

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 part of a multi-academy trust. The school 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 for up to 36 boys. There are currently 32 full time boarders, and 6 flexi boarders. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 December 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.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2020

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Respect and fairness exemplify the culture in this boarding provision. Boarders feel listened to, valued, and like that they have a say in their care. They feel boundaries are reasonable and that there are opportunities for consultation and change. This creates an environment they enjoy staying in. Leaders actively seek feedback from boarders and make changes as a result. They encourage boarders to pitch suggestions for developing the provision further to house parents. Most proposals are agreed, which contributes to the collaborative nature of the boarding house.

Many boarders take part in sporting activities run by the school and also belong to clubs in the local community. House parents plan larger activities throughout the school year, such as trips to theme parks, ice skating and activity weekends. Boarders look forward to these well-planned events. As part of the wider school, boarders participate in charity fundraisers which benefit the community. House parents recognise the need for boarders to enjoy unstructured time and ensure the boarding house is a welcoming and homely environment. Boarders receive encouragement to develop local friendships and to spend time in the local community. House parents support boarders with their academic work or university applications during prep time.

Comprehensive and well-integrated support is in place across the school to support boarders physical and emotional wellbeing. The boarding house provides a stable and consistent environment for boarders. House parents take a 'sensible parent' approach to decision making. They are attuned to individual boarders needs. Leaders recognise the physical and emotional demands placed on some boarders with their sporting activity. The care and support provided to boarders is sensitive to this.

Parents are positive about their children boarding. They feel there is good communication with house parents and say they can always get in touch with someone. They say that house parents respect and care for their children. They see their children make progress in boarding. Speaking of their son, one parent says they have 'seen a significant improvement in his social and emotional wellbeing and mental health' since joining boarding this academic year.

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

Boarders say they feel safe, both in boarding and in the local area. They say they can speak to house parents if they have any worries. Boarders enjoy positive relationships with house parents and do share concerns with them. Boarders will speak about their academic worries or concerns for friends for example. House parents have a realistic understanding of young people's needs. They encourage and promote positive behaviour instead of focusing on negatives. This leads to a well-managed, settled boarding house. Being able to board supports vulnerable pupils with their emotional wellbeing and attendance. It also helps to strengthen

relationships with key individuals in their life, such as parents. This approach adds value for the individual and the wider boarding group.

Work to inform boarders and to guard against misogyny and harmful sexual behaviour has been embraced. Some boarders have taken a lead on aspects of this work, cascading their learning to younger year groups across the school. As a result of this work, awareness has increased, as has the reporting of incidents. The actions taken by leaders in response helps to build a safer and more enriching environment for all. Leaders invite external speakers into school, complementing the work teachers complete around topics such as knife crime.

Leaders implement effective whole school systems to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. Leaders encourage staff to report low level concerns about pupils. This helps them understand how to best provide support. They monitor behaviour, including any changes, and respond quickly where there are concerns. Good use is made of support services locally. When thresholds for external support are not met, the school ensures support is put in place.

Safer recruitment processes are followed, with new staff not allowed to start until the required checks are complete. Relevant concerns regarding staff who move on are shared with potential new employers.

Ongoing and urgent site maintenance is effective. The learning culture of the school extends to this area, with relevant action planning as required. Some house parents and site staff are trained to recognise faults in fire doors, which has strengthened the monitoring in this area. Boarders undertake regular fire drills and house parents check they understand what they need to do in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders promote a school culture that focuses on the individual first and foremost. Boarding principles match the school values. These are well understood by boarders and provide them with realistic aspirations for themselves. Leaders recognise the responsibility they have to boarders and have a good understanding of the quality of care provided in boarding. An experienced head of boarding is in post and is line managed by the headteacher. The headteacher is relatively new in post, and has worked collaboratively to develop a thorough understanding and oversight of the boarding provision. This oversight is comprehensive and diligent. Leaders invite external scrutiny to better understand areas for development. Arrangements are further strengthened as a result of this. There is a drive and focus on learning and improvement.

House parents are employed from within the school and as such have existing relationships with boarders. Reflective supervision sessions help house parents to differentiate between the roles. House parents receive training which supports them to care for boarders. Regular team meetings take place to allow house parents the opportunity to plan support for boarders.

School governors provide external oversight and scrutiny. The safeguarding governor undertakes responsibilities with diligence. Governors hold school leaders to account and ensure they understand the standards in boarding.

All national minimum standards are met and there are no areas for improvement identified.

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 Tim Markall

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01225480466

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Inspectors

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Martin Davis, Social Care Inspector

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