

Buckswood School

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

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Boarding provision outcome

The school meets all of the national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(d)

- The inspection in June 2018 identified that some pupils were not making good enough progress. This was particularly the case for pupils in key stage 3 and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders had not identified the needs of pupils with SEND correctly or ensured that they had appropriate support. Some teachers did not understand well enough how to support lower-ability pupils or pupils with SEND. Teachers did not always demonstrate high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the pupils in key stage 3. Sometimes pupils' work was too easy.
- Since the previous inspection, expectations about the quality of teaching have risen. Well-thought-out structures have been put in place across the school to help teaching meet the needs of pupils better, including those with SEND. However, there is still inconsistency in the quality of teaching because some teachers do not have the skills to apply the new systems successfully.
- New class profiles are helping teachers to understand the starting points and abilities of the pupils in their classes. Where this information is accurate and used well, it is helping teachers to plan challenging activities that enable pupils to make stronger progress.
- Helpful systems have been put in place to support the teaching of pupils with SEND more effectively, but they are not yet consistently being used well by all teachers. However, overall, pupils with SEND are now making stronger progress because their needs are being met, especially in English.
- The strongest teaching is highly tailored to the needs of individual pupils. For example, sixth-form students studying art make extremely strong progress and achieve the highest outcomes at A level. As a result, they go on to study on a range of art, design, and architecture courses at renowned universities and colleges.

- Pupils report that personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is now taught more regularly. They find the sessions helpful and interesting. For instance, a recent session included a visiting speaker from Sussex Police to talk about the dangers of drug use.
- Leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching more effectively. They provide coaching and training to help teachers improve and have quickly challenged any underperformance. New heads of year lead strong professional discussions to explore progress and provision and what needs to change. As a result, teachers recognise a much stronger sense of teamwork and say that morale is lifting. Teachers explained that this has led to improved outcomes for pupils.
- The advisory board of governors now has oversight of the quality of teaching and receives regular updates from leaders about the improvements being made. Advisory board members are encouraged by the positive impact of recent developments on pupils' learning and progress. However, they are not complacent, and know that there are still improvements to be made.
- All the standards in this part are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- As required on all progress monitoring visits, the inspectors examined the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, and examples of current and ongoing practice as requested by the Department for Education (DfE). The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and meets all of the requirements set out in the government's latest statutory guidance. The policy has been published on the school website as required by the independent school standards.
- The designated safeguarding lead and the safeguarding team have continued to drive the whole-school approach to keeping children safe. This is supported by increased staff training, awareness and understanding. One recent example of a safeguarding allegation was checked, and the evidence demonstrated a prompt referral to external safeguarding agencies and swift, appropriate action by school leaders. A reflective approach by leaders resulted in a minor addition to the school's own policy to strengthen its practice further.
- Safeguarding arrangements overall are continuing to become embedded to keep pupils, including boarders, safe, and to promote their welfare. Boarders and day pupils know where to go and who to speak to when they have any concerns. The well-being 'hub' plays a key function in supporting pupils, including boarders.
- These standards continue to be met.

Paragraph 9

- Inspectors were asked by the DfE to explore this independent school standard relating to behaviour.
- There is a strong link between safeguarding procedures, behaviour management and teaching in PSHE. Recent concerns about students using drugs have led to changes in risk assessments and supervision arrangements for 'town leave' and to enhancements in the PSHE curriculum. Overseas students have been made aware of the legal implications

of drug use and possession in the United Kingdom.

- Leaders are challenging and changing a culture of relaxed expectations, especially with older students. Appropriate use of exclusion for serious events is giving a clear message and keeping other pupils safe. Leaders are now establishing higher expectations of behaviour across the school.
- Professional dialogue between leaders and staff is now more prevalent and is leading to improvements. New analysis is giving much clearer information about behaviour 'hot spots', which leaders are able to act upon. Leaders check the consistency of how well the behaviour policy is followed by staff.
- During the inspection, behaviour around the school was positive. Adults quickly addressed any episodes of minor overexcitement between pupils.
- This standard continues to be met.

Paragraph 15

- At the request of the DfE, inspectors checked the admissions and attendance registers.
- Initially there were some minor discrepancies between the two registers that showed a different number of students on roll. These were quickly put right and some administrative oversights with transposing information were addressed. Staff could account for the whereabouts and safety of all registered pupils.
- Leaders recognised that, although current systems meet the standards, they could be simplified. The fact that the 'sales team' maintains the statutory admissions register is not helpful because their focus is on delivering income rather than maintaining a statutory document meticulously.
- Staff responsible for attendance have strong procedures in place to check for and report children missing education.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 30, national minimum standard 5.4

- At the time of the previous inspection the boarding houses provided accommodation of variable, and sometimes poor, quality in respect of heating, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness and maintenance. Unsafe and unhygienic practice was entrenched but had not been unidentified by the school's leaders.
- Previously identified concerns in relation to the cleanliness of specific areas, including boarders' individual shower cubicles, were followed up by the inspectors. The ongoing programme of works was tested by conducting a full tour of each operational boarding house, and it was demonstrated that issues relating to these specific areas had been satisfactorily addressed. Areas and rooms identified as of concern at the previous inspection were revisited. Specific concerns relating to broken windows, hazardous fridges and mould in showers have been addressed, and the accommodation is now in an acceptable condition.
- Internal systems in respect of the reporting and monitoring systems of the boarding houses have improved. Previous checklists completed by boarding staff had been without structure and therefore completed in an ad-hoc way. These documents have

since been reviewed and further strengthened by clear and explicit guidance for the boarding staff to follow in their completion of these daily checks. This process works in conjunction with the daily tasks completed by the cleaning team, with the oversight of the matron.

- Safer practice was observed during this inspection with regards to the storage and use of potentially hazardous cleaning materials. Kitchen appliances, including fridges, are now subject to daily visual checks and twice-daily temperature checks.
- Weekly meetings that include members of the boarding, ancillary and estates team, monitor the completion of planned maintenance works. These meetings reliably inform ongoing decisions about changing priorities. The newly appointed facilities manager also has a weekly meeting with the co-principal and has produced his first report for the advisory board in order for this body to remain apprised of progress. These additional layers of scrutiny provide additional safeguards that were previously lacking.
- These standards are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)

- At the time of the last inspection, it was found that the persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school were not demonstrating the good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They had not ensured that all of the independent school standards were met. The leadership and management arrangements for boarding were identified as having significant weaknesses. Leadership responsibilities were not clear and links between education and boarding provision were limited. This meant that boarding staff, particularly the head of boarding, were not held to account with sufficient rigour. Leaders did not have robust oversight of health and safety requirements in the boarding houses.
- Governance has been strengthened. The advisory board of governors now provides a strategic link between the proprietor and co-principals. It provides specific expertise and wise counsel to help the proprietor and co-principals make well-informed decisions to benefit pupils.
- Leaders and members of the advisory board have attended training and visited other boarding schools to upskill themselves. Leadership roles and responsibilities have been reviewed. The introduction of year-group leaders and a review of the house structure have made lines of accountability clearer.
- Links between school and boarding staff have been strengthened. The co-principals have shifted the culture of the school so that everyone is working together to make the improvements needed. As a result, all of the independent school standards and national minimum standards are now met. However, the co-principals recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that all aspects of the school are good or better.
- These standards are now met.

National minimum standard 13.3

- Senior leaders demonstrate a measured and timely approach in their efforts to improve and strengthen the leadership arrangements for boarding. In recognising the previously identified areas of weakness, senior leaders have provided the head of boarding with a

mentor, the deputy principal (pastoral), who acts as a strategic link to the co-principal and advisory board. This chain of leadership has developed a greater understanding of the legislative and good-practice guidance it needs to follow to secure good-quality outcomes for boarders.

- An appraisal process of the role of the head of boarding has been completed in conjunction with a review of the job description for this role. Consequently, the immediate, medium- and longer-term tasks for the head of boarding have been made clear and measurable.
- With support, the head of boarding has completed an action plan in response to the previous inspection, as well as an evaluation of the boarding provision. Records viewed during this inspection demonstrate that the action plan remains under regular review and evaluation with smart and measurable targets. Heads of departments that have an impact on the boarding provision, including estates, catering and ancillary teams, now meet regularly to ensure that they understand the impact each has on each other. Collectively, they all have an impact on making the required improvements to the boarding provision. This shift in culture has resulted in a more uniform approach to securing improvement.
- This national minimum standard is met.

National minimum standard 13.4

- All members of the boarding team have been subject to an appraisal process. This has been used to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of individuals as well as the collective provision.
- Leaders and managers have focused on increasing the whole school's awareness of safeguarding issues and concerns. This includes lower-level welfare concerns. Reporting mechanisms are readily understood by staff across each remit, and this increases the chances of spotting concerns early, in order to provide the necessary levels of support and intervention for individual boarders. Where applicable, clear and appropriate welfare plans have been introduced. Consequently, all associated staff members understand their own and each other's roles and responsibilities. Such plans were sampled and judged to be effective. Through such improved practice, the school demonstrates compliance with the relevant standards that are aimed at providing the safeguards and welfare processes that protect and nurture the boarders.
- This national minimum standard is met.

National minimum standard 13.5

- The advisory board demonstrates a strong commitment to improved scrutiny and monitoring of the boarding provision. The newly appointed facilities manager has produced his first health and safety report for this group. These reports remain in their infancy, but they do provide an improved monitoring tool that places the safety and well-being of the boarders at the centre of the school's practice.
- The head of boarding has fully implemented the new appraisal process and completed the initial stages of this piece of work for all boarding house staff. During a group interview with representatives for each boarding house, without exception, those present described a renewed drive and energy with this process. Relevant training courses have been attended and more are scheduled. The head of boarding has attended leadership

training and has visited other boarding schools.

- The head of boarding has introduced reflective diaries for all boarding house staff. These are regularly reviewed by the head of boarding and the deputy principal for boarding. A focus of these documents is to encourage the boarding staff to reflect on their daily interactions with the boarders, and this includes their own perceived impact of how any training that they have attended has had an impact upon the quality of the care that they provide.
- No further or additional shortfalls in respect of the national minimum standards were identified during this inspection. The school now meets all of the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- This national minimum standard is met.

The national minimum standards that were assessed during this inspection

Standard 6.2

- The estates and premises team has been strengthened by the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced facilities manager and an additional assistant. Both appointments are full time.
- New systems include a 'health and safety' folder held in each boarding house. This contains recording formats for routine daily and weekly checks. Boarding house staff have received additional training and guidance on these tasks. Some of these tasks are directly linked to reporting processes to the estates team. Consequently, health and safety concerns in relation to maintenance and repair issues are swiftly communicated to the facilities manager.
- A rolling programme of maintenance, repair and renewal works is under way, the priorities for which are reviewed on a weekly basis.
- During this inspection, the school's revised risk management was tested. A potential health and safety issue was randomly selected, concerning a hot-water urn in a boarding-house kitchen. Boarding-house staff were able to produce the risk assessment that had been completed, and a boarder was able to describe to the inspector how he had been made aware of the potential hazards in using this equipment. This was one example of the school's improved approach in teaching boarders to take age-appropriate risks, in line with growing up and being prepared for adulthood.
- This national minimum standard is now met.

Standard 7.1

- The school produced documented evidence to demonstrate that the areas of concern from the previous inspection had been satisfactorily addressed. One boarding house is currently not in use. This was a calculated decision, based on health and safety/fire safety grounds.
- All of the operational boarding houses were visited, and for two, the fire safety risk assessments were scrutinised against the school's plans of work. The recommendations resulting from these independent assessments have been incorporated into a timely plan for completion. To test the school's systems further, the inspector randomly selected one recommendation to track. This recommendation was to make improvements to a fire exit point in one of the boarding houses. Records demonstrated that external contractors had

been swiftly commissioned to complete this work.

- The school's liaison with the local authority fire officer has increased and improved. It was noted that the local authority fire officer was conducting a visit during this inspection. In response to the local authority fire officer's input, immediate action in respect of changing the layout of one of the boarding houses has been completed. All of the recommendations from each of the boarding house's last fire risk assessment have been completed or are near completion.
- Every boarding house has a dedicated fire safety folder. Daily and weekly routine fire safety checks were found to be up to date, including fire evacuation practises by each boarding house. Boarding house staff have received fire-marshal and fire-warden training. Through a group interview with the inspector, these staff were able to describe confidently the recent changes that have been implemented, including a strengthened understanding of their own roles and responsibilities.
- This national minimum standard is met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets 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 now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school:
 - 3(a) 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;
 - 3(d) 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.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 30 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that, where the school provides accommodation, regard is had to Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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

- Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility. (NMS 5.4)

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured. (NMS 6.2)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (NMS 7.1)
- 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 and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. (NMS 13.5)

School details

Unique reference number	114656
Social care unique reference number	SC050170
DfE registration number	845/6031
Inspection number	10089295

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 the 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	307
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	181
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	149
Proprietor	Buckswood School Limited
Chair	Stuart Whorlow
Co-principals	Kevin Samson and Michael Shaw
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,500
Annual fees (boarders)	£29,100
Telephone number	01424 813 813
Website	www.buckswood.co.uk
Email address	achieve@buckswood.co.uk

Date of previous standard inspection

5–7 June 2018

Information about this school

- Buckswood School is an international school. It provides for day and boarding education of 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'.
- 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 seven boarding houses, six of which are on the school site. One is located close to the school site.
- None of the pupils have an education, health and care plan. Approximately one in 20 pupils have SEND.
- 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.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- The school previously received a standard inspection in June 2018, where the school was judged not to comply with all the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- This is the first progress monitoring inspection since the previous standard inspection.
- The school was required to produce an action plan by the DfE. The action plan was evaluated by Ofsted in October 2018 and was rejected by the DfE.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils throughout the inspection. The lead inspector met briefly with the proprietor. A meeting was also held with the advisory board of governors. Inspectors observed learning in lessons in all key stages. Inspectors visited all of the boarding houses. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised to check compliance with independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

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