Information about Boarding for families

What is a boarding school?
A boarding school is a school where children study and live during term time. **Full** boarding is when the child returns home for the school holidays. **Weekly** boarding is when the young person returns home for weekends too.

Why does Buttle UK fund boarding school places?
When there are difficult situations at home that are not improving, a boarding school can sometimes offer a good alternative for a child and their family. It means that the child can focus on their studies away from home, but still remain in the care of the family. Boarding schools also offer lots of opportunities for children to be with other children socially, and can provide a good support system to help with good wellbeing.

What age does my child need to be?
Buttle UK’s boarding programme only funds secondary education. This is young people aged 11 to 16 (Year 7-11 in England and Wales, P7-S4 in Scotland, or Year 8-12 in Northern Ireland). Our funding usually comes to an end at the end of GCSE’s or Scottish National 5.

Who looks after my child when they are at boarding school?
During school-hours, a young person is looked after by teachers, just like in an ordinary school. Outside school hours, there is a ‘house parent’ who lives on site and who is there to look after your child.

Younger boarders will probably share a bedroom or dormitory with other children in a ‘boarding house’. Younger pupils will also often have a ‘buddy’ and many schools have pupil volunteers to help younger pupils settle in.

To find out what young people have told us boarding school is like, please see this short video: https://buttleuk.org/top-tips-for-boarders-2/

Can I still contact my child when they are at boarding school?
Yes – you can talk to your child at any time outside of school hours, just like any school. If there is a need for you to be contacted during the school day, the school will sort this out. Each school has their own policy regarding the use of mobile phones.

Will I have to pay anything for my child to go into Boarding?
For children placed through Buttle UK’s Support for Boarding programme, the cost of education, food and accommodation is covered by Buttle UK, the school and sometimes other charities or the Local Authority. Buttle UK (and sometimes the school) can also contribute towards the cost of uniforms, laptops and school trips. There might be some trips, activities and costs that are not essential to your child’s education where you may be asked to fund.

Where will my child go to boarding school?
You do not need to have chosen a boarding school when you make an application to us – we can help you find a suitable school. We aim to find places in State or Independent boarding schools, no more than 1.5 hours from the family home so that your child can more easily go home when needed and for holidays.

We choose schools with Good or Excellent reports for the Boarding element. We also want schools to provide a good level of education. We prioritise placing children in schools where there is an emphasis on good pastoral support rather than academic or talent achievements.

Emotionally I am 100% better now he is at boarding school. This has helped my mental health so much. I think he has grown up so much and gained considerable amount of confidence.

We have seen an improvement with her behaviour both at school and at home, however, she does still exhibit some behavioural challenges which are to be expected given the difficult situation he is in. We have seen some improvement in her behaviour and she was awarded boarder of the week which boosted her confidence.
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What is the difference between a ‘state’ and ‘independent’ boarding school?

A ‘state’ boarding school is a ‘regular’ school, but where the children can also live in their boarding houses during term time. There are around 32 state boarding schools in the UK, but they are not spread equally across the UK. Local Authorities fund the education element, while Buttle UK will fund the boarding element. State schools do not have admissions exams.

An ‘independent’ boarding school (also known as ‘private’) is where both education and the boarding element need to be paid for. Because of this, independent boarding schools are much more expensive than state schools. Independent schools have their own admissions process, and some schools need pupils to pass academic admission exams.

Buttle UK’s preference is to place a young person in a state boarding school, but when this is not an option, then consideration will be given to independent boarding schools.

How do I know if going to boarding school is right for my child?

Your child needs to want to engage with education for a place to succeed, and they need to be able to cope with being away from home, their family and support network for long periods of time. Most boarding schools will offer trial days/weekends/week to help a child decide if the school is right for them.

Boarding might not be suitable for some children. There are a number of reasons for this, and it might relate to one-off incidents or patterns of behaviour which mean they may not cope in a boarding environment. For examples of when a boarding place may not be suitable, please see our website: https://buttleuk.org/apply-for-a-grant/support-for-boarding/

What happens if a boarding place fails?

Sometimes a child starts and then decides they aren’t happy in boarding school. Or, because of their behaviour, the school decides boarding is not a safe option for them. If that happens the child will leave the school and you, as parent/carer, will have to talk to your Local Authority to find a place for them. This can mean homeschooling or time out of school because of the challenge of finding a place at late notice.

What should I do if I think boarding is right for my child?

Buttle UK supports around 12 children into a boarding place each year. Please visit our website https://buttleuk.org/apply-for-a-grant/support-for-boarding/ to see if your circumstances meet our criteria for support.

If you feel it does, speak with your Support Worker who will need to make the application on your behalf. You also need to speak to your child to see if a place in a boarding school is something they would want to consider. We aim to assess applications as quickly as possible, but the application process can take several months. We will ask about the circumstances at home, and request financial evidence (bank statements) from you and others with parental responsibility, and other supporting information along the way. We prioritise our funding for families most in need.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our Support for Boarding programme, please contact Katie Wood on 020 7798 6233, or visit our website at www.buttleuk.org

He has settled into boarding and I have not had as many negative behaviour reports. He is now on ADHD medication which is helping his focus in class. He joined Cadets twice a week. At school and at home, we have noticed a marked difference in him since joining.