

Burford School

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Burford School, Cheltenham Road, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4PL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Burford School is situated in Burford in Oxfordshire. It is a maintained school with academy status for girls and boys aged from 11 to 19 years. There were 1,495 students on roll at the time of inspection, of which 96 were boarders. The boarding site is a short walking distance from the main school.

This was a social care inspection on the boarding accommodation only.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This school enables some students to develop and enhance their experiences through boarding. Students range from local to international and all come to 'prepare for life'. Staff tailor activities to support students to build on key life skills and help them to prepare for their future destinations.

Children's time at boarding when not at school is filled with fun, laughter and opportunities to enhance their studies. Staff actively seek children's participation in a range of enjoyable activities and regular routines. Children enjoy these, and staff enjoy getting involved in games of volleyball and making games fun for all children.

The boarding provision is a prominent feature of the local community. Students respect local residents and, in return, residents respect students. The local church offers opportunities for children to gain experiences for their Duke of Edinburgh awards, and the local golf, football and rugby clubs welcome students to join the clubs during non-school times. A local community association has also donated musical equipment to help students pursue their interests. Students also support a twinned school in Gambia, enhancing their understanding of the world.

Children's voices are heard in the boarding provision. An active student boarding council holds the school's leadership team to account, championing the views and wishes of students. This has helped bring student grumbles to the attention of leaders and prompt action to address anything concerning, like the unpredictable Wi-Fi signal in boarding, leaving children feeling heard and their views valued.

Students joining the boarding provision are thoughtfully considered. Staff consider the child's interests and friendship groups to ensure that their experience will be positive. Staff are aware of students who are struggling to make friendships and use a buddy system to support them when transferring between the boarding house and day school to help new students settle. Staff ensure that parents are informed, and involved in supporting their child both at school and away from school.

Students have great aspirations for their futures. Staff take pride in celebrating the achievements of students who have left the boarding provision. Students are inspired by creative displays that staff have created to celebrate positive role models. Staff work closely with teachers to know students' progress and identify any barriers to learning. Students, as a result, are motivated to strive for better grades.

Students like being in the boarding provision and told inspectors that they value their time there. They said that when they are unhappy with any aspect of boarding, they feel comfortable to raise these in boarding meetings, knowing that any concerns would be addressed. They gave the example of the 'digital detox' as something they were planning to raise and were hopeful for a positive response from leaders.

The auxiliary staff ensure that the children's environment is comfortable and welcoming. Students' clothing is laundered daily, and staff ensure that clothes are returned with care and precision. The bathroom areas are also cleaned regularly, and any maintenance issues are rectified quickly.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Students' safety is well considered, and any risks are immediately acted on by staff. Regular meetings between boarding and school staff highlight any new risks children face. Plans are implemented and staff are informed through regular formal and informal meetings. This has led to low numbers of students being absent from the school's care. Each of these incidents has been brief and has not required the support of external agencies. On each occasion, the student was located safe and well.

The arrangements for the administration, storage and record-keeping of medication are weak and result in errors not being immediately picked up and addressed. For example, one student's medication was not in the original packaging, had expired and had not been returned to the pharmacy. On other occasions, there have been flaws in the record-keeping, making it hard to determine whether medication has been correctly administered.

Students are supported to display socially acceptable behaviour. Students follow the school's behavioural contract, and staff reinforce this by giving students boundaries, structure and routine. In one example, this helped a student to address previous behavioural challenges and transform their outcomes, and their parent explained how positive this has been for their child.

Students are supported to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Regular education, both at school and in the boarding provision, helps educate students of potential dangers. Support from senior student heads of boarding and staff ensures that students can talk to people that they trust about any concerns. Close links with other agencies mean that concerns are reported quickly and effectively when this is required, reducing the risk of harm to children.

Staff are skilled at identifying emerging risks. Regular training, supervision and reflective meetings help them to reflect on safeguarding scenarios and their responses. Staff are positive about this and feel it has created a supportive culture to better inform their practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Students benefit from a caring, empathic leadership team that holds their best interests at heart. Students feel valued and listened to. Parents spoke of times when leaders sensitively supported their child with homesickness.

Leaders are keen to further improve the boarding provision to enhance students' experiences. Regular feedback from students, parents and staff supports this.

A passionate Chair of the Governors' Boarding Committee oversees the boarding provision. They visit the boarding house regularly and hold the senior leadership team to account. The chair knows the local area well and ensures that students' views are listened to and acted on.

All staff have been thoroughly vetted using safer recruitment practice. However, leaders have not picked up on some omissions in the required checks for any member of a household that lives on the school premises.

Leaders know their staff well. Consequently, staff feel supported and equipped to perform their roles. They bring their skills and passion, and students benefit from an enthusiastic team. However, in some cases, one family member is supervising and supporting another. This has the potential to make practice insular.

The oversight of health and safety processes is generally effective. There are procedures in place for emergencies, and maintenance work is undertaken when required. However, one child with special educational needs who has an identified action in emergencies does not have a written personal evacuation plan. This has not affected staff practice. Staff demonstrated that they understood their role in the event of the child requiring evacuation.

The head of boarding is passionate about the students' experiences and is resilient to any challenges. For example, one student struggled to adapt to life at the boarding house. This resulted in some difficult behaviours at school and the house. The head of boarding advocated for this child and supported them to succeed.

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 for boarding schools:

- All medication is stored safely and securely, and accurate records are kept of its administration. Staff are properly trained to provide the support that pupils need when administering medicines. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarders to whom they are prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as being sufficiently responsible to do so. Where applicable, schools have regard to government guidance. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 7.4)

Points for Improvement

- Leaders must ensure that family members of staff living on site are appropriately vetted.
- Leaders must ensure that all children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have a personal evacuation plan in place in the event of a fire.

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: SC013029

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Matthew Albrighton

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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