

# Buckswood School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

---

<b>DfE registration number</b>	845/6031
<b>Unique reference number for social care</b>	SC050170
<b>Unique reference number for education</b>	114656
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28/11/2012 to 30/11/2012
<b>Inspector</b>	David Putnam / Janet Hunnam

---

<b>School address</b>	Buckswood School, Guestling, HASTINGS, East Sussex, TN35 4LT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01424 813813
<b>Email</b>	acheive@buckswood.co.uk
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Redsell

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Information about the school

Buckswood School is an independent boarding and day school for boys and girls aged 10 - 19 years of age. The majority of students board on a termly basis. Currently there are 235 boarders, 163 boys and 72 girls. The boarding accommodation is provided in eight different houses. Seven are located on the main school site and one is about half a mile away and is accessed by school transport. The school is situated close to Hastings and caters for children and young people from over 40 different countries, resulting in a genuine international community. Many of the boarders do not speak English when they arrive, but are supported to make rapid improvement. The school is accredited by the British Council as a centre for English as a foreign language. The boarding provision was last inspected in January 2008. The education provision was last inspected in December 2011.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for boarders	outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care	good
Boarders' safety	good
Leadership and management of boarding	satisfactory

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- Boarders develop understanding and genuine respect for different cultures and religions. Boarders from over 40 countries make up the boarding community. Boarders say they do not experience or witness any form of racism. One said, 'The governments of different countries may not get on, but here we do.'
- Staff have high expectations and aspirations for boarders. They communicate these in ways that support each boarder to recognise and develop their own talents and skills. Boarders say that learning goes beyond lessons and that the school 'helps you to be yourself'.
- Boarders are extremely proud of their school. They attribute the positive outcomes they achieve to the extensive opportunities available to them and the support they receive from staff and each other.
- Boarding houses are well managed by enthusiastic and committed staff. Effective communication between boarding and teaching staff promotes the welfare of boarders. The safety of boarders is prioritised.
- Significant improvements in the provision of medical services to boarders have been implemented. The health and well-being of boarders is promoted effectively through robust procedures instigated by professional nursing staff who are supported by motivated boarding staff.
- A focus on constant improvement is evident from the leadership team. Open communication between boarders and staff means that boarders consistently contribute their ideas for change. Senior staff consider these carefully and take appropriate action. Where it is not possible to follow up suggestions or accede to

requests, clear explanations are provided.

- All national minimum standards are met. Areas for improvement are identified, but current practice does not significantly impact upon the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision.

## **Outcomes for boarders**

Outcomes for boarders at the school are outstanding. Boarders are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their boarding experience and make the most of the opportunities available to them. Boarders develop strong and lasting friendships with each other and with staff. They describe a 'family spirit' within the school that supports them to grow in confidence and make measureable progress during their time in the school.

Boarders highlight the diversity of cultures, religions and values among the school community as a fundamental strength. Boarders develop and communicate genuine respect for difference. Boarders say that Buckswood is a place where, 'all cultures meet with no conflict' and that, 'everyone has a place in the school even though everyone is different'. Boarders thrive in an environment where tolerance is promoted. Boarders consistently state that they feel safe in a setting where neither racism nor bullying is experienced.

Boarders develop an exceptionally strong sense of self-worth through the way staff see them as individuals. Boarders say that, 'Buckswood helps you to be yourself' and that, 'it is ok to be different'. This stems from an over-arching aim of the school to identify and develop the talents and skills of all students. Boarders say they are encouraged to think about what they desire for the future and are not limited by cultural norms or the expectations of others. One said, 'Staff encourage you to do what you want to do, but to do it well.'

The health and fitness of boarders is enhanced through the promotion of sport. Boarders benefit from extensive opportunities to take part in a wide range of stimulating activities in and around the school and in the wider community. For example, some boarders augment their experience of sport within school by also representing local teams. This innovative approach helps to improve the confidence of boarders. Recreational facilities on site are of a high standard. These are utilised throughout the school day and are accessible to boarders through evening and weekend activities.

Boarders are proactive and confident about expressing their views which are valued and respected by staff at all levels. They benefit from open and clear lines of communication. They provide positive examples of their opinions being listened to and acted upon to bring about improvement. Furthermore, boarders develop skills in negotiation that support them to prepare for the next steps in their lives. Last year all sixth form students leaving the school went on to university.

## Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Boarders are nurtured and supported through the provision of pastoral care from an enthusiastic and committed staff team. Positive links between boarding and academic staff support an overall ethos of care within the school that assists the personal and academic development of boarders. Boarders are confident of being able to approach a range of people within the school to discuss any ideas for improvement or issues of concern. The senior master plays a significant role in this regard. He visits each house daily and knows each student personally. Boarders get to know him well and see him as accessible and open to their suggestions. Where it is not possible to agree to their ideas, reasons for this are made clear which helps boarders to accept decisions.

The induction of new boarders is carefully considered and managed from the point of application. Boarders from different countries are paired with contemporaries who speak the same language to help them settle in and fully understand the boarding experience. Younger boarders are paired with senior students who act as mentors. Prefects also provide support to students across the school, providing the opportunity for individual growth and development as they take on additional responsibilities.

Boarders enjoy the opportunity to engage in broad ranging activities outside the school day. Time for such activities is well structured, but boarders have considerable choice in this regard. Numerous clubs and societies are set up at the instigation of boarders and staff with particular interests. In addition to sporting activities, boarders are able to develop skills in music, drama and the arts. For example, a new debating chamber has been built where boarders are able to explore current issues and develop independent opinions.

Boarders live in accommodation that is of a good standard and well maintained. Each house has a different character or feel. Friendly rivalry between houses is encouraged through a range of competitive events throughout the year. This helps boarders to develop a sense of identity within the school. Not all individual houses currently have communal areas where boarders can relax together. However, there are numerous rooms and spaces throughout the school where this can be achieved. Similarly where students share a room places where they can be alone are limited. All boarders are provided with the space for personal study in their rooms.

Comprehensive information gathering prior to admission ensures that individual needs of boarders are identified, planned for and met from the outset. Health care arrangements are robust. Boarders benefit from significant improvements made since the last welfare only inspection. Two registered nurses efficiently support the health needs of all boarders. Particular health needs are effectively communicated to all relevant staff. When necessary emotional and psychological needs of boarders are effectively identified and sensitively addressed.

Catering arrangements are of a high standard. Mealtimes are an important

communal activity for boarders. Food is plentiful, but choice is limited. Dietary needs linked to cultural or religious requirements and allergies are identified and systematically communicated to the chef to ensure these are met sensitively and effectively. Opportunities to prepare additional snacks exist within the different houses.

## **Boarders' safety**

The safety of boarders is good. The safety of boarders is a high priority. Boarders consistently say that they feel safe in the boarding community. Bullying is not identified as an issue by boarders, but clear policies are in place to ensure a robust response if instances are identified. Boarders do not go missing from the school, but staff demonstrate confidence in following an established procedure should this happen. Night time security is commissioned to promote the safety of boarders while sleeping. This augments additional security measures utilised within the school at all times. An electronically operated gate controls entrance to the main site. Closed circuit cameras cover main outside areas and access points. A new electronic key fob system has been introduced into almost all areas of the school and boarding houses. Boarders privacy is promoted by issuing individual cards to access their own rooms and communal areas. The same cards are used to log when boarders leave the school site. Individual safes are provided to all boarders who share rooms to ensure their personal property is kept secure.

Where necessary, plans are in place to meet specific individual needs. Generally behaviour within the school is of a very high standard. Boarders demonstrate levels of politeness and courtesy that are a credit to themselves and their school. Strategies and systems for responding to poor behaviour are clearly set out and fully understood by boarders, parents and staff. The involvement of prefects in issuing sanctions is regularly monitored.

Boarders are free to express their views and opinions in a culture of openness within the school. Consequently boarders are confident about raising problems or suggestions for improvement. In addition, boarders have the opportunity to contact an independent external person to raise any issues or concerns. Contact details for this person are widely communicated, but boarders rarely feel the need to use this resource.

An identified senior member of staff has lead responsibility for any matters relating to child protection. All school staff know to contact this person to ensure that any concerns are dealt with properly and consistently. Boarding staff receive a detailed induction and further training in specific core skills. Prefects also complete a preparation course to enable them to undertake their responsibilities effectively. Currently prefects are not trained in child protection awareness. Leaders and managers were open to the suggestion that this would assist prefects in their pastoral role with boarders.

Recruitment procedures for all new staff are robust. Vetting checks are carried out and reflected in the central register of all staff. Where staff are recruited from overseas additional checks are undertaken to establish suitability and confirm rights to work in the United Kingdom.

Risk assessment processes are sound. Risk assessments cover the entire school environment. Documentation relating to each boarding house is reviewed regularly and displayed clearly. Plans are in place to improve the system for risk assessing trips and outings. Currently documents are not always signed off. This relates to them being completed on computer rather than by hand. This has limited impact on boarders as documentation continues to be completed and reviewed well in advance of any trip.

The local Fire and Rescue Service inspects the school annually. Prompt and effective responses are made to any recommendations made at these inspections. However, staff do not ensure that fire safety standards are sustained and maintained at all times. Inspectors found one example of a fire door being wedged open with a fire extinguisher. Immediate action was taken to fix a bracket and secure the extinguisher to the wall. The school has strict rules on bringing electrical equipment onto the premises. However, despite the efforts of staff to enforce these rules examples were found of untested fan heaters being used in some bedrooms.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

Leadership and management of boarding is satisfactory. Monitoring arrangements are adequate, but lack coordination as different matters are currently monitored by a range of senior staff. Leaders and managers demonstrate strong commitment to the school and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. Improvements to the boarding experience result from initiatives highlighted by the leadership team and the suggestions of boarders. For example, managers have ensured that building works continue to extend on site facilities. A number of additions and alterations have been made since the last inspection of boarding provision. At the suggestion of boarders arrangements for breakfast have been changed to bring more flexibility and a relaxed start to the day.

Through a clear statement of boarding principles and practice boarders and parents understand the services and facilities on offer. An informative website augments the details provided in printed documentation. Communication with parents is good. Senior staff are proactive in communicating important information. Enquiries are responded to promptly and effectively.

Required policies are in place and are reviewed regularly. Leaders and managers improve the quality of boarding provision through responding positively to recommendations made at previous inspections. For example, boarders now benefit from improved facilities when they are unwell. The introduction of robust health care practices further promotes their health and well-being.

Sufficient boarding staff are employed to respond to the needs of boarders at all times. Staff are complimentary about their initial induction and subsequent training they receive. However, records show that not all new staff are supported to complete induction documentation. Furthermore, boarding staff are unclear about the ways senior managers provide for their support, supervision and personal development. Boarders are not significantly compromised by any shortfalls that are identified.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- ensure standards of fire safety are maintained and sustained between inspections, in particular ensure that fire doors are not wedged open and all portable appliance equipment is tested
- implement child protection awareness training for prefects
- implement a clear and coherent process for monitoring matters set out in the national minimum standards
- ensure that arrangements for the supervision, support and development of boarding staff are clear and understood by all concerned.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



28/11/2012

Dear Boarders

### **Inspection of Buckswood School**

As you may know, two inspectors recently inspected the boarding provision at your school.

We spent time in the boarding houses, joined you for meals, met with you individually and as a group. We also met with members of staff and examined records relating to boarding.

We were very impressed by the standard of boarding that you receive and by the pride you have in both your school and your boarding facilities. Many of you spoke about how much you enjoy having people from so many different countries of the world in your school. You told us that you learn a lot about each other and develop genuine respect for different cultures and religions.

You have a strong feeling safe. You are confident that you can always find someone to talk to if you are worried about anything. The staff support you well but you help each other too.

Along with senior members of staff you have suggestions and ideas to make boarding better. Senior staff also identify changes they want to make. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Excellent nursing staff make sure you have the support you need if you are unwell or have hurt yourself. The range of activities, clubs and societies available to you is excellent. Many of you spoke about the positive way that your school helps you to identify and develop new skills.

During the inspection no shortfalls were identified against the national minimum standards. We did highlight some areas where we felt further improvements could be made. We have shared these with the senior members of staff. Some relate to processes and procedures, but we trust others will bring direct improvements to your boarding experience.

Finally, we found you all extremely polite and courteous throughout our time at

Buckswood. You were a credit to yourselves and to your school. Thank you for your honesty and openness during the inspection.

Yours sincerely,

David Putnam / Janet Hunnam