

Linden Bridge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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| Inspector | Kerry Fell / John Chivers |
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| Date of last inspection | 20 June 2006 |

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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| Outstanding: | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good: | this aspect of the provision is strong |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound |
| Inadequate: | this aspect of the provision is not good enough |

Service information

Brief description of the service

Linden Bridge School is a local education authority (LEA) maintained special school for children with special needs, specifically for pupils who are diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder. The school provides a structured 24-hour curriculum, with the opportunity to build social skills, communication skills, and leisure and independence skills. A range of communication systems are used throughout the school including Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), TEACCH (a structured treatment and education programme for children with autistic spectrum disorders), and visual and written cues. Boarding is provided for under 16's in brightly decorated flats on the first floor of an annex to the main school building. Over 16's are accommodated in a new purpose built Further Education Department building. A newly built swimming pool was opened in June 2006.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Personnel records demonstrated that Criminal Record Bureau disclosures for new staff were being received more promptly, with staff commencing work to complete induction after the disclosure had been received or a few working days prior to them being received. The school continues to ensure that all possible steps are taken to safeguard students when recruiting staff. Boarding records and activities are beginning to be linked to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Term target records identified which of the five outcomes they related to, and the daily circle time topics were now being based on the Every Child Matters outcomes. Staff spoke confidently about this being introduced and how all elements of their work, the boarding activities, and the support to the students formed part of these outcomes. Breakfast routines had been changed since the last inspection. Breakfast used to be taken as a whole boarding group in the main dining hall. Breakfast was now taken in a family style, in each of the boarding kitchens. Staff stated that this had enabled them to manage better the food that students were eating, in that breakfast was now cereal, toast and fruit, rather than cooked breakfast, which used to mean that students who were boarding had three cooked meals each day. This arrangement also enabled students to better manage their anxiety levels, because some student's behaviour could upset other students and therefore cause difficulties at breakfast time. The inspectors joined a group for breakfast, and found it to be a relaxed and sociable time. Students were serving their own cereal, and pouring fruit juice for each other. Students, where appropriate, also took responsibility for clearing away after breakfast.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Most students only board for two nights per week, and therefore the responsibility for attending dental, GP, optician and other medical or health appointments remain with the parents or carers. Senior students within the further education (FE) department board Monday to Thursday over a nine week period. Where students were unwell during the inspection they returned home. Parents and carers are asked to complete a health assessment at the time of admission to boarding. Key workers keep this information on the student's key worker file, and specific

medical or support needs are recorded within the student's care plan. The school holds a clear medication protocol that has been passed to all parents, and provides guidance on how medication should be supplied to the school, and how any medication remaining at the end of the term would be returned home. The school expects all medication to be supplied with the original pharmacy label, or where medication that had not been prescribed is supplied but is not classed as homely remedies, the school expects a covering letter to be provided by the student's GP or Consultant. The school holds a highly detailed management of medication policy that had been updated in April 2007. This gave clear guidance to staff on how to manage and administer medication, record keeping, first aid and relevant legislation. Good medication administration records were being held, and old records were placed on the student's key worker file. Controlled drug medication logs are held, and were observed to be well maintained. Only one controlled drug medication was held at the time of the inspection. The record was audited during the inspection and found to be accurate. No students were managing their own medication at the time of the inspection. Members of staff confirmed that they had received training in the management of medication, and the inspectors were advised that the head of care had responsibility for overseeing the management of medication throughout boarding. Personal, social and health education is managed mainly during the school day. However it was evident from social activities undertaken, care plans, discussions with staff and students and observations throughout the inspection, that where appropriate, this was also dealt with during the boarding time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school continues to hold detailed and informative policies with regard to privacy and confidentiality, which include policies on case recording and access to records. Students can access their records if they wish, but students spoken to during the inspection were not comfortable with the idea of reading these records, or would not be able to read and understand the written information held. It was noted that areas are available on the records for parents or carers and the student to make comment. The school's guidance with regard to searching students' possessions is held within the confidentiality policy. Staff supervision was observed not to be intrusive. Consent for staff to support students with intimate and personal care is obtained from parents and carers and a copy of the signed agreement is held on the student's key worker file. Detailed information about what support a student requires is obtained from the parents and carers prior to a student beginning boarding, and this is recorded within the care plan. Payphones are available, and students who use the payphones confirmed that these are in areas that provided sufficient privacy. The school's complaints policy and procedure had been reviewed in April 2007, and had been updated to include the contact details for Ofsted. A simplified pictorial complaints procedure is available for students, although in most cases concerns and complaints would be raised directly with staff as the need occurred, or during circle time. Suggestion boxes are also available within the boarding areas, and although under utilised, students are aware that these are available to them. Some suggestions made by students are on display in the boarding area and included information about what action had been taken by the staff. Two complaints had been logged since the last inspection. Clear accounts of the complaint, the outcome and the action taken were recorded in the complaints log. The complainant also had the opportunity to add comments once the complaint had been closed. The complaints log was signed off by a senior member of staff and by the standard 33 visitor. The school produced a safeguarding statement in January 2007, which all staff had signed as having been read and agreed with. The child protection procedure was also updated in 2007,

and was a comprehensive policy. The policy continues to include child protection procedure flow charts, and staff met during the inspection confirmed that they each had a copy of the flow chart for easy reference. Staff are aware of who the school's child protection liaison officers are, and what action they would take in the event that a student made a disclosure. All staff had undertaken foundation training in child protection and Surrey County Council's "what to do if..." training, which is a course about how staff should appropriately respond to concerns that a child is being abused. Child protection procedures also form part of the school's induction programme. The head of care attended training for child protection liaison officers, run by Surrey County Council, the day before the inspection. They advised the inspectors that this had been intensive, but informative training. Comprehensive records are held of any child protection referrals made by the school, which included details of the outcome of the referral and any action taken. The child protection liaison officers also advised the inspectors of what action they had taken when they were dissatisfied with the social workers or social services' response on receiving a referral from the school. Records and conversations with staff demonstrated that appropriate action was taken by the school in the event that a child protection concern was identified. Students spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they felt safe at the school and could identify staff that they can raise concerns with. Staff also stated that the standard of care practice at the school was very high. Students affirmed that they were not bullied at the school, with one student stating that "the one thing we do not do here is bullying." A range of anti-bullying information is displayed in the boarding area and the school continues to hold a detailed countering bullying policy, which had been developed in consultation with the students. Details about how an identified bully would be supported is included in the policy. Staff members also stated that the level of bullying within the school was very low, and in discussion, identified that if they were aware of a bullying incident occurring they would intervene. It was noted that staff also had an awareness that as students attending the school were diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders, some behaviour associated with this diagnosis may be identified as bullying behaviour when there is no intent or comprehension that the behaviour may cause anxiety to another student. The school's policies included guidance on the vulnerability of students with autistic spectrum disorders, and that these students could be at an increased risk of bullying. The absence without permission policy had been reviewed in February 2007, and staff had signed this policy. An absconding log is held by the school, although no incidents had been logged. The school continued to hold a comprehensive behaviour management policy, this included a policy with regard to permissible and non-permissible sanctions. Staff stated that sanctions are rarely used and that redirection, predictable routines, and encouragement are used to promote positive behaviour. Six sanctions were recorded since the last inspection. A separate and detailed restraint policy is available. The school uses positive options as a model for behaviour management and restraint, and staff confirmed that they had received or were due to attend training. Staff stated that the incident of restraint was low, and this was confirmed by the restraint log which contained records of four incidents of restraint since the last inspection. These records detailed that the use of restraint had been necessary and appropriate. Where a student's behaviour caused concern, or put themselves or others at risk, a behaviour management plan is put in place. The plan observed during the inspection was detailed and included actions, expected outcomes and a risk assessment. This plan was developed and agreed by the multi-disciplinary team working with the student and by the student's parents or carers. The school continues to hold a policy on health and safety, a security policy, a fire policy and procedure and a policy that covered the safety and maintenance of the school swimming pool. Two members of staff are trained as pool assistants. The school had taken action to ensure that their fire safety procedures met current legislation, and the updated

guidance manuals had been obtained. The head teacher had attended training in the new fire safety regulations. The school held a fire risk assessment, however this needed to be reviewed. The inspectors were advised that the Local Authority had informed the head teacher not to undertake the fire risk assessment because the Local Authority would take responsibility for this within their residential special schools. It was noted that the school's management team had taken initial steps to ensure this was completed. Fire evacuation notices in pictorial form were displayed around the school, and students in the further education department had undertaken an evacuation the evening before the inspection, as part of the induction of new boarders. Staff stated that they had not been satisfied with the response and had walked the students through the evacuation procedure following this test. Another is planned for the near future. A full range of risk assessments are available for the school site, areas accessed off site, and for activities. All had been updated either in the autumn term 2006, or in the new year. An appropriate accident log is held by the school, however, staff had been continuing to use the old bound accident book. The head of care took action during the inspection to ensure that the accident book that complies with data protection would be the only record used. Injuries were also recorded on Surrey County Council forms, and would be sent for analysis and reporting to Surrey County Council, and any other relevant agencies. Three members of staff had been recruited since the last inspection. The personnel records for these members of staff demonstrate that the school continues to follow a good standard of vetting and that the required recruitment information is held. It was noted that the new staff recruited had commenced work with their criminal records bureau (CRB) disclosure in place, or that the CRB disclosure was received shortly after commencing induction. The school confirmed that all possible steps were taken to ensure that the students were safeguarded, and that no member of staff was left unsupervised. This is in line with current guidance from the Department for Education and Skills.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The head of care and boarding staff were able to demonstrate with ease how they contribute to the promotion of education within the school. Key workers meet on a daily basis with classroom assistants to ensure that information about the previous evening's events are shared with the education/teaching staff. The inspector also observed education staff sharing information about the school day with boarding staff. Boarding staff stated that they would assist with homework, and they confirmed that they were involved in annual reviews and the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP). This was confirmed by student records which included copies of the student's IEP and the contribution made by boarding staff and their parents. Each student has term targets that are worked on during boarding time, these may include social skills, or personal/independent living skills. The school works on a 24-hour curriculum that includes structured programmes throughout waking hours. Activities and events throughout the day assist in the promotion and development of social skills as well as education. The inspectors were shown lists of activities undertaken by students which were not only fun and entertaining, but helped develop safe risk taking, promoted physical activity and developed social skills and social inclusion. Books, games and videos are available in all of the boarding flats. Good communication and independence skills are also promoted throughout the boarding time. FE students are supported to develop independent skills such as home management, sewing, and cooking, and one FE student stated that learning independence was as important a part of their education at the school, as their daily lessons. Work within the boarding areas is linked to the Every Child Matters five outcomes. Staff had a sound awareness of these

outcomes, and students targets are also linked into at least one of these outcomes. Individualised support is paramount within the running of the school. Detailed information about the needs and routines of the student is obtained from parents prior to the student beginning to board. This information is used to develop the student's care plan. The school uses specialist communication systems and timetables or evening schedules that are individualised to the student using them. These support the students to understand and predict the daily routine and next activities. Care plans clearly identify the student's specific cultural, dietary, religious, ethnic and support needs, and how these will be met. Evidence of these being met were observed throughout the inspection. Consistent approaches are used across the school, and include specialist techniques such as the use of social stories, TEACCH structured timetables and Makaton/see-read symbols. The school offers speech and language therapy, and staff work closely with professionals involved in the student's care. It was evident that staff had a detailed understanding of the individual needs of each student, and where the student had special interests or specific rituals or routines, these were built into the student's schedule. The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is contracted by Surrey County Council to provide an independent advocacy service. Information about who the NYAS advocate representing the students and how they can be contacted is displayed throughout the school. The NYAS representative has attended the school on four occasions, and initial sessions were for two hours. The school has since negotiated that these are extended to four hour sessions. However, discussions with staff during the inspection identified that this service does not meet the needs of the students. Time between sessions meant that the students no longer remembered who the NYAS representative was, and why they were visiting. Students in the further education department only board for nine week sessions, which meant that by the return session it was not the same group of students resident. There have also been occasions when sessions within the boarding houses have taken longer than anticipated and therefore a session with the further education students could not be completed. Staff advised the inspectors that a recent session on bullying by the NYAS representative was not presented in a suitable format for the students at the school. Staff have also been approached to give advice on how the needs of the students could be better met by the advocate. It is recognised that the staff team have the best knowledge about the needs of the students, however the independency of the individual is compromised by the school staff providing support during sessions and giving guidance on the needs of the students. The inspector was also informed that although the school was advised that support would be available from someone with knowledge and experience of the needs of students with autistic spectrum disorders, this appears to only be provided by telephone and may include calls being transferred to people who have not had contact with the students before. It could also result in students being left on hold waiting for their call to be transferred to someone else. The school will continue to work with NYAS to develop the service, in order to better meet the needs of their students.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Making choices may be difficult for some students, therefore choosing activities is built into the daily schedules. There are opportunities for students to make their opinions known. Circle time is used each day and specific topics are chosen for each meeting. These are gradually being linked to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Minutes of the school council meetings are displayed in word and symbol format in the school and boarding areas. Suggestion boxes can also be used to pass on comments and suggestions to the school council. Students were aware of the achievements that the school council had made, and also that not all requests could be

met by the school, for example for financial reasons. As detailed under enjoying and achieving, a range of communication systems are used throughout the school to ensure that all students can communicate with staff. Staff stated that generally students would approach them as and when their concerns or needs arose. Student records exceed national minimum standard 17 for Residential Special Schools. Statements of Educational Need were held on all of the files sampled during the inspection. These included information from the multi-disciplinary staff involved in the care of the student, and the student's parents or carers. Highly detailed care plans are also developed by key workers using information from the school's introduction to boarding document, which is completed by parents or carers, the Individual Education Plan (IEP), term targets and the student's health care plan. These documents are kept under regular review, and clearly identify the specific needs of each student and how the school will meet them. Each file also contained a pupil progress report which is used as a basis for the boarding report in the annual review. Home - school books ensure that communication is maintained between the staff and parents or carers, and telephone contact is maintained. Records of contact and correspondence are held in students' files. Payphones are available in boarding areas, and some students have their own mobile telephones. Parents and carers also telephone the boarding areas directly. Students received telephone calls from their parents during the inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose had been updated in April 2007. A copy of the schools aims and values and criteria of boarding is available in addition to the statement of purpose. These documents are also displayed within the boarding areas. Staffing rosters clearly detail the days and hours that staff work. Staff continue to work split shifts from 07:00 until 11:00 and 15:00 until 23:00. Staff stated that they are happy with this shift pattern. Sleeping in duties are undertaken by two members of staff each evening, one in the main boarding area, and another member of staff in the FE department. Waking night staff are also available. Duty arrangements provide good levels of staff support, and ensure consistent staffing. Evening activities are led by at least one member of staff, and key workers escort the students to their classrooms each morning. Agency staff are not used by the school, and staff confirmed that levels of absence due to sickness are low. Time is built in to rosters for team meetings and key worker responsibilities. The head of care is highly experienced and qualified. They are dedicated to the role and have an excellent understanding of the student group. The head of care holds the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 and the Registered Managers Award. Two members of staff have completed the NVQ level 3, and another member of staff is completing the NVQ level 3. The new staff are keen to undertake the NVQ course, and have registered for the next course available. Members of staff confirmed that they received good levels of training, although some staff had training courses cancelled at the last minute. Staff confirmed that they had received training about the needs of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders, as well as updates in the mandatory training course. Evening observations evidenced that staff worked well with the students, and support was offered in a positive and friendly manner. Students spoke highly about staff support and comments from parents and carers, within students' records, were positive about how boarding staff had met their child's needs and supported them to develop. Students stated that staff were nice and that they liked them. One student stated that the school was "in my opinion 100% perfect". Records were well

maintained and easily accessible and the head of care had a good awareness of the records kept by the key workers. Senior staff monitored records held, and these were also checked as part of the standard 33 visits.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.