

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 part of a multi-academy trust. The academy provides education for boys only from the age of 11 to 16 and has a mixed-gender sixth form. The school has a small boarding facility, housing up to 36 pupils. The school is located close to the city centre and caters for pupils of all abilities.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 March 2020

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected Requires improvement to be 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: Inadequate

Date of last inspection: 14 March 2018

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarders are positive about the care and support that they receive. They say that they enjoy their boarding experience and are well looked after. Effective systems are in place, so everyone has a voice. Boarders say that they feel listened to. They state that leaders consider their wishes and views and take action. They feel supported across all aspects of their lives.

There is a significant focus on improving positive mental and emotional health. With support and encouragement from staff, some boarders work with an external agency. This has supported them to lead initiatives and deliver presentations. The positive impact of this initiative on the school and the wider community is remarkable.

The drive to raise awareness and understanding in matters relating to equality is effective. Boarders have led successful initiatives and have given presentations to the school community in order to promote respect and equality.

Boarders have access to a variety of activities and sports. Staff support them to reach their goals and have aspirations for their future. Some boarders said that they would like more choice of activities at weekends.

Some areas of the boarding accommodation are worn and tired. Further work is required to make the environment more homely.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The arrangements to keep children safe in the event of a fire are not wholly effective. Leaders have not acted quickly enough to address faults with some fire doors. Leaders acted during the inspection to rectify this shortfall.

Fire drills take place on a regular basis. The current system does not go far enough to identify any deficiencies. Leaders took action during the inspection to make the system more robust. This aspect must be prioritised going forward.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) leads by example. In difficult and emotive situations, he provides calm and effective leadership. He ensures that staff receive good support. This helps them manage difficult situations well. As a result, boarders receive good-quality and coordinated support when they need it most.

Boarders are safe and secure. They told inspectors that they feel safe. They can identify an adult to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. The DSL takes swift and decisive action in the event of any concern. He has developed a safeguarding culture that underpins day-to-day practice.

The DSL has introduced effective, comprehensive monitoring systems. This means that the safety and welfare of boarders is constantly considered and reviewed. This ensures that boarders are safe and supported.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders have acted to ensure that boarders are part of the safeguarding culture. Boarders have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They have an important and active role in ensuring the safety and welfare of their peers. They are rightly proud of their role and the positive impact it has had across the school community.

Senior leaders have acted to address shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. Their focus on the safety and welfare of boarders has raised standards and improved the service.

Leaders and managers complement each other's skills well. The reconfiguration of accountability has provided clarity in respect of roles and responsibilities. Leaders are well respected by all. Staff speak of their determination, dedication and drive. When asked, boarders found it difficult to identify any areas they could improve.

Senior leaders have established an inclusive culture. Care and education staff work exceptionally well together. This ensures cohesive working, in a supportive and open culture. The school values are applied across all aspects of boarding and educational life.

The leadership team appropriately challenges partner agencies. Several good examples of this practice are evident. The DSL tirelessly questions others when they do not act. This has secured much-needed support for children and their families.

Managers provide good-quality, supportive supervision. Staff say that this has helped them to improve and question their practice. They see this as a fundamental aspect of their work and central to improving the experiences and safety of children.

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 standard(s) for boarding schools:

- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Recommendations

- Act to improve the environment in which children live.
- Work with children to review activities available at weekends.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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 Andrew Davies

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01225 480466

Email address: Headmaster@beechencliff.org.uk

Inspector(s)

Tracey Ledger, Social Care Inspector (lead)

David Kidner, Social Care Inspector

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