

St Michael's School

St. Michaels School, Harts Lane, Burghclere, NEWBURY, Berkshire, RG20 9JW

Inspection dates	16/03/2015 to 18/03/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding	1
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

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. There are a significant number of strengths in the care provided. Boarders receive very good standards of care and support. This enables them to make significant progress in their educational, moral and personal development.
- The extensive improvements made since the last inspection include refurbishment of the boarding house, improved recruitment procedures, completion of safeguarding training for all members of staff and effective recording of medication administered.
- Boarders live in a multi-national and inclusive boarding community. Boarders develop tolerance, understanding and respect. There is acknowledgement and enjoyment of each other's of individuality and identity. Boarders enjoy being part of a community with shared beliefs. Boarders learn about the diverse cultures and nationalities which make up the boarding community.
- Boarders unanimously speak positively about their enjoyment of their boarding experience. They develop meaningful friendships, enjoy the varied activities and feel safe and secure.
- Boarders' welfare is promoted very well because boarding staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities and obligations. Boarders report that bullying is not an issue and that the community will not accept or tolerate it.
- There are good arrangements for health care with sound procedures in place for the administration of prescribed and homely medication.
- The small size of the boarding community and the fact that members of staff who work in the boarding provision also teach the boarders, means that all their needs are known and that any issues can be swiftly addressed and responded to.
- The use of external monitoring from other professionals ensures that performance is reviewed and reflected upon and that the head teacher and housemaster keep up to date

with developments and changes in legislation and practice

- Minor shortfalls identified during the inspection have had no impact on the safety or well-being of the boarders. These relate to completing records of sanctions imposed, provision of e-safety training to underpin staff's safeguarding knowledge and refurbishment of one of the common rooms.

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 took place over three days and was carried out by a Social Care Regulatory Inspector. During the inspection the boarding areas were visited, groups of boarders met the inspector, all members of staff involved in boarding duties were interviewed and activities and break times were observed.

The inspector also joined boarders at mealtimes, examined numerous records and consulted with the manager of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB) prior to the inspection. Letters from parents about their opinions of the quality of boarding were also examined.

Inspection team

Paul Taylor

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St Michael's School is located in Burghclere, near Newbury. This non-affiliated independent boarding school is registered for pupils aged from four to 18 years. It opened in 1991 in order to meet the needs and beliefs of the followers of the Society of St Pius X. The school is a registered charitable trust and its goals reflect those of the Catholic Society to which it belongs, namely the preservation and continuation of the Catholic faith and tradition. The school aims to instil in its pupils knowledge, virtue and a sense of responsibility.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- provide all members of staff with training in e-safety.
- consistently record when sanctions have been completed.
- refurbish the wet weather common room.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Boarders benefit from excellent relationships with staff and each other. Difference is valued and celebrated, with different nationalities contributing to a vibrant and welcoming boarding environment. The ethos of boarding promotes the spiritual and moral development of each boarder.

Boarders clearly enjoy and fully embrace being part of the boarding community. They speak most positively about being part of a caring community and of making lasting and meaningful friendships. 'It is like a big family' is a comment from a boarder. Boarders make significant progress in their lives and develop their skills and confidence to an excellent extent. All boarders learn to be part of a team whether this is taking part in shared chores or by being part of the cadet force. This enables them to also develop their leadership skills and confidence.

Shared living enables boarders to develop tolerance and understanding of each other. The culture of respect is central tenet of boarding life. This demonstrates itself through the high standard of behaviour observed and by the support that boarders give to each other.

Boarders benefit from having their views and opinions valued and promoted to an excellent standard. Boarders contribute fully to the running of the boarding community. Boarding has a high status in the school and the views of those living there are seen as important and worthwhile. A number of avenues are available for boarders to express their views and to put their requests forward. Boarders say they feel listened to and that their views contribute to decisions made regarding the boarding community. They have been able to influence decisions with regards to menus, décor, activities and bed times.

Boarders benefit from comprehensive health care arrangements. Any specific health needs are known and met. Boarders lead healthy and active lifestyles. Physical activities and interests are embedded as part of the daily routines and this supports fitness, team building and healthy living.

An excellent programme is in place which ensures boarders receive comprehensive guidance and support in their transition toward adulthood and independence. All boarders are provided with extensive opportunities to develop their independence skills. An excellent approach toward future planning allows sixth form boarders an invaluable chance to experience increased levels of responsibility and autonomy. All sixth form boarders become prefects after they have finished an induction program. This enables them to develop their leadership skills and to take responsibility for leading and guiding younger boarders. This is an extremely important aspect of the boarding provision and enables boarders to become positive role models.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Good

Good pastoral arrangements ensure a clear focus on boarders' welfare. These are embedded in practice and clearly understood and implemented by staff. Effective communication ensures the pastoral and educational needs of boarders are addressed as a joint focus. This is easily achieved due to the small size of the school community and the fact that boarding staff are also involved in teaching the boarders. Therefore any specific needs or issues are known to boarding staff and can be address promptly and effectively.

A thorough induction process for new boarders ensures that they are supported by members of staff, prefects and their peers. Boarders are allocated a 'buddy' who takes responsibility for showing them the routines and explaining rules. This helps boarders settle into their community very well. 'It was good, it helped' is a comment from a boarder.

Members of staff ensure that boarders have a varied selection of enriching activities made available to them. Physical activity is promoted with an emphasis on healthy living and exercise. Football, hockey and swimming are popular activities for the boarders. Outings are also organised for boarders, especially at weekends. They visit historical places, pleasure parks as well as local shops and towns. Attendance at the school's cadet force is embedded in the routine of the school. This provides opportunities for boarders to develop leadership skills, discipline and team work.

Healthcare arrangements for boarders are good. All members of staff are trained in first aid and there is also a nurse available on site for advice and support if needed. Members of staff transport boarders to medical appointments if needed. There is an effective system in place for the administration of medication and some boarders are assessed as being competent to self-administer their own medication, for example asthma inhalers. There is a sick bay which can be used if boarders need to be isolated, for example if they have a condition which may be contagious. They are able to summon support if they need from the sick bay.

Boarding facilities are warm and comfortable and boarders are able to personalise their cubicles with photographs and posters. Boarders are also involved in helping to redecorate their boarding areas in colours which they have chosen. This enables them to feel they have an investment in their living space. There is a common room which boarders can use during break times if the weather is inclement. Although this room is not used widely, it is in need of redecoration to make the room more welcoming.

Boarders are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of food they eat. Menus are varied and an emphasis is placed on cooking home made food and using as much home grown produce as possible. Specific dietary needs are known and catered for by the chefs. Meal times are well ordered social events with good manners being shown by all boarders.

Boarders' safety

Good

The school has a recruitment process which is robust and ensures that all necessary checks are carried out on prospective members of staff before they commence employment. This means that only adults with appropriate personal and employment histories are engaged to work with the boarders.

All members of staff receive training in safeguarding and all know who to go to and what to do in the event that they have concerns about a boarder's welfare. Staff obligations and guidance are also contained in the school's child protection and safeguarding policy. This means that all members of staff have the training and knowledge as well as guidance to promote boarders well-being and safety. Not all members of staff have received specific training in e-safety. Although they are clear as to the rules around internet access and are aware of potential risks they have not had formal training to underpin their knowledge in this area. This has had no negative impact on the safety of boarders but use of the internet is an aspect of young people's lives which is increasing both socially and academically.

Boarders unanimously report that they feel safe living at the school and that they have a number of members of staff they can approach for support, as well as an independent visitor. They also have a good awareness of external organisations they can contact if they feel they need support from another source. They report that bullying is not an issue. 'We just won't stand for it as a school' is a comment from a boarder. 'We all look out for each other' is another comment.

Behaviour is seen to be exemplary. Boarders are observed to be polite and considerate to each other as well as members of staff and visitors. There is an embedded culture of mutual respect

operating in the school. The imposition of sanctions is rare and where these are applied they are almost exclusively related to behaviour in school rather than behaviour in the boarding area. Sanctions mainly involve a boarder completing a community chore, such as tidying up or sweeping an area. The boarders feel this is fair and that it is also a positive way of addressing behaviour. The records of sanctions kept by the housemaster do not consistently record when a sanction has been completed. While this has no impact on the welfare of boarders, it can make it difficult to assess exactly when any misdemeanour was addressed.

There are numerous risk assessments in place which outline measures to be taken to ensure boarders safety. For example, the drill to be used when air rifles are being used or what measures need to be in place when they are out on school trips. This approach ensures that members of staff and boarders alike are aware of the risks associated with any activity and how these can be minimised.

Boarders safety is also protected by the use of regular fire drills as well as safety checks of fire and electrical equipment. It is clear that boarders safety is given a high profile and that effective systems and checks are in place to ensure that their safety is promoted and protected to a good standard.

Leadership and management of boarding

Good

The boarding provision is managed to a good standard. Close liaison between members of staff and the leadership team ensures that there is consistency and stability for the boarders. There are shared aims which are clearly established and embedded in the school and boarding provision. The spiritual and moral growth of the boarders is given a high priority and this is made very clear in the school prospectus and boarding guide.

The school assesses the effectiveness and performance of the boarding provision on an ongoing basis. Weekly meetings between the boarding staff reflect upon boarders well-being and staff performance. This is underpinned by having external professionals assess the school's performance. As a result of this improvements in areas such as décor and reviewing of procedures and policies are effectively implemented.

All members of staff have an induction program which ensures that they are effectively prepared to work in the boarding provision. They also receive regular appraisals and supervision so that their ongoing practice can be assessed and developed. Senior members of staff keep up to date with legislative changes and this is passed on to members of staff. This ensures that practice in the boarding provision is good and that boarders are suitably protected and supported.

The majority of pupils at the school are boarders. This means that the boarding provision is central to the running and routines of the school. Boarders come to the school from a wide range of nationalities and cultures and with a shared faith. This means that difference is celebrated and enjoyed while everyone has a shared commonality and belief in the structure and faith which underpins the values upon which the school operates.

Parents report good communication with the school. Comments made by parents include 'we have felt that our son has been admirably supported', 'the school's inclusiveness has made our son feel completely at ease' and 'it is a happy and balanced environment.'

The small size of the boarding community means that boarders have ready access to all members of staff. They also meet with their housemaster on a termly basis as a formal opportunity to speak about how they feel they are being cared for. Additionally, there is a suggestions box which is frequently used by boarders. The boarders feel that they can influence the running of the boarding provision and examples of changes made include changes in bed times, menus and

having an influence in the decoration of the boarding area.

Since the last inspection improvements have been made in the robustness of the recruitment process, improved décor in the boarding areas, staff child protection awareness and training and a more effective process for the administration of medication. The use of an external consultant in assessing the systems operated in the school has ensured that practice is kept up to date. This means that standards can be maintained and that external scrutiny supports the school's own internal monitoring.

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	116594
Social care unique reference number	SC012016
DfE registration number	850/6062

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	
Number of boarders on roll	30
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Father Patrick Summers
Date of previous boarding inspection	17/10/2011
Telephone number	01635 278 137
Email address	bursar.sms@gmail.com

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