

# Beechen Cliff School

Beechen Cliff School

Alexandra Park, Bath, Somerset, BA2 4RE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this boarding school

Beechen Cliff School is an academy of 1327 pupils. It provides for boys from age 11 to 16 and a mixed gender sixth form of 407 pupils. The school has a boarding provision housing up to 36 boarders. The school is located close to the centre of Bath and caters for pupils of all abilities. There is a strong focus on sport at this academy.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 16 March 2018 and 22 to 23 May 2018

Very occasionally, Ofsted will delay the publication of a report to ensure full consideration of concerns identified during the quality assurance process. In a rare instance, this process may suggest gaps in the inspection evidence base, which will cause Ofsted to conclude that the inspection is incomplete. This happened at Beechen Cliff School when the boarding provision was inspected in March 2018. Social care inspectors returned to the school in May 2018 to gather additional information to secure the evidence base in respect of the boarding provision. In such cases, the inspection report is not published until Ofsted is satisfied that the inspection is secure.

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>inadequate</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures, which mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Date of last inspection:** 27 January 2015

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This boarding school is inadequate because:

- Leaders, managers and governors demonstrate a poor understanding of the principles and practice of safeguarding and child protection. This places pupils and boarders at risk.
- On too many occasions, safeguarding incidents are not acted upon and progressed in a timely way or in line with the school's policies and procedures.
- Leaders, managers and governors fail to ensure that there are effective systems in place to identify and address incidents of bullying and racism.
- Leaders, managers and governors fail to ensure that the arrangements in place for staff recruitment are safe. They do not consistently follow the principles of safer recruitment of staff.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not monitor the impact of teaching effectively. They do not pay sufficient attention to the progress made by pupils over time. This means that not all children are reaching their full potential.
- Leaders and managers fail to ensure that staff working closely with children are provided with the training and support they require to effectively and safely care for them.
- A number of national minimum standards have not been met.

The boarding school's strengths:

- Pupils who stay at the boarding facility are provided with a well maintained and clean environment.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the welfare of children who spend time living in host families.

## **What does the boarding school need to do to improve?**

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

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. National minimum standard 6.2
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the secretary of state. National minimum standard 11.1
- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. National minimum standard 13.1
- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. National minimum standard 13.2
- The school's leadership and management demonstrates good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. National minimum standard 13.3
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. Children attend school or other educational provision; they are learning and making good progress from their starting points. Staff are ambitious for children and support them to attend and do well in their education. There is effective liaison between the boarding provision, teaching staff and headteacher. National minimum standard 13.4
- The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. National minimum standard 13.5
- The senior boarding staff have an adequate level of experience and training. National minimum standard 13.6
- The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1. National minimum standard 13.7
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action is taken as appropriate. National minimum standard 13.8
- The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate. National minimum standard 13.9

- Boarders are not discriminated against, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 or because of their cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs. National minimum standard 16.1
- The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards. National minimum standard 18.1
- The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). National minimum standard 18.2

## Recommendations

- Update the statement of principles and practice to fully reflect the individuality of the boarding provision.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

The leadership, management and governance of this boarding provision is inadequate. Children are not fully protected. Significant and widespread concerns in respect of the safety and wellbeing of children were identified during this inspection. The arrangements for dealing with concerns about child welfare are inadequate. These arrangements also apply in the school as well as in the boarding provision.

There are too many examples of senior leaders making decisions and taking action that could place children in increased situations of risk. Too often child protection procedures are not followed. For example, children who made disclosures were asked to write down their account. Leaders and managers had not considered the distress that such an action may cause for the child nor the potential risk posed to any formal investigative process.

There is a lack of urgency in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children. In March this year, Ofsted highlighted the lack of an adequate security system to alert staff at night time if a boarder leaves the building or lets someone in. Despite being aware of such safeguarding dangers, leaders and managers have not taken swift and appropriate action to rectify this.

School leaders and managers do not ensure that all pupils make secure academic progress from their starting points. They do not pay sufficient attention to the progress that pupils and groups of pupils make over time. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Children enjoy the sports available to them outside of school time. They have very good access to sports and recreation facilities on site and the school links with local and national youth teams to promote sporting excellence.

Children receive support that promotes their emotional health and well-being. Pastoral support systems links well with external agencies such as Community Adolescent Mental Health Services, to ensure that children receive help when they require it. For example, staff respond proactively in identifying and responding to incidents of self-harm. This support has seen an improvement in boarders' well-being.

Relationships between children who board are good. Some children acknowledged that they can become homesick and that they support each other at these times and when they have problems.

Children stay in a well-maintained and clean environment. They are provided with good quality food and also have their own facilities to prepare snacks and meals. Children gave positive feedback about their boarding experience to the inspector.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate**

The lack of robust and well-led safeguarding systems obstructs action to ensure that children are safe. Leaders and managers do not demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding procedures, statutory guidance and how this should be applied consistently to their practice. This results in a culture that does not respond effectively or appropriately to concerns.

The school's procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns lack transparency and obstruct processes to keep children safe. Leaders and managers fail to demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge or training required to effectively manage and oversee concerns about child welfare. On too many occasions inappropriate action is taken without prior consultation or referral to the relevant safeguarding agencies. This action has the potential to increase the risk of harm to children rather than reduce it. In addition, information provided by the school to safeguarding agencies is not always sufficient to help the designated officer to understand the severity or nature of the disclosure. This approach to keeping children safe results in the designated officer not having all the information about the child's concerns in order to make effective safeguarding decisions.

Leaders and managers fail to ensure that staff are recruited in-line with safer recruitment guidance. In particular, the processes to manage situations where

members of staff start work prior to the completion of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are inadequate. Inspectors found one case where a member of staff had started work with only one reference and no DBS check. Risk assessments in these circumstances are poor and do not mitigate any risk effectively.

The arrangements in place to ensure the safety and welfare of children who spend time living with host families are effective. Systems are in place ensure that safeguarding checks, such as DBS checks, are carried out in respect of host families and other adults who visit their homes. In addition, assessments of families are carried out prior to any children coming to stay with them. A matching process is also in place to ensure that a suitable family is identified for each of the children.

The arrangements in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children who are linked to professional sports clubs are also managed well. Some of these children spend time living with host families out of the area. Checks in relation to the suitability of host families are robust. Regular monitoring of these arrangements takes place with all involved including the children. Regular and meaningful contact is maintained between the head of boarding, welfare officer and sporting clubs.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Leaders, managers and governors do not ensure that procedures and practices are securely in place to ensure effective safeguarding and child protection. As a result, children are not fully protected from harm.

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of incidents that take place in the school. They do not monitor incidents with rigour to identify and address identified patterns of behaviour. Leaders' responses to a recent incident at the school have been too slow. Leaders have not taken the required action to strengthen and improve their work to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that systems are in place to provide regular and effective formal supervision to boarding staff. This means they are unable to formally monitor the quality of the work of staff in the boarding provision. For example, leaders and managers do not identify areas where staff may require additional support or training. Practice issues and incidents are not discussed on a regular basis and therefore lessons cannot be learnt to improve future practice and outcomes and experiences for children. Staff are not provided with dedicated time to raise any concerns or worries that they might have in relation to the children.

The management of complaints received by the school is weak. Leaders have not implemented a robust system to ensure that complaints are formally recorded, responded to, or monitored. Leaders have not ensured that the school's complaints policy is used appropriately. For example parents' concerns are not routinely recorded following conversations with leaders. As a result, there is a lack of management oversight to enable leaders to address complaints thoroughly and

appropriately.

The statement of principles and practice is identical to the school's core values and ethos. This document does not currently reflect the individuality of the boarding provision.

The head of boarding is the south west regional representative for the state boarding forum and is keen to share practice with other providers.

## **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:** SC475345

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr A Davies

**Type of school:** Boarding School

**Telephone number:** 01225480466

**Email address:** [Headmaster@beechencliff.org.uk](mailto:Headmaster@beechencliff.org.uk)

## **Inspector(s)**

Guy Mammatt: social care inspector

Tracey Ledder: social care inspector





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