a strong emphasis in the curriculum; therefore, students have a clear understanding of risks and consequences. For example, students have a clear understanding of risks arising from inappropriate use of the internet. They say they are very grateful for the support given by staff if they are concerned about any worrying messages on the computers they use out of school.

Students told inspectors that they enjoy school and this is confirmed by the very large majority of those who returned an inspection questionnaire. In the past, this has not always been reflected in the below-average attendance figures. However, these figures are influenced by the fact that most students have to travel to school by bus and there are no alternatives if they miss it. Staff have always worked hard to improve this situation, and their work has started to have a much more positive impact in the last year, since new systems have been introduced for targeting support on the students and families where the need is greatest.

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and students' achievement. This is the basis of their strategic planning, which is sharply focused on the correct priorities for meeting ambitious targets for raising standards. The governing body makes an important contribution to this work, especially in the way it seeks evidence that improvement plans are raising standards quickly enough. Senior leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They are increasingly developing the skills of middle leaders in this work and holding them to account for the effectiveness of their teams. Where weaknesses are identified, effective performance management ensures that staff receive appropriate training or challenge. Overall, the more systematic and rigorous approach to school development has improved achievement from satisfactory to good in the last two years, which demonstrates the school's good capacity to raise standards further.

The curriculum from Year 7 to Year 13 is well organised and provides a good range of pathways, both academic and vocational, to enable most students to fulfil their aspirations. It also makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through a strong focus on famous people across the world who provide a good role model. Much of this work links to the school's sports specialism, for example learning from sports people who have used their fame to campaign against injustice. The specialism has also brought about partnerships that enrich students' learning; these include opportunities to work with a professional football club, a university and other schools. Boston Spa has a strong partnership with a nearby special school and includes its students in lessons to help meet their learning needs. This demonstrates to students the priority given to tackling discrimination and promoting equality.

Although most families live at a considerable distance from the school, staff work hard to communicate with them in a range of ways, including a very informative

website. As a result, the very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire say the school keeps them well informed, responds well to their concerns and helps them to support their children's learning. The school meets requirements for safeguarding students very effectively.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



11 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Boston Spa School, Wetherby LS23 6RW**

Thank you very much indeed for your help when I came with my colleagues to inspect your school. We found our discussion with you and your questionnaire responses very useful in helping us to make the judgement that your school provides you with a good quality of education.

You make good progress in most of your subjects between Year 7 and Year 11, and those of you who go into the sixth form continue to make good progress. You achieve particularly well in sciences, history and French. In the past year or two, you have considerably improved your achievement in English and mathematics because your teachers are providing much more interesting lessons that are better matched to your learning needs. Your responsible approach to managing your own behaviour creates a very positive climate for learning in lessons. Many of you told us that you feel free from any significant threat of bullying and we could see how well students get on together. This makes your school a very pleasant place to visit.

The headteacher and staff are very keen to continue improving your education and we have agreed with them that the most important areas to work on are to:

- make all of the teaching as challenging and interesting as the best in your school and to give you more opportunities to learn independently
- help some of you to improve your attendance
- improve the way information about your progress is kept so that it can more easily be used to check that none of you are falling behind.

This means that some of you will have even more challenges in your work but I am confident that you will rise to them. My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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