

Burford School

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

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Burford School is a maintained school with academy status for girls and boys aged from 11 to 19 years. There were 1,439 students on roll at the time of inspection, of which 94 were boarders.

This was a social care inspection of the boarding provision only. The boarding site is a short walk from the main school.

Inspection dates: 29 April to 1 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 31 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Students are welcomed to the boarding provision through a well-established admissions procedure and staff carefully think about how students are supported to live positively with each other. Students generally enjoy living with each other and staff work well with students to resolve any minor conflicts. Students are encouraged to develop important lifelong skills, such as learning to reflect on any barriers they face and finding effective solutions to help them move on and progress.

Students develop a strong sense of belonging and the culture of the boarding provision enables students to take on increased responsibility as they mature, with many older students acting as mentors and role models for their younger peers. The impact of this is that students develop a strong sense of togetherness, and this helps students to further develop their belief in their own capacity to achieve.

Children's cultural needs are carefully considered and well understood. Staff ensure that all children's interests and preferences are supported, and adaptations are made when necessary. A diverse boarding population includes many students from overseas. Consequently, students develop their understanding of diversity and difference in a natural and organic manner.

All students benefit from a wide range of on-site and off-site activities, which helps to support the development of peer relationships, both in the boarding provision and in the local community. This is particularly important for younger or newly integrated students, as part of helping them to settle.

Some staff who support students have dual roles in school and boarding. This provides unique perspectives on the experiences and progress of students and helps leaders to better understand the support that individual boarders may need. In addition to this, leaders have a colour-coded system that records additional monitoring of progress.

Staff implement strong boundaries and have high expectations for students, which encourage them to achieve and integrate into boarding. Some students struggle with the mobile phone restrictions, although many parents praise the approach taken by the school and the impact this has on their child. One parent said, 'The boarding house is run with exceptional efficiency, whilst maintaining a fun, warm homely feel with a no-nonsense approach. The phone policy is structured and fair, and this has had a tremendously positive impact on my child's well-being and ability to embrace the whole boarding experience.'

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

Although safeguarding concerns in boarding are infrequent, there is a strong framework around student welfare. Any emerging concerns are well understood, and staff take the right action when required. Since the last inspection, leaders have implemented a new monitoring system which supports improved oversight of individual students, from both academic and boarding perspectives. This helps to offer a broader approach regarding student welfare and supports staff to better understand barriers to learning and any emerging areas of difficulty.

Students feel safe and can identify a range of familiar adults to seek help and support from when required. Students can access a confidential monitoring system should they require help or have concerns about their peers. Leaders have commissioned specialist help services for students when required, for example, bereavement support and targeted work for one boys in once year group about misogynistic views and social media influences.

The pastoral approach in boarding focuses on ensuring that students feel safe, supported and happy, which is seen as essential for their well-being and success. There is a strong emphasis on positive relationships between students and staff, and leaders show a good understanding of the importance of staff using their intuition, knowledge of individual students and professional curiosity to promote student well-being.

Staff support the administration of medication prescribed overseas. At the start of the inspection, no formal policy was in place to guide this practice. Inspectors found some inconsistencies in how overseas medications are managed, such as a controlled medication being administered without original labelled packaging and one child taking their medication inconsistently and without effective medical oversight. Leaders took effective action to implement a draft policy during the inspection and are committed to ensuring more transparent processes for all staff to follow. Leaders recognise the importance of parents and their children making informed decisions and are keen to ensure a balanced approach in the future.

In one of the boarding houses, students were not consistently maintaining the kitchen environment to the accepted standard. Leaders agreed to students' wishes to have surveillance equipment to enhance the detection and monitoring of student behaviour in the kitchen. The rationale for this decision did not follow good practice principles and potentially infringed students' right to privacy. The surveillance equipment was removed during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff feel well supported and there is a strong sense of unity in the staff team. There are a range of meetings that provide opportunities for staff to share their knowledge of the experiences of students and exercise their professional judgement. Staff benefit from training and additional learning and development opportunities.

Staff value the relationship-based culture that has been embedded in the boarding provision and recognise the important role they have as parental role models for students. Despite this, the strong emphasis on relationships and direct communication means that there is sometimes limited information recorded about the journey that individual students have through boarding and the progress that they make over time. While this has not had any direct impact on student welfare, in the future students may find it difficult to retrace their experiences of their time in boarding.

The health and safety arrangements across the boarding site are well managed by the head of maintenance, who ensures regular checks are undertaken to monitor the physical environment and maintain it to a good standard. Several students have personal evacuation and emergency plans, which clearly set out the actions staff should take in the event of an emergency.

All staff are safely recruited, and effective vetting ensures that safe adults support children. The single central record is carefully managed and updated to reflect staffing changes in the school as appropriate.

Leaders are supported by a board of governors who understand the school and the boarding experience for children. Governors visit the boarding provision regularly and take time to speak with children, advocating on their behalf as necessary. Governors also work in partnership with elected students to prepare reports for relevant meetings, and this ensures that students' wishes and feelings remain a central part of the wider development of the school, which is particularly notable in boarding.

Staff value students' wishes and feelings and promote the importance of students communicating their views. Students have an important role in the ongoing development of the school and use their experiences to help leaders consider where improvements can be made. Students can apply for roles of responsibility in boarding through an elective system based on merit and shared aspiration.

No requirements or points for improvements have been made as part of this inspection.

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

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