

Brymore Academy

Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust

Cannington, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 2NB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Brymore Academy is a single-sex school for boys aged between 11 and 17 years. Its purpose is to develop their knowledge of farming, horticulture, engineering and sports. The academy is a state boarding school, and is part of the multi-academy Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust.

At the time of this inspection, there were 135 boarders. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

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: 24 to 26 May 2023

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.

Date of last inspection: 26 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarding at Brymore Academy has a hugely positive impact on the students. The admissions procedure, including the dormitory compatibility assessment, the boarding experience and the transition for students moving on from the school are of a high quality.

From their starting points, boarders make excellent progress, not only academically, but also in, for example, improving their confidence and social skills. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the impact the boarding school has had on their child. There is effective liaison between the education staff and the boarding staff. Information about vulnerable boarders is shared between education and boarding staff, if appropriate, to ensure that boarders receive the support that they need.

Boarders spoke positively about their boarding experience. As well as making friends and learning different life skills and trades, they enjoy an extensive range of meaningful and stimulating extra-curricular activities. These include a comprehensive sports programme, access to a newly refurbished swimming pool, leadership and mentoring programmes, Young Farmers' Club, mountain and road biking, and many more. In particular, boarders told the inspectors that they enjoy the opportunities to visit places of interest on day trips.

Boarders' emotional and health needs are well met. The school has an on-site health centre, where boarders have access to qualified health professionals, including mental health practitioners. Records, including care plans, are kept up to date and reviewed regularly. The inspectors found these records to be personalised and they demonstrated consultation with the boarder and parent.

The boarding houses are warm and comfortable, and the boarders enjoy relaxing in well-equipped communal areas. In the main, boarders are happy with the boarding house facilities. However, a few of the boarders told the inspectors that they would like more privacy measures in the sports changing areas.

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

Boarders who contributed to the inspection told the inspectors that they felt safe, and that they had someone who they could speak to and share any concerns with. These views were echoed by the parents who provided feedback to the inspectors.

Inspectors observed positive and warm interactions between the staff and the boarders. Staff spend a lot of time with the boarders so that they know them well and can identify any emerging concerns. Equally, boarders know who they can speak with should they have any worries. They are keen to be part of the solution, for

example befriending other boarders who are homesick and ensuring that they are included in the wider group. This creates a fully inclusive environment.

When new boarders arrive, staff have plans ready to show how they will promote their physical, mental and emotional well-being while they are boarding. Staff are confident to make dynamic risk assessments, when necessary and in the interests of each boarder individually.

Staff expect a high standard of behaviour from the boarders, who, equally, have high expectations of themselves. However, the inspectors found that not all staff were following the academy's policy on behaviour management. This means that some boarders experience punitive, rather than restorative, responses from staff. Boarders told the inspectors that they worried about this, that there was unfairness and that they were confused by the inconsistency in response from some staff.

Boarders do not go missing from the boarding provision and there is no use of physical intervention or restraint within the boarding provision. Risk assessments are kept under review and provide staff with the strategies to safely support a boarder when they are upset or worried.

Staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding work well with other safeguarding agencies. They promptly share any necessary information, contribute to strategy meetings to agree approaches to keep boarders as safe as possible, and provide key pastoral staff for those boarders who are identified as requiring additional support.

Inspectors found that the safeguarding lead had failed to complete a required safer recruitment check on a long serving member of staff who was under investigation. Measures to safeguard the boarders and the member of staff were in place during the investigation. This oversight was found by the inspectors to not have a safeguarding impact on the boarders at that time, however, it does mean a national minimum standard was not met.

The health and safety lead demonstrates effective oversight of what is a large and complex site. They prioritise routine maintenance effectively, and all fire safety measures and equipment, including personal evacuation and emergency plans, are maintained. The inspectors found that some locks in the toilets and bathrooms required attention to ensure that the boarders were afforded privacy. This was addressed during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Both the head of the school and the head of boarding are ambitious and have high aspirations and expectations for the boarders. Both demonstrate strong leadership and an eagerness for professional dialogue, challenge and continued learning. They know the strengths of the boarding provision, and any areas for development are recorded within the academy's development plan. Professionals, parents and school colleagues all highly praised the senior leadership team.

There are effective systems in place to monitor the quality of boarding provision. Feedback is gained from boarders to ensure that their views and wishes are known and met if possible. Governors and an independent listener, who visit regularly, provide further layers of external scrutiny. Any issues raised are taken seriously by the senior leaders.

Staff like spending time with the boarders. There is a genuine sense of enjoyment of the different personalities and cultures. Staff have high expectations of boarders, who embrace and accept the standards expected of them.

Staff understand their roles and receive regular training and termly supervision to ensure that they are competent and knowledgeable and work as a team. Staff who contributed to the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about their work.

The head of boarding gave reassurances to Ofsted of the actions they would take to address the few shortfalls identified during this inspection.

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:

- For all members of staff households who are aged 16 and over (not on the roll of, nor employed by, the school) and who live on the same premises as boarders, an enhanced certificate with a check of the Children's Barred List must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). (National minimum standards, page 21, paragraph 19.2)

Recommendations

- Ensure that the approach to behaviour management is reviewed, and that it is restorative and consistently implemented by all staff.
- Ensure that the plans to improve the development of the boarding provision continue. In particular, ensure that boarders are provided with a nurturing, homely environment, with a focus on promoting privacy and dignity, for example in the changing rooms and bedrooms.

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: SC042165

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mark Thomas

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

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