

Sexeys School

Cole Road, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0DF

Assurance visit

Information about this boarding school

Sexeys School is a maintained, mixed gender boarding school for 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. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses which are located on the school site. At the time of this visit, there were 128 boarders.

Visit dates: 14 to 15 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 March 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Inadequate

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

The boarding staff offer the boarders warm, child-focused, nurturing care. Boarders report that they really enjoy boarding. They benefit from consistent rules and boundaries and boarding routines run smoothly. The boarders value the sense of community and the family feel of the school. They particularly enjoy making friends and learning independent living skills, such as undertaking their own laundry, keeping their room tidy and travelling independently on public transport.

Boarders benefit from open and trusting relationships with the boarding staff. They are encouraged to share their views, opinions and concerns. They report that they feel listened to and their views are promptly acted upon by the boarding staff whenever possible.

Parents report that their children are very well cared for and benefit from boarding at the school. Parents value and comment positively on the effective communication from the boarding staff and feel confident that their children are well cared for and safe.

The boarding staff understand the emotional and physical healthcare needs of the boarders. Comprehensive care plans offer the staff guidance about how those healthcare needs are to be met.

The boarders enjoy a varied range of activities when boarding, such as theatre visits and sports events, despite the COVID-19 restrictions.

The school and boarding staff work closely together to ensure that the boarders make progress with their education. Educational achievement is promoted by the boarding staff. Prep time in the boarding houses is closely supervised. Boarders report that they find it helpful to have a specified time after school to focus on their homework. During the COVID-19 lockdown, when they were unable to board, boarders were regularly supported with their education and well-being through regular contact from the boarding staff.

The safety of children

The boarding staff understand how to manage risks and keep the boarders safe. They are vigilant, show professional curiosity and promptly challenge and escalate any safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. The boarding staff have a good working relationship with safeguarding professionals.

Boarders report that they feel safe and could name someone to speak to if they felt worried or unsafe. Any safeguarding incidents are comprehensively investigated.

Boarders report that they all get on very well most of the time and there is no bullying taking place in the boarding houses.

Comprehensive assessments of risks are in place that offer staff strategies and guidance in how to manage risk. COVID-19 restrictions are well managed in the boarding houses and help to ensure the safety of the boarders and staff.

The boarding staff are carefully recruited in accordance with safer recruitment practice and procedures. Extensive checks are undertaken to ensure that only suitable people are employed.

Behaviour management systems are effective and are understood by boarders, who say rules are fair and consistent. The boarding staff support the boarders to learn from their mistakes rather than taking a punitive approach.

Leaders and managers

The boarding provision of the school offers a high-quality boarding experience. Leaders and managers provide strong and stable leadership and are relentless in their pursuit of improvement and development. Improvements across the boarding houses are apparent in the smooth running of the boarding provision, quality of safeguarding and positive feedback from parents and boarders.

The findings from internal quality monitoring systems are promptly acted upon by leaders and managers. They undertake continuous improvements to boarding,, such as extensive audits of safeguarding policies and procedures and staff recruitment procedures. All recommendations from the previous inspection are met and there are no recommendations arising from this visit.

There has been a high turnover in the staff team recently. However, a consistent and stable staff team is now in place that are sufficient to meet the needs of the boarders. Staff report that they are well trained in all the topics they need, such as safeguarding and first aid. Staff supervision has been reviewed and a format is now in place that challenges and supports staff practice.

The two boarding houses are well maintained, well equipped and provide the boarders with a comfortable environment. Boarders report that they like their rooms. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the boarding houses were redecorated to provide a homely appearance. The common rooms are now decorated to resemble family living rooms. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the two houses are now split according to age so that boarders can remain in their 'bubbles' when boarding.

Boarding school details

Unique reference number: SC039847

Headteacher: Helen Cullen

Inspector

Tina Maddison, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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