

# Burford School

Burford School, Cheltenham Road, BURFORD, Oxfordshire, OX18 4PL

<b>Inspection dates</b>	07/05/2013 to 09/05/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for boarders	Good	2
Quality of boarding provision and care	Good	2
Boarders' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of boarding	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is good because

- The boarding experience supports pupils to make good progress in all aspects of their development. Boarders grow in confidence and independence which helps prepare them for life after school. Opportunities to further personal interests are encouraged and supported along with new experiences.
- The boarding provision is extremely well organised and managed. Effective leadership from the headteacher and the head of boarding provides clarity on the aims and objectives. Boarders have direct access to the governing body through the boarding committee. This level of consultation is excellent.
- There is a multi-agency approach to safeguarding matters. Effective joint working contributes to meeting the needs of individual boarders within a boarding community. The pastoral care is a particular strength of this boarding school.
- Boarders enjoy the boarding provision and would recommend it to others. The staff are well respected and have a good understanding of the needs of boarders.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 9.10am on 07 May 2013 and commenced at 1pm on the same day. Inspection activities carried out over three days included discussions with boarders, boarding staff, matrons, school governor, designated person for child protection, catering staff, maintenance staff and key members of the senior management team. Key boarding documents and policies were reviewed, including self assessment documents for boarding. Meals were sampled, activities observed and a tour of the boarding house took place. Minimal response through Parent View, the headteacher provided the schools' survey responses from parents and pupils .

## Inspection team

Clare Davies

Lead social care inspector

Wendy Anderson

Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Burford School is a maintained school with academy status for boys and girls aged from 11 to 19 years. There are approximately 1153 students with capacity for up to 90 boarders. The boarding house is located on a separate site within the town of Burford.

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

- continue to upgrade the boarding accommodation in line with the school's development plan
- ensure that all records are signed and dated
- streamline records and documentation of pastoral care issues into one care plan

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for boarders

**Good**

Outcomes for boarders are good. Boarders have a strong affiliation with the boarding community where they have developed good relationships with the staff and each other. Boarders develop social skills and a respectful tolerance of others. Signs of maturity are evident as boarders reflect on their own development in comparison to their younger years in the boarding environment. For example, incidents of behaviour have reduced and for those boarders involved, they recognise that their behaviour has improved and that they benefit from structure and boundaries.

The boarding community is made up from mixed gender, an age group from 11 to 19 years and boarders from diverse cultural backgrounds. The integration of boarders is excellent, promoting a harmonious residential environment. Boarders support and help one other and reports are rare of any possessions going missing as they demonstrate respect for each other and the boarding house.

Boarders enjoy their time and the majority would thoroughly recommend boarding at this school. The boarders have many talents in music, drama, sports and leadership skills and are able to further these skills through boarding activities and taking part in community events. For example some boarders play in a local football team and some are actively involved with the local church and their events. Free time can be managed independently or taken up with planned activities from the boarding staff. Boarders make good use of the boarding house resources such as; the gym equipment, games room, television, craft materials, pianos and outdoor space.

The participation of boarders is very good with formal meetings such as the food committee and the boarding committee, and informal discussions with staff. Boarders feel able to make suggestions and feel listened to. They are able to report on changes that have been made and where they have been consulted. For example with food items, activities, changes to the accommodation and the consequences for failing to follow the rules.

Boarders receive excellent care and support in relation to their health needs. Medication can be self-administered where staff have assessed that they have the competence to do so safely. This assists with boarders' independence and preparation for leaving school and perhaps moving on to university. Boarders enjoy the food provided and engage with catering staff to provide feedback and make requests. Boarders are able to make snacks in the common room areas. Dietary needs are catered for to support boarders in managing their personal health requirements or cultural identity.

Boarders say that the boarding environment supports them with their studies, their strong grades and exam results demonstrate their success. Overall, boarders have achieved better academic results than day pupils. Boarders report that they are supported well, given responsibility and trust. Some sixth form boarders report that they like how they are 'treated like young adults'.

### Quality of boarding provision and care

**Good**

The quality of the boarding provision is good. There are particular strengths in the pastoral care provided and the level of activities available to boarders. All the staff who contribute to the boarding provision work collaboratively with the focus of the boarders at the forefront of their practice. The head of boarding has been in post for 20 months and has made significant improvements to the boarding provision in this time.

The commitment and dedication of the boarding staff is strong to ensure that boarders receive good quality care. There are effective links between the boarding house and school staff. These

improvements ensure that support is provided towards the academic progress of boarders. New boarders receive adequate induction to the boarding house after an introductory visit. The comprehensive handbook provides all the necessary information to boarders and their parents. Established boarders may act as a buddy to support new students to help them become familiar with boarding staff and routines. New boarders report that they were made welcome when they were new to boarding.

To promote the 'well rounded' experience, boarders have access to a vast range of extra curricular activities. Some are provided through the main school, others arranged just for boarders and some students are involved independently with local community groups. These opportunities enable boarders to develop their skills and interests and try new experiences. Examples of these are; the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, playing for a local football team and taking music lessons within the boarding house. The boarders enjoy regular trips to local leisure facilities and entertainment venues.

In addition to the boarding and food committees, senior boarders are selected to attend the school governors boarding committee. This provides an excellent two way dialogue for boarders to raise issues directly with the governing body and for governors to deliver messages and seek the views of boarders. This structure of inclusion is commendable and ensures that the boarders' views are central to decision making at a senior management level.

Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to address the health and medical needs of boarders. There are sound systems for the storage and administration of medication and strong links with community health resources. Boarding staff manage personal and medical issues in a sensitive manner fully involving boarders, and parents where appropriate. Good records are maintained on issues relating to boarders health and well-being, the quality of care plans vary and do not always fully capture the care practices being followed. Boarders report that they are well cared for and particularly identify the team of matrons to turn to when they are unwell or have a need to discuss a personal matter.

The boarding accommodation is within a Grade II listed building providing charm and history. However, with an old listed building there are restrictions towards maintenance and upgrades incurring high costs associated with any work required. The school has committed to a ten year programme of maintenance and upgrade and has completed several areas of work within the last two years. Large dormitories for eight boarders has been divided into two smaller rooms for four. There has been extensive improvements to the security of the site protecting boarders from potential intrusion by members of the public and creating a safe environment without excessive use of locked doors. The next priority is to upgrade toilet and bathroom areas to improve these facilities and enhance boarders' privacy.

The communal areas and dormitories provide a warm, welcoming environment where boarders can relax and personalise their space with posters, photographs and their possessions. The expansion to two utility rooms is welcomed by boarders as they have a communal space to meet and chat and are able to prepare drinks and snacks.

Meals are taken in the dining room where boarders have been allocated where to sit to promote socialising with boarders of mixed gender, age group and nationality. This system works well, supporting the development of the boarding community and extending friendships groups. At weekends boarders can choose where they sit in the dining room, to offer choice. Boarders report that generally they like the food and report how it has improved since the employment of a new chef. A salad bar offers an alternative to the main meal, menus are published in advance and the food committee meet with the catering team to provide feedback and raise requests. This ensures that the views of boarders are incorporated into the menu planning. Improvements have occurred such as; the introduction of drinks machines, a range of condiments and a more

efficient serving system to reduce the time taken to get a meal.

Boarders can maintain contact with their family and friends through telephone and email. A pay phone provides a dedicated telephone line for boarders to request a returned call. Records confirm that the boarding staff maintain good lines of communication with the parents and carers of boarders. Contact is made to share positive events in addition to reporting any incidents that have caused concern.

## **Boarders' safety**

## **Good**

This boarding school makes good provision to safeguard boarders. Staff are trained in safeguarding and knowledgeable of the child protection policies and procedures. They know what action to take in the event of any concerns or allegations and work effectively to ensure that any potential or safeguarding concerns are referred promptly. Safe working practices ensures that boarders are protected from harm. The boarding house staff have developed some excellent relationships with other agencies in the community. Contact with health services, the police, housing departments and social care have led to some multi-agency decisions for the benefit of boarders.

The school has a sound procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices. This ensures that boarders are cared for by adults who have been checked for suitability to work with children and young people. The scrutiny of checks is not always recorded, for example when telephone contact is made with a referee for verification.

Boarders say they feel safe and demonstrate this in the quality of their interactions with each other and with staff. Boarders look out for one another and confidently approach and talk to all staff. Messages that bullying will not be tolerated are conveyed through the handbook and reinforced by staff in main school and boarding. Boarders, and staff, say there are some low levels of bullying and boarders report that staff 'sort things out'. Communication from parents acknowledges how 'swiftly and decisively' an incident of bullying was dealt with. No boarders have gone missing; staff know what to do should this happen, in accordance with school policy.

The structure and boundaries consistently provided enable boarders to feel safe at this boarding school. The strength of the relationships between boarders and the staff team underpin this safe environment. The head of boarding seeks to get to the cause of any problem that may lead to misbehaviour. His leadership promotes a supportive response, not punitive. However there is a firm response with consequences for any breach of the rules. Boarders report that this system is fair and the boarders on the committee were instrumental in producing an agreed list of consequences to be applied to boarders who may flout the boarding house rules. During the inspection boarders were observed to be polite and well behaved, engaging with the inspection process with enthusiasm.

Matters of health and safety are routinely checked and repairs are promptly attended to by on-site staff. As a result the boarders benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact on their welfare. Risk assessments relating to the boarding house and activities identify likely risks and how they can be reduced or eliminated. This procedure is effective without denying boarders the opportunity to take measured risks as part of their growth and development.

There are fire safety systems installed and boarders have experienced evacuations so they are prepared in the event of a fire. A recent health and safety inspection undertaken by the local authority concluded that the boarding provision was compliant. The officer reported, 'when walking around the site it was apparent that health and safety features in your priorities.'

The leadership and management of this provision is outstanding. The head of boarding has made a significant contribution to the development of the boarding house in the 20 months that he has been in post. The headteacher actively supports the boarding aspect of the school and works effectively with the boarding staff to monitor and raise standards. The recommendations from the last inspection have all been addressed. The head of boarding has developed a staff team that is enthusiastic and committed to making positive changes for the boarders to benefit from.

All boarding staff recognise that their contribution collectively provides good quality boarding provision and they are keen to develop it further. The school makes good use of self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for development, this involves regular consultation with boarders, day students and their parents. The headteacher ensures that any development within the school and the boarding house delivers a positive impact for boarders. There have been improvements with; the security of the site, the boarding accommodation, record keeping and procedures, and links with the school staff (academic and senior leadership team). There is a clear plan for future development and staff are fully involved with working towards the key objectives.

All boarding staff are subject to an appraisal of their work in line with the whole school's performance management system. This ensures that they are monitored in their work and supported with any training needs. Some staff have completed professional qualifications through the Boarding Schools' Association and some are working towards these. Boarding staff have attended many training events to ensure that they have completed the mandatory sessions and are up to date on current practice issues.

The boarding provision values diversity and celebrates difference. Boarders explore an understanding of equality and cultural differences through music, sport, food and festivals. Taking action to think of others, boarders get involved with charity fundraising events, helping in the local church and supporting other community groups. The staff are fully aware of the diverse nature and needs of its boarders and ensure that they all have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential while boarding at this school.

Boarders and parents are made aware of the complaints procedure, there have not been any formal complaints for over a year. Effective lines of communication with parents, and regular feedback systems such as surveys, promote good working relationships where the care and safety of boarders remain the focal point.

The board of governors has a dedicated boarding committee who report information into the overall governance of the school. Such a committee dedicated to look after the interests of boarding is a commendable strength of the leadership and management of the school. The inclusion of head boy and head girl on this committee indicates a firm commitment to consultation with boarders. This ensures that the views of boarders are gathered and they are listened to through this system of empowerment.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138289
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC013029
<b>DfE registration number</b>	931/4040

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Maintained Boarding School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	81
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kathryn Haig
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	29/01/2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01993 823303
<b>Email address</b>	head.4040@burford.oxon.sch.uk

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