

Buckswood School

Broomham Hall, Rye Road, Guestling, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4LT

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Boarding provision outcome

The school does not meet all of the relevant national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(g), 4

- At the last inspection, leaders had not monitored the quality of teaching sufficiently to ensure that it met pupils' needs, and had not taken enough action to address weaker teaching. The school did not teach pupils how to be safe in all situations. There was not an effective system in place to monitor pupils' progress.
- Leaders have acted with urgency to improve the quality of teaching. They work closely together to check that teachers meet their appropriate expectations and intervene when necessary to address underperformance. Most teachers make effective use of time, and plan lessons well to ensure that pupils make progress.
- Pupils have access to lessons that teach them how to keep themselves safe in an appropriate range of situations. Leaders have ensured that staff have access to resources to support pupils to learn about important topics, such as child sexual exploitation and the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- There is a clear framework in place to assess pupils' progress. Teachers make use of this information to provide challenging activities that extend pupils' learning. Leaders have ensured that teachers share this information with parents and carers and explain it clearly.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(d)

- Staff have identified the most able pupils, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teachers provide appropriate challenges for the most able pupils. Pupils who are new to English receive very effective support. However, provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language does not

address their needs well enough in some classes.

- This standard is not met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 8, 8(a), 8(b)

- In June 2017, pupils were not kept safe because leaders had not resolved safeguarding weaknesses at the school. Designated safeguarding leaders did not manage allegations about staff correctly and information was not shared appropriately among senior leaders. Concerns about pupils were not recorded in sufficient detail. There was insufficient accountability to keep boarders safe.
- There is still work to do to ensure that there is a safe culture in the school. Although there is a detailed code of conduct for staff, it is not fully embedded. Records show that these expectations are not upheld well enough.
- Since the proprietor has become less involved in the running of the school, leaders and governors have not established who takes responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding. There are inconsistencies in some of the systems and that can place pupils at risk. There is also no effective monitoring of, or learning from, safeguarding incidents.
- Leaders and governors are not clear enough how to report any concerns about the conduct of the co-principals or the proprietor, should they arise. The safeguarding policy sets out a clear procedure for this. However, staff at all levels do not show that they would follow the same procedure if there were allegations against the proprietor or co-principals.
- Since the new designated safeguarding leader (DSL) started in September 2017, there have been improvements in the reporting of concerns about pupils and allegations against staff. Staff are starting to share information with the right people to ensure that appropriate action is taken when necessary. Records are increasingly detailed and show that, where possible, the school is starting to work with parents to help keep pupils safe.
- The single central register meets requirements. Information that was missing from staff recruitment checks in the past is now complete.
- The new 'well-being hub' is a clear point of access for pupils and staff who have safeguarding concerns. This is strengthening the prominence of safeguarding in school life, including in the boarding houses, and enabling staff to work together more to keep pupils safe. As a result of this closer working, the DSL and the safeguarding team have a clearer understanding of current strengths and weaknesses in this aspect of the school's work.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets current government requirements and is published on the school's website.

- These standards are not met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 10

- At the last inspection, records of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying were insufficiently detailed and showed that staff did not investigate or apply sanctions consistently. It was not clear how leaders were seeking to reduce incidents of alcohol consumption among pupils.

- There are logs of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. Some records are sufficiently detailed and show that staff investigate these matters appropriately. However, the quality of records and investigations is not yet consistent enough. Staff do not always comply with the school's behaviour policy in applying appropriate sanctions for poor behaviour. Responses to the staff survey indicated that some staff felt that the school did not manage pupils' behaviour and bullying well enough.
- There continue to be incidents where boarders consume alcohol. These incidents are recorded but there is not enough evidence that staff have investigated fully or implemented any lessons learned. However, some action has been taken to try to prevent pupils from drinking alcohol. For example, some pupils have received counselling in relation to their use of alcohol.
- There is a behaviour policy that sets out sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour.
- The standard relating to the behaviour policy is met. All other standards within these paragraphs are not met.

Paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Previously, there were some missing risk assessments. These included risk assessments to ensure that staff who might have convictions are safe to work with pupils and individual risk assessments of pupils with specific requirements.
- The missing risk assessments have been completed. There are some detailed risk assessments for pupils who have specific requirements, although some are not as well focused on pupils' individual needs as they could be.
- The standards within this paragraph are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the last inspection, many of the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding were not met. There was no system to hold leaders to account.
- The new leadership team has set about addressing previous concerns with greater rigour and determination. Nevertheless, there is still much work to do to ensure that all standards are met consistently and that safeguarding is effective.
- Relatively recent changes to leadership, governance and systems are not secure. In particular, leaders have not established responsibilities for all aspects of pupils' safety well enough. This lack of oversight means that pupils continue to be at risk.
- A governing body is now in place but it is too new to demonstrate any impact on the leadership of the school. It is not yet fully clear how the governing body will take over the role that the proprietor has within the school. However, the governors bring some relevant experience and are seeking appropriate training for their new roles. They are enthusiastic and want the school to improve.
- Leaders are rightly seeking advice and professional development from outside the school. This has resulted in some important changes, such as the introduction of appraisal for all staff. Leaders have wisely secured further training in appraisal to help to ensure that all staff are effective in their roles and fulfil their responsibilities.

- The standards in this part are not met.

Boarding provision

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools that were assessed during this inspection

National minimum standard 11.1

The school ensures that:

- arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- In June 2017, systems for recording and responding to concerns about pupils lacked analysis, depth, historical context and details of the action needed to protect pupils. Risks were not well identified, understood or managed to support the safeguarding of pupils effectively. There was no rigorous management of allegations against staff.
- The new DSL, who is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role, has introduced more effective systems to identify the risks to pupils and the action necessary to keep them safe. However, not all safeguarding incidents are being reported to the DSL. This demonstrates that a safeguarding culture, where all staff recognise their responsibility for keeping pupils safe, is not fully embedded. The recording, reporting and monitoring of safeguarding incidents and allegations against staff have improved. There is increased liaison with external safeguarding agencies. But this progress is compromised due to leaders' and governors' confusion around reporting concerns about the co-principals and proprietor.
- Although there are now more rigorous safeguarding systems, there is currently no systematic means of reviewing recent incidents and allegations to consider how the system could be improved. The monitoring of safeguarding matters is not yet effective.
- The boarding staff have completed a range of safeguarding training. However, this training is not being evaluated and is not featured as part of the staff appraisal process to assess the staff's learning and the impact of their training on their practice.
- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 12.1

The school has, and consistently implements, a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyber bullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions.

- At the last inspection, ineffective systems to track and monitor incidents of poor behaviour resulted in an inconsistent approach to behaviour management. The recording of incidents when the staff used physical intervention was not robust.
- There has not been sufficient improvement in the recording of incidents of physical intervention. Records do not contain sufficient detail to enable managers to monitor the safe use of physical intervention. Records also are not always completed in a timely manner, leading to the potential for inaccurate reporting and possible delay in

implementing appropriate support for pupils.

- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 12.2

The policy complies with relevant legislation. It has due regard to guidance, and is understood by staff and children.

- This standard is met

National minimum standard 13.1

The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.

- At the last inspection, there were no effective systems providing robust scrutiny, evaluation of practice and monitoring of the leadership, management and quality of the boarding provision. Numerous national minimum standards were not met.
- A governing body is now in place, but has only recently begun meeting to implement systems to hold leaders and managers to account. Currently, there is not a sufficient level of robust scrutiny, challenge and evaluation of boarding practice to identify strengths and weaknesses, with actions to address shortfalls.

- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 13.2

There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.

- In June 2017, boarding staff were not provided with adequate support and guidance to ensure their ongoing professional development and evaluation of their practice.
- A new boarding manager is providing clear leadership and improved support for the boarding staff. Regular weekly meetings, the implementation of an appraisal system to review practice and increased training for the boarding staff are all instrumental in developing the boarding provision and strengthening the safeguarding of pupils.

- This standard is met.

National minimum standard 13.3

The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role.

- The appointment of an experienced DSL and boarding manager has been positive in strengthening the skills and knowledge within the senior leadership team. However, recent poor safeguarding practice demonstrates that the necessary skills, awareness and understanding within the school's leadership and management team remain weak and ineffective in protecting pupils.

- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 13.4

The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.

- The boarding manager has responsibility for monitoring compliance with the standards through an annual self-assessment and evaluation against the standards. This system is at an early stage and is not yet effective in ensuring that all the standards are met.

- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 13.5

The school's leadership, management and governance actively promote the well-being of pupils.

- New initiatives, such as the well-being hub, are raising the importance of the safety, welfare and well-being of pupils across the school. But weaknesses in safeguarding remain. A culture of safeguarding is not yet embedded fully.

- This standard is not met

National minimum standard 13.8

The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.

- At the last inspection, there was no evidence of staff supervision and appraisal. An appraisal system is now in place for the boarding staff. The boarding staff have had a meeting with the boarding manager to set their objectives. Review meetings are planned to assess their progress and their boarding practice. The boarding manager is undertaking direct observation of each of the boarding staff's practice.

- This standard is met.

National minimum standard 13.9

The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

- The monitoring of complaints is not effective. The complaints log provides insufficient detail of investigations, outcomes and evidence of learning to support improvements in practice and outcomes for pupils. The recording of informal complaints is not rigorous, and there is a lack of clarity in relation to when an informal complaint becomes a formal complaint.

- This standard is not met.

National minimum standard 15.1

Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding.

- At the last inspection, boarding staff were not receiving regular reviews of their boarding practice. An appraisal system is now in place for the boarding staff. The boarding staff have had a meeting with the boarding manager to set their objectives. Review meetings are planned to assess their progress and evaluate their boarding practice. The boarding manager is undertaking direct observation of each of the boarding staff's practice.

- This standard is met.

National minimum standard 15.6

Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing, and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate.

- In June 2017, the policy relating to boarders going missing was not a rigorous and robust policy linked to wider safeguarding issues. It did not take account of the statutory guidance for children missing from home and/or education. The staff were not effectively safeguarding the pupils, because they did not fully understand the risks associated with pupils who go missing.
- The policy has been reviewed and is more robust in relation to wider safeguarding concerns and risk assessments. It provides the staff with a clear process for managing incidents to protect the welfare of pupils when they leave the school without permission. However, significant concerns remain about the lack of action taken by the staff in relation to recent incidents. On one occasion, a pupil was asked to leave the school due to non-payment of fees. Another pupil also stopped attending linked with non-payment of fees. The whereabouts of these pupils were unknown for a considerable period of time, when they were at serious risk of exploitation, trafficking and grooming. Senior leaders have only recently begun to accept that that they have a duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils in such circumstances.
- This standard is not met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraphs 3, 3(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraphs 8, 8(a), 8(b)).
- The proprietor must promote good behaviour among pupils by ensuring that a written behaviour policy is implemented effectively (paragraphs 9, 9(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementing of an effective anti-bullying strategy (paragraph 10).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school must ensure that:
 - arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 11.1).
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour

among pupils. This policy includes:

- measures to combat bullying, including cyber bullying, and to promote positive behaviour
 - school rules
 - disciplinary sanctions
 - when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and
 - arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions (NMS 12.1).
- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary (NMS 13.1).
 - The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role (NMS 13.3).
 - The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (NMS 13.4).
 - The school's leadership, management and governance actively promote the well-being of pupils (NMS 13.5).
 - The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate (NMS 13.9).
 - Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate (NMS 15.6).

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a framework for pupils' performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).
- The proprietor must promote good behaviour among pupils by ensuring that a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, among other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour (paragraphs 9, 9(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment

policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)).

The school now meets the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The policy to promote good behaviour complies with relevant legislation and has regard to guidance, and is understood by staff and pupils (NMS 12.2).
- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff (NMS 13.2).
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (NMS 13.8).
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding (NMS 15.1).

School details

Unique reference number	114656
Social care unique reference number	SC050170
DfE registration number	845/6031
Inspection number	10047033

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	433
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	184
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	250
Proprietor	Buckswood School Limited
Chair	Stuart Whorlow
Co-principals	Kevin Samson and Michael Shaw
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,900
Annual fees (boarders)	£20,400
Telephone number	01424 813 813
Website	www.buckswood.co.uk
Email address	achieve@buckswood.co.uk

Date of previous standard inspection

28–30 March 2017

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the proprietor has taken some steps to remove himself from the leadership and management of the school. He is no longer the headteacher. There are now two co-principals fulfilling this role. A governing body that does not include the proprietor was established in November 2017. There are also some new senior leaders in post. The head of the junior school left in December 2017 and has been replaced by a deputy principal. There is also a new head of boarding and a new designated safeguarding leader.
- The last standard inspection took place in March 2017. At this time, the school and boarding provision were judged to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place in June 2017. The school did not meet all of the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding schools that were checked during that inspection.
- Buckswood School provides education for day and boarding pupils between 10 and 19 years of age. The school is not selective. It admits pupils from all over the world. Pupils join and leave the school at different times and with varying abilities in spoken and written English. Around one third of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school's motto is 'ad vitam paramus' – 'we are preparing for life'. The school seeks to enable pupils to be the best that they can be, discover where their talents lie and explore the world around them.
- Buckswood School is located in the village of Guestling, three miles to the north-east of Hastings. The spacious grounds include a swimming pool, stables, a vineyard and a pond. The school also has an outdoor activity centre based in woodland, approximately one mile from the main site.
- Around one half of pupils board in one of eight boarding houses, seven of which are on the school site. One is located half a mile away and accessed by school transport.
- No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- Inspectors met with the co-principals, senior leaders, the governing body and the proprietor. They also met with day and boarding pupils and spoke to other pupils informally.
- Inspectors took into account 31 responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for staff and spoke with a number of school and boarding staff. They also considered 42 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents.
- Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited lessons in a wide range of subjects and looked at pupils’ exercise books. Senior leaders accompanied one inspector to some classes.
- A wide range of documents relating to the education and boarding provision were examined. These included the school’s development plan, minutes of meetings, records of behaviour and bullying incidents, records of complaints and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Gary Holden	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jan Hunnam	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Lolita Rascagnares	Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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