

Sexeys School

Sexeys School, Cole Road, BRUTON, Somerset, BA10 0DF

Inspection dates	24/09/2013 to 26/09/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for boarders	Good	2
Quality of boarding provision and care	Good	2
Boarders' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of boarding	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- Boarders make good progress in developing their personal and social skills provided by skilled and supportive staff. Good attention is paid to equality and diversity enabling boarders to achieve well, particularly those with disabilities.
- Boarders' and parents' views are actively sought and feedback confirms that they feel the school provide an overall positive experience for boarders and that their views are valued.
- Boarders confirm they feel safe in the school and supported by staff that are trained and vigilant in child protection. Boarders are safeguarded well, through a caring ethos, proactive anti-bullying practices and child protection work and through promoting the tolerance of others.
- The school is led by a new headteacher who provides a highly visible role to boarders. The school regularly audits and evaluates boarding provision and it benefits from a team of governors who play an active role in driving improvement.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

Information about this inspection

The school was given a morning's notice period on the day of inspection. An initial meeting was held with the headteacher and head of boarding. Discussions with boarders, boarding staff, catering, maintenance, business, human resources, medical, information technology and special educational needs staff took place. All boarding houses were visited. Discussions took place with boarders in all houses and during meals. Boarding staff gave a tour of the accommodation and around the site. Recruitment files, risk assessments, safeguarding records, policies and procedures, and the school's database were sampled. Boarders' surveys, parent feedback and Parent View surveys were also examined.

Inspection team

Pippa Greed	Lead social care inspector
John Mitchell	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Sexey's School is a maintained, mixed, boarding school in Bruton, Somerset for 216 boarders aged 11 to 18 years. The school admits pupils from all over the United Kingdom and has a small number of pupils from overseas. It offers both day and termly boarding places. The boarding accommodation is provided in three houses, all of which are located on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of boarders are ensured. This relates to the sports changing rooms for both genders, particularly girls' changing room being suitable for purpose.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders at the school; and such arrangements have regards to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This relates to the quality of record keeping for children and young people for whom there are child protection concerns.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Good

Outcomes for boarders are good. Boarders make good progress to develop their social development and independence skills as a result of high expectations placed upon them. Through good boarding provision and commitment towards progress, boarders are encouraged to grow in confidence. Boarders say they feel well supported by their peers. This is reflected through effective prefect and buddy mentoring systems. Boarders value the merits of mixed ages boarding arrangements. This has enabled boarders to benefit from positive peer relationships developed through affiliation, with a positive impact on their self-esteem.

Boarders behave well and respond to support in order to overcome any difficulties. Boarders say they know each well and remind each other should anyone misbehave. Boarders spoken with felt that bullying is not seen as an issue and felt positive about the school's approach in managing behaviour. They report very positively on feeling safe, choice of activities and support with school work. Boarders say rules for sanctions are fair and they respect and understand the rights of others. Positive behaviour is reinforced through positive praise, merits and awards.

A wide range of activities is offered to boarders in evenings and weekend. These offer a range of social, sports and leisure activities as well as weekend outings. The choices made available take into account differing age groups. Boarders talked with enthusiasm about after-school and weekend activities, as a result of which they have lots to enjoy and learn new skills. Examples include: mountain biking, climbing, paintballing, concerts and discos, shopping trips, wide range of sports, cadets training and Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Activity planning is done in consultation with boarders and feedback is gathered through on-line questionnaires, which in turn inform future activities.

Boarders have good relationship with staff and interactions between boarders and staff, and between boarders of different age groups, were seen to be warm and friendly. This helps boarders develop confidence and good social skills. A boarder told his house manager, 'You're the best house parent ever.' Boarders spoke positively about their boarding experience. They value the positive interaction and they confirm they enjoy their time in boarding. The new headteacher is seen positively and comments include: 'good vibes from [headteacher]', 'his door is open' and 'he says "hello" and has learned our names quickly.' Boarders are able to identify an adult they can talk to and spoke well of a range of staff within the school. This means that potentially vulnerable boarders are supported effectively.

Boarders are supported to keeping themselves fit and healthy. Boarders benefit from a dedicated health care provision delivered by skilled nurses and a counsellor. Boarders are able to access support and advice in order to understand what growing up means to them. They are also able to make use of available information provided and have the confidence to seek out help when needed. Boarders spoke positively of the health centre nurses saying 'they are very friendly and very helpful.'

Boarders are well supported to gain independence skills and prepare for the next stage of their education. The special educational needs coordinator works in partnership with parents and primary schools to prepare for new placements. Inclusion team members attend annual reviews and meet with prospective parents and boarders. Specialist assessments are carried out to provide the school with clear guidance on how best to support boarders who have additional needs through adaptations, equipment or support. This means prospective boarders' needs are planned for carefully prior to the start of the academic year. Boarders' independence skills are actively promoted, so that they are able to participate as fully as possible in boarding life.

Parents View feedback given at the time of this inspection shows positive responses from parents overall, with 96% of parents saying they would recommend this school to another parent. Parent View surveys reflected similar findings from the surveys the school has conducted which demonstrated that while most parents are happy, a small number of parents do not agree. While the school is aware of these results, these findings demonstrate a small degree of dissatisfaction, particularly linked to progress.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Good

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Pre-admission information is collected by the management team in order to assess the suitability of placement for potential boarders. Boarders and parents are invited to visit the school and meet staff through informal contact and an open evening was being held during this inspection visit. Once a place is approved, the school focuses on giving guidance and encouragement to ensure positive outcomes for boarders. Boarders complete a profile about themselves as part of admission process to enable staff and boarders to get to know one another. Sometimes these have not been received by boarding staff prior to new boarders' arrival. Boarders described the positive impact from pastoral care when settling in a new school. The school uses a well-organised electronic system to manage information about each boarder and identify boarders' developmental targets. The system provides teaching and boarding staff with an effective tool to communicate and document information in a cohesive way alongside daily records. Care plans for boarders with identified needs are extensively detailed. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The school nurses provide pastoral care to assist boarders to understand the importance of good health and personal care. Boarders can choose to speak with a range of professionals, including a qualified counsellor. Risk assessments are used to establish whether boarders are able to manage any aspects of any medication they require. The school manages an electronic record which is accessible by teaching, boarding and nursing staff. This means arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and the system enables the school nurse to monitor this effectively. The health centre is clean and equipped appropriately for the care of boarders when they are unwell or injured.

Boarders are encouraged to engage in the wider community as well as boarding life. Boarders' views are actively sought through feedback surveys, on-line questionnaires, visits by governors, the introduction of suggestions boxes and the school council as well as through the prefect system. Boarders spoken with have indicated some positive changes made as a result of boarders' views. The school's survey demonstrated that the majority of boarders and parents agree that they are well cared for and feel safe.

Boarders benefit from a good range of interesting boarding facilities such as a café and spacious common rooms with snack making facilities, including a relaxing designated space for sixth form boarders. Some recreational spaces offer pool table, table tennis and table-top football for boarders, with access to entertainment along with large screen televisions and gaming facilities. Bedrooms were seen to be mainly personalised. A rolling programme of refurbishment has taken place with the upgrade of bedroom furnishings, shower facilities, carpeting and mattresses, which are much improved. Boarders are provided with secure lockable storage for their personal items. Boarding accommodation is of good standard, clean, warm, well-furnished and maintained. The issues of window restrictors and sports changing room shower curtains identified at the last boarding inspection have since been addressed. However, the general condition of showering facilities for sports is out of date. An additional new purpose-built boarding house has been finished to high standard. The furnishing provided in this accommodation is of good quality but seen by some boarders as clinical in feel.

Quality and choice of food are good and several boarders spoken to state it has improved since a

catering manager started last year. Some meals are taken in boarding houses and boarders like to be able to access simple meals and snacks at evenings and weekends. A good range of food is provided, with safe and hygienic practices supported through training and staff appraisal. Individual dietary needs are well catered for.

Boarders' safety

Good

The safety of boarders is good. Robust recruitment arrangements, supported by clear and up-to-date records of checks and decisions at each stage of the process, help ensure that adults appointed are suitable to work with children.

Appropriate action is taken to safeguard boarders who may be at risk of harm, including liaison with local child protection services. However, records lack detail, with limited information to explain decisions taken by the school and discussions with other professionals. This does not significantly affect boarder's safety but fuller records would show more clearly that any concerns have been dealt with effectively.

Behaviour is good and bullying incidents are infrequent and are managed well by the school, with a restorative approach taken to support boarders and maintain good peer relationships. Boarders are kept safe when using the school's computer systems and they accept rules on the use of mobile phones, which provide an appropriate level of restriction for each age group. Teaching and boarding staff respond effectively to any incidents of concern, taking opportunities to raise boarders' awareness of e-safety. There have been very few incidents of boarders going absent or missing.

Site security and safety are good. Clear processes are in place to ensure any potential risks to boarders' safety are anticipated and addressed. Repairs and contractors are well managed, minimising disruption and ensuring boarders are kept safe. Fire drills and alarm checks are carried out regularly. A requirement made at the last inspection to fix restrictors to upstairs bedroom windows has been addressed. Boarders are guided and supported to keep themselves safe when out and about in the community. A community police officer has played an active role in raising awareness about keeping safe and anti-bullying practices.

Leadership and management of boarding

Good

The leadership and management of boarding are good. The boarding provision has been reorganised along with a newly-built boarding house. The management structure is clear and includes succession planning. There is very strong governor involvement in the school. The school make use of external consultancy support from School Improvement Partners (SIP). This means the governing board actively challenges the school and promotes continuous improvement. Comprehensive and informative reports and annual governor visits to each boarding house ensure governors have clear evaluation of the service, helping to drive improvement. The school also carries out detailed audits of each boarding house, taking into account a range of evidence including boarders' and parents' views. This means the school demonstrates a strong commitment to improving outcomes. Action taken since last inspection and boarders' views confirm this.

The school has an effective written policy for its boarding provision, outlining boarding principles and practice and describing routines and procedures clearly. The school manages complaint procedures appropriately and maintains an effective system of records for each individual boarder. The ethos of the school along with careful boarding planning ensures individual boarders' needs are recognised and valued.

There are good staffing arrangements in place. Boarding staff are deployed to work in specific houses and there is a good staffing structure in place. Staff retention is strong and morale is good. Staff are supported well through regular staff meetings, annual appraisals and individual supervision. Training includes induction in boarding and school environment, and annual refresher training in line with Boarding Schools' Association. Most boarding staff are trained in boarding management at certificate and diploma level and all have received training in child protection. The Director of Boarding collates boarding staff and boarders' views in respect of individual boarding houses. These are analysed and trends are highlighted for further improvement.

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

Unique reference number	137313
Social care unique reference number	SC039847
DfE registration number	933/5400

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.

Type of school	Maintained boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	216
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Mr Irfan Latif
Date of previous boarding inspection	10/02/2010
Telephone number	01749 813 393
Email address	headmaster@sexkeys.somerset.sch.uk

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