

Brymore Secondary Technical School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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Inspector Sharron Escott / Paula Lahey

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Brymore School of Rural Technology is a single sex school for boys which was established in 1952. The school is a maintained, state boarding school. Education is free and there is a modest charge for boarding provision.

The school offers a unique opportunity for boys from 13 - 17 years of age to develop their knowledge of farming, horticulture, engineering and sports. At the time of this inspection there were 102 boarders; the school has a capacity for 150. There were an additional 40 day pupils. The school is broadly Christian with an ethos based on resilience, responsibility and resourcefulness.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	satisfactory
Outcomes for boarders	good
Quality of boarding provision and care	good
Boarders' safety	satisfactory
Leadership and management of boarding	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- Since the last inspection in 2009 the school has appointed a new senior management team who are determined, committed and focused on improving standards at the school.
- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is satisfactory with elements of significant strengths in the care provided and where staff have very high expectations and aspirations for the boarders. This has a positive impact on boarder's progress and outcomes achieved.
- The boarding houses are well-organised and managed. The boarder's leadership team provides structure and accountability to support boarders and promote the health and well-being. The ethos of the boarding provision is based on openness, trust and respect that celebrate individuality and achievement. Each boarders is seen as unique.
- Boarders are well protected through thorough risk assessments, environmental and health and safety procedures and safeguarding training for staff. However, there were a range of significant shortfalls in recruitment processes for non-core staff.
- There is a clear ethos of mutual respect between students and staff. Boarders are proud of their school. They know that their views are taken seriously and they have a strong sense of belonging. Effective communication between staff groups and good health care systems and facilities ensure boarder's health needs are recognised and met to a very high standard.
- There is on-going reflection of practice and an ambition to improve the quality of the provision. Members of staff at all levels embrace change and look to improve

how the school can further improve its services. An experienced senior management team is the driving force in the search for excellence and the capacity to reflect and improve.

- The school meets all but two of the national minimum standards. These relate to ensuring that robust recruitment practices are established and embedded in practice. In addition, an area for improvement has also been identified to ensure that the outdoor areas are appropriately lit.

Outcomes for boarders

Outcomes for boarders at the school are good. Boarders enjoy their experience of boarding and take full advantage of the vast range of activities on offer. They speak of being proud of the school and enjoying the sense of camaraderie and community. They take part in an extensive range of activities and interests which further develops and broadens their confidence and life experience. They also thrive on the daily structure and opportunities available to them to learn vocational skills. One boarder said, 'the routine, rules and structure at the school is helping me prepare for adult life.' Another boarder said, 'I want to pursue a career in bee keeping and I would not have had this opportunity in my other schools.'

Boarders benefit enormously from living at a school where their views and opinions are valued and promoted. They are actively involved in the day-to-day running of their houses and contribute to the school's development. The boarder's views are seen as being central to the operation of the boarding provision. Regular forums and meetings ensure that their opinions and suggestions are heard by all significant individuals involved in the running of the school. This approach ensures that they are able to influence decisions regarding issues such as menus, activities, resources and decor.

Boarders benefit from living in a school where healthy living is embraced and promoted. Regular fitness and outdoor activities provide opportunities for healthy living and lifestyles. The health care facilities on site enable boarders to seek medical advice, support and treatment. Their health care needs are therefore promoted to a good standard. Mealtimes are a social occasion; table seating arrangements include a range of year groups sitting together. Monitoring systems are in place which ensure boarders maintained a reasonable balance to their diet. Boarders report that the quantity of food available has improved significantly. However, not all boarders enjoy the quality of meals, saying that some meals are somewhat bland and repetitive.

Boarders thrive in an environment where the structure and high expectations is embedded in the ethos and culture of the school. The leadership system within the boarding provision provides them with clear areas of responsibility and accountability that is clearly defined and respected. This structure also enables them to develop their life and social skills and preparation for adult life.

Boarders identify individuals who they can share any concerns with. Their boarding experience has enabled them to develop lifetime friendships with other boarders. A parent said, 'the staff show empathy, they do not use sarcasm as an approach, they always look for the best in pupil; relationships between boarders and the staff are positive'. Boarder's sense of responsibility, accountability and confidence improves significantly while at the school and they make good progress during their stay.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is good. Increased staffing within the boarding provision has provided boarders with additional support and supervision. This has reduced the concerns relating to bullying and encouraged individual's growth and independence. Close working relationships between teaching and boarding staff ensures that boarders requesting or needing extra support are provided with this swiftly and effectively.

Boarding staff are committed to their tasks and are able to offer good standards of guidance to those boarders who need it. In addition, house parents and mentors support boarders during evenings and weekends. Regular meetings and opportunities are available for boarders to put forward suggestions to provide them with quick resolutions to any concerns and issues arising within the boarding houses, therefore creating a harmonious atmosphere.

The staff team and curriculum in the school ensure that boarders have access to an excellent and varied range of activities. Numerous clubs and sports are readily available and the wide variety offers something for every boarder. Examples of activities include; Chads Hill run , circuit training, rugby, welding, carpentry, blacksmithing, gardening and farming. In addition, those boarders in year 11 are provided with extra-curricular activities to enhance their reading, writing and art.

Administration of medication is monitored by the matrons to ensure that boarders receive the medication they need. Support offered to the boarders by the nursing team is of a good standard.

The boarding facilities are of a good standard. The refurbishment programme to the boarding provision has significantly improved the accommodation. Boarders enjoy living in an environment that they have contributed to; colour schemes, soft furnishing and dedicated areas are personal to them. In additional, each boarding house provides an information television system. This informs boarders of events scheduled for the day, forecasted weather and national news headlines.

All boarders are provided with individualised care plans. These clearly describe the individual needs of boarders which are well known to all staff. Boarders are able to contact friends and families via email, telephone landlines and mobile telephones. Those who have family living abroad are encouraged to use social media (Skype) to maintain frequent contact.

The boarding regime combined with the high level of staff commitment ensures that boarders well-being and development is central to staff practice and promoted to a good standard. One boarder commented, 'this is the best school I have been to, the opportunities available keep us busy and we learn lots of new skills. We really enjoy all the sports.' Parents' feedback include, 'I am very happy with the schools pastoral care, I find the staff to be very caring and efficient, the school maintains excellent communication with me.'

Boarders' safety

The school ensures that boarders are safe through a range of processes, but this is let down by weaknesses in the recruitment of non-core staff, e.g. gap-students and volunteers. The school gives a high priority to safety to its boarders by ensuring that the physical environment of the boarding provision is safe and secure. All staff receive on-going training in safeguarding. Risk assessment and the management of risk is effective. Health and safety is well managed and students and staff are clear about fire evacuation procedures. All activities and environmental features are routinely and robustly assessed, although outdoor lighting is limited and improvement to this is in the school's development plan. Boarders receive excellent opportunities to try new and challenging activities in a safe and structured way.

Child protection awareness is given a high priority. There are senior designated members of staff responsible for all child protection matters. These individuals are vigilant and conscientious, ensuring close contact is maintained with key agencies including the local safeguarding team. Boarders report that bullying has significantly reduced and isolated incidents are promptly acted upon when reported. Boarders say they feel safe, secure and are well cared for. They feel valued and respected and are confident that the staff, house captains and mentors would notice the signs if a boarder is unhappy. Boarders clearly see it as the role of everyone at the school to look after each other and take action to ensure that all are safe and happy. They can also seek help from adults as well as trained peers on any issue; this underpins the culture of community support.

The school have appointed a high number of new staff since the last inspection. There are significant shortfalls in the recruitment process, with references and the verification of these and enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks not being received prior to new staff commencing employment. As a result, the school's recruitment process is not sufficiently robust and does not consistently ensure that all adults who have contact with pupils are subject to all necessary checks prior to employment. Additionally, comprehensive checks are not consistently carried out on other adults, such as frequent volunteers and partners, who may live on site or who visit regularly.

Clear behavioural expectations are in place for all pupils at the school. Boarders say

these are fair and reasonable. High standards of behaviour were observed around the campus with pupils showing politeness and respect to adults and peers alike.

Leadership and management of boarding

Since the last full inspection conducted in 2009, the school has appointed a new governance and senior leadership team, who are very committed to improving and raising the standards of care within the school: they provide strong and effective leadership. The management team effectively ensure that key practices receive close attention and scrutiny which drives improvement. New recording systems and robust monitoring strategies are now in place and these are being effectively implemented. Any weaknesses are identified thorough self-evaluation and action plans are put in place to address these.

The school has developed a clear Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and aspirations of the school. In addition, the school has established an exceptional and very informative website. This facility provides both parents and boarders with current and future information relating to the school.

There is always enough experienced staff on duty in the boarding areas to ensure that boarders are supported and guided. Clear policies underpin practice and established routines and expectations ensure an orderly and well organised boarding community. The experienced staff team receive on-going training which ensures they have the skills and knowledge to ensure that boarder's well-being is protected and promoted to a good standard.

Boarder's views are valued and encouraged. The introduction of regular house meetings, dedicated time for a drop in discussion with the headteacher and development of the school council has ensured that the boarders are integral to the school's development. Boarders are well informed of how to raise a complaint and concern; these are frequently reviewed and acted upon. Boarders are confident that they are listened to and respected. However, records lack clarity to show that the school's policy has been fully implemented.

Communication with parents is very good. Parents say they feel well informed of their sons progress and any concerns. The school actively seeks the views of parents as part of the quality assurance and self-evaluation process. This approach ensures that the school is proactive rather than reactive when engaging with parents and other stakeholders.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') issued by the Secretary of State.

(NMS 14.1)

- For all persons over 16 (not on the roll of the school) who after April 2002 began to live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school, there is a Criminal Records Bureau check completed at the standard level. (NMS 14.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- Ensure the health and safety of all the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and building, specifically with outdoor lighting when accessing the drive and local village. (NMS 6.1)

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.



22/11/2012

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Inspection of Brymore Secondary Technical School

Dear Boarders

As you know we recently inspected the boarding provision at your school. It was lovely to meet with you; your polite and welcoming manner impressed us.

We spoke with many of you and found your feedback constructive in helping us to learn what it is like to board at your school.

You told us that you feel part of the school community and are proud to join in with the traditions such as 'Chads hill run', 'fitness' and maintaining the farm and gardens. Many of you told us that the school has made many positive changes this last year. These include, consistent boarding house staff (houseparent's), increased staff support in the evenings and weekends and more activities to do. We agree with this and feel you receive good support, care and opportunities.

You told us that you feel your boarding houses have been made more homely recently and you are pleased there is a dedicated accommodation group set up. Many of you said you could not think of any other ways in which the school could improve. You said that this was because you already felt that the senior staff listened to you and involved you in making changes. We agree with this and congratulate you for your enthusiasm in joining in with the many forums such as council meetings and open house meetings to share your views. We think they are very positive and effective.

We have asked the senior staff to improve aspects of the recruitment of new staff. Additionally we have also asked them to consider; additional training for staff, continue to focus on bullying concerns, ensure you have the contact details for Children's rights and Ofsted and develop systems to improve administrative records.

Best wishes and good luck with the 'pimp my room' and 'hamper design' competitions.

Sharron and Paula

Yours sincerely,

Sharron Escott / Paula Lahey