



Department
for Education

How boarding school can help to improve outcomes

Boarding School Partnerships (BSP) is a Department for Education agency which seeks to promote the consideration of placements at state and independent boarding schools for vulnerable young people in and on the edge of local authority care in England and Wales.

It seeks to do this by: giving local authorities access to the expertise and resources of the charities and schools involved in boarding placements of vulnerable young people, undertaking research into outcomes, and promoting the BSP 40% Partnership Bursaries.

Boarding school education can be a life-changing experience for young people. It can give pupils from diverse backgrounds a stable, caring and supportive environment in which to succeed and fulfil their potential. There are more than 500 boarding schools in the UK, 38 of which are state maintained schools or academies. Many of these boarding schools currently support vulnerable young people co-funded by specialist charities and/or local authorities.

The BSP's primary role is to help local authorities in three principal ways:

Research & Best Practice

- Facilitating the sharing of research, experience and best practice guidelines to help local authorities evaluate boarding school placements.

Funding & Facilitation

- Extending and promoting the BSP Partnership Bursaries scheme under which almost 70 independent and state boarding schools are now committed to providing long-term bursaries of 40% for local authority placements.

Relationships & Networking

- Helping to cultivate relationships between local authorities, specialist charities, and boarding schools including through national conferences, regional Network meetings, and ad hoc contacts

The role of the BSP is based on the understanding that many young people can benefit from the structure, community, individual attention and pastoral care of boarding school.

Throughout the UK, charities and schools are already supporting an estimated 1,000 vulnerable young people as boarders at state and independent schools.

These are vulnerable people some of whom might otherwise eventually have needed to be taken into local authority care. Some local authorities have also been involved in boarding placements for many years. This is consistent with the statutory duty to consider boarding placements for looked after children (Source: Promoting the Education of Looked After Children, Department for Education, July 2014).

Boarding School Partnerships was launched in July 2017 to help local authorities evaluate and facilitate boarding placements wherever appropriate. An increasing number of local authorities have been evaluating boarding placements for vulnerable young people, especially those in or on the edge of their care or who have recently left care. More than 100 local authorities in England Wales have now registered on the BSP site and more than 60% of these have attended a BSP conference or regional BSP Network meeting.

The BSP has published research into the outcomes of 52 vulnerable young people placed in state and independent boarding schools by Norfolk County Council over the past 10 years, details of which can be found on our web site (www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk).

When boarding may be appropriate

LA-supported boarding school placements may be appropriate where a young person's home circumstances are (or at risk of becoming) unsustainable and where there are/is:

- Links with their family network but the links may be fragile or chaotic, and full-time, long-term care by the wider family is not possible
- An average to good educational potential or an identified talent or potential talent
- Good attachments and the ability to make and sustain positive relationships.

Boarding schools offer many opportunities including an extended range of education, supervised homework time ("prep"), before and after school activities, individual attention and high-quality pastoral care.

This is particularly important for vulnerable children coming from seriously adverse home or family circumstances. One Virtual School Head says: "It is not about saying they will get a better education, because they won't. It is enabling them to learn there, which wouldn't normally be possible because of a chaotic home life".

Those who may (or may not) benefit

The decision about a boarding placement must be made on the basis of careful individual selection and looking at a range of options that would benefit the child in the long term. Every good parent wants the best for their child. This is true for individual parents whose child may be at risk of entering care in the future, and for local authorities who are corporate parents for Looked After Children. Local authorities, as corporate parents, have the statutory responsibility to act for, support and look after a child in the same way a good parent would.

It is important for local authorities to ensure that the assessment process for identifying children who may benefit is multi-agency and holistic. Boarding placements may particularly suit those young people who...

- Can be resilient to the challenges of a busy pace of life and increased workload i.e. who have the ability to keep going if things get tough
- Can cope, for example, with sharing a dormitory; and there should be no major safeguarding concerns with them doing so
- Can demonstrate self-awareness and the capacity to be aware of the needs of others
- Have the maturity to see the 'bigger picture', to demonstrate self-control and seek help when it is needed
- Wish to broaden their horizons, raise their aspirations, improve their academic performance and improve their confidence and social skills
- Have the confidence to be able to enter into a different cultural and social environment, be open-minded and try new things, show empathy towards others and make new friends
- Can be motivated and determined to make the most out of the opportunities, face challenges and work hard
- Are capable eventually of becoming role models for their younger peers

Boarding school placements have proved successful for many young people close to the edge of care and for some Looked After Children. But, ultimately, boarding school may simply not be 'right' for every young person, including those with significant long-term behaviour difficulties that may be beyond the capability of a mainstream school to manage. Some may consider a successful foster carer placement as a reason not to consider boarding school. But, in some circumstances, a boarding placement may best suit a prospective both a young person and their foster carer.

Useful contacts

Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation

www.royalspringboard.org.uk

Buttle UK

www.buttleuk.org

Reedham Children's Trust

www.reedhamchildrenstrust.org.uk

Boarding Schools' Association

www.boarding.org.uk

Independent Schools Council

www.isc.co.uk

Boarding School Partnerships

www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk

Checklist

The experience of our partner charities, schools and an increasing number of local authorities implies that many more vulnerable young people could benefit from boarding school. *Boarding School Partnerships* can help local authorities to evaluate boarding placements where appropriate. We encourage children's and young people's services to engage as follows:

1. Register online on the BSP website all the relevant members of your team or department to ensure they have full access to all the resources on the site and also to qualify for free places at conferences, briefings and training sessions
2. Encourage your team members to familiarise themselves with the resources available from the various organisations involved in *Boarding School Partnerships*, including the charities and boarding schools
3. Nominate one or more people as your authority/ department's designated Lead for *Boarding School Partnerships*, with responsibility for briefing others on all issues and opportunities relating to boarding school placements
4. Establish relationships with boarding schools within, say, 120 miles, including those committed to offering BSP Partnership Bursaries to help fund placements. We can help you make the first contact if you want
5. Arrange workshops and/or briefing sessions on Assisted Boarding. Use the Case Studies section of the website to identify those of "your" cases which might be appropriate for boarding school placements
6. Arrange visits to nearby boarding schools to gain insights into their ethos, facilities and resources, and also into the cases of vulnerable young people among the school's existing pupils. Discuss possible placements with a boarding school as early as possible, even in outline
7. Arrange discussions and meetings to compare *Boarding School Partnerships* experience / expertise with neighbouring local authorities
8. Please contact us with suggestions, questions or enquiries. We're here to help. Contact us by email: director@boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk

Boarding School Partnerships is a collaboration of the Department for Education with the Boarding Schools' Association, Buttle UK, Reedham Children's Trust, and Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation

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