

Burford School

Oxfordshire County Council

Cheltenham Road, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4PL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Burford School is situated in Burford in Oxfordshire. It is a maintained school with academy status for girls and boys aged from 11 to 19 years. There were 1,319 students on roll at the time of inspection, of which 97 were boarders. The boarding site is a short walking distance from the main school. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2015. This inspection was aligned with an education inspection.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 May 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 18 November 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- The boarding provision is welcoming and feels homely. Students appear relaxed and happy.
- Staff are enthusiastic. They are passionate about ensuring that students'

boarding experience is fun and rewarding.

- Students progress as a result of boarding, both in their academic achievements and in their social development.
- Leaders are passionate about ensuring that boarding is central to how the school operates. They are child-centred and take students' views into account.
- Students are involved in a vast array of extra-curricular activities. They regularly access the community and feel that they belong.
- During the inspection, leaders took action to address inspectors' concerns about boarders' privacy in their dormitories, and the number of showers that are available. This demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that a high standard of care is provided.
- The staff have developed strong and effective links with other agencies to ensure that students' needs are met.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- Staff training in, and awareness of, safeguarding does not include all areas, such as online safety, in sufficient detail.
- Although bullying incidents are acted upon, staff do not always recognise lower-level bullying-type behaviour.
- The school has three independent listeners, however, students had a predominantly negative view of this service.
- There have been targeted groups for girls who have particular vulnerabilities. However, this has yet to be extended to boys.
- Leaders have recognised the need to explore students' emotional well-being. However, the surveys that have been created for this purpose are no longer as purposeful as intended.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that boys are included in groups which offer advice around healthy relationships and particular areas of vulnerability.
- Continue to review and develop the role of the independent listener to ensure that students better understand the value of this service.
- Ensure that staff are proactive in making sure that low-level bullying is recognised and therefore acted upon.
- Ensure that staff have the knowledge and confidence in all current safeguarding challenges for young people. This specifically refers to online safety.

- Review the process for capturing students' emotional well-being to ensure that it effectively identifies potential concerns.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The care and acceptance offered to children in boarding enables students to explore both their own and one another's identities and feelings. This has resulted in boarders building strong, positive relationships with each other. Parents are positive about the effect of the boarding experience on their children. One said: 'This school nurtures well-rounded, well-behaved children who are accepting of each other and set off for adult life with a positive attitude.'

The students spoken with by inspectors said that they are happy in boarding and that they have fun. Older students said that they now feel prepared for the 'real world'. Relationships between students are generally good.

Boarding staff know the students well; they are able to recognise when students are upset and are responsive to situations where students may require additional support. However, some students perceive some staff to be inconsistent in their support, particularly in their approach to behaviour management. At the time of the inspection, the senior team was already considering how to address this.

Individual members of staff are assigned to some students to provide additional emotional support. Specific groups have been set up to offer advice and support to students experiencing worries and difficulties such as feeling homesick. Students said that they value this support, that it allows them to reflect on their own feelings and enables them to support each other. Students see some staff as being particularly warm and nurturing and they were very positive about this; students said that these relationships make them feel that they are cared about. A nurturing approach is evident within the boarding houses. Students feel a sense of belonging. One said: 'You can just be yourself here.' They have friends who they share their experience with and they help one another.

The students have access to independent listeners and they know who these people are, but they said that they would not use them. Students told inspectors that they feel they don't have a relationship with these individuals; they consider that it would be a sign of weakness to access this resource. Senior staff have not sufficiently developed the independent listener role and have not been creative enough in encouraging students to understand the value of the resource.

Parents and students can identify the effect boarding has had on progress, both academically and socially. Students are more confident, independent and achieve in their education. Academic results are higher for boarders when compared to the rest

of the school. Staff are ambitious for the students and support them to do well.

Currently, students complete a weekly welfare survey to enable leaders to look at themes around emotional well-being and, if necessary, provide individual support. In addition, the home-school link worker is available to provide help and advice. However, some students said that they no longer use the welfare surveys as they were intended to be used. In addition, leaders cannot confidently say how helpful to students the sessions with the home-school link worker are. When it is identified that students require additional support, welfare plans are completed. These are very detailed and include a range of strategies which are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are effective in achieving the desired outcome.

Students have a strong voice in boarding and they have many opportunities to put their views across. They have been influential in making changes within the boarding provision.

Transitions into boarding are well managed, with helpful information gained from previous schools and parents. Sixth formers enjoy additional privileges and are well prepared for their next step by individualised work with the boarding staff.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Students who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe in the boarding houses. Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities. Students said that staff are very quick to respond to serious bullying incidents. However, the annual surveys indicate, and some students said, that lower-level bullying behaviour is not always identified by staff. As a result, some students see this as normal behaviour. One student said: 'The boarding staff don't try to think from a student's perspective.' Staff are confident in their ability to recognise changes in students' behaviour which may indicate that there is an emerging concern.

There is effective partnership working with other agencies and parents to ensure the safety of all students and staff. Where concerns have been identified about students' safety, these have been reported promptly. Safeguarding chronologies are now in place to enable staff and managers to take appropriate action to safeguard individual boarders. Clear learning from a recent incident was evident, resulting in appropriate recommendations for further action. In order to promote healthy and respectful relationships, girls who are considered particularly vulnerable have been able to attend targeted groups. However, although a need has been identified for a similar group for boys, this has not yet been established.

Staff undertake training in safeguarding practice and leaders have increased the number of designated safeguarding leads. However, staff have limited awareness of online safety, reducing their ability to give students clear guidance and advice about how to keep safe while using the internet. Some aspects of online safety are covered during education time but not within boarding.

All students who board understand what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour. Those who spoke with inspectors said that they are aware of when and why sanctions are used. The students have made changes to the sanction process through the student council, leading to a greater focus on reward rather than sanction. There are a low number of major sanctions and staff focus instead on de-escalation. Through the relationships that boarding staff develop with students, they are increasingly aware of when to intervene. Clear and consistent boundaries are in place and behaviour is good. There have been no instances of students going missing from the boarding provision. If students are upset and go off site, there are clear procedures in place to guide staff. Fellow students generally intervene before a situation escalates. This is indicative of the positive relationships between students.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The senior leadership team strives to provide an environment that helps students to develop insight, judgement and character'. This aim is achieved well in the boarding community. Leaders show an active commitment to enhancing the boarding experience and the students' overall well-being. The newly appointed director of boarding is enthusiastic, committed and aspirational for boarding. The boarding team is child-centred. Its members listen closely to the students and want the best for them.

There are strong links with partnership agencies; this ensures that students' needs are met. Community links have been developed successfully. These links enable the students to use local facilities and to develop a sense of local belonging and purpose. The senior leadership team regularly monitors the standard of care and addresses any shortfalls. Leaders have a good understanding of the progress students make. They have developed targets that include all areas of students' lives, including their educational potential.

Staff enjoy working in boarding. One described it as 'a wonderful place that is home to a vibrant community of hardworking students and caring staff'. Staff said that there is a much stronger sense of community within the boarding community now than previously. They attribute this to the house parents. Staff feel well supported. Supervision sessions are now recorded, helping leaders to better oversee and review boarding practice.

The governing body is visible and active and provides an appropriate balance of support, advice and challenge. Members have developed a boarding committee which ensures that students who board have a voice. Boarding is seen as an integral part of the school. Governors visit the school regularly and are clear about the development plans for the school.

The majority of parents spoke positively about the boarding facility. They believe that their children flourish because of the care, guidance and empowerment provided. Students leave boarding being more independent and confident as young adults.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC013029

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Kathy Haig

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Emeline Evans: lead social care inspector

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