

Linden Bridge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
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Date of last inspection	15 May 2007

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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

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 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, TEACCH (a structured treatment and education programme for children with autistic spectrum disorders), and visual and written cues. Boarding is provided for under 16s in brightly decorated flats on the first floor of an annex to the main school building. Over 16s are accommodated in a new purpose built Further Education Department building. A newly built swimming pool was opened in June 2006.

Summary

The inspection was a 'key' inspection and announced. All of the key standards in the sections Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution and Organisation were inspected on this occasion. The section Economic Wellbeing was not assessed at this inspection. There were no areas for improvement set as a result of the last inspection and no actions or recommendations have resulted from this inspection. The boarding section is managed to a high professional standard and affords an equal standard of care and support to the students.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no areas identified for improvement as a result of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the students and staff ensure that these areas are diligently monitored and reviewed as appropriate and that health care at the school is actively promoted. The school has a comprehensive health promotion policy and a student health care policy and plan. The policies include such areas as intimate care, health and safety, first aid and medication, anaphylaxis, treatment plans, HIV/Aids awareness epipen and caring for children of the opposite sex. There is a clear medication protocol of which all staff are aware. The sample of student's files inspected, including files of students placed in the school's further education centre evidence detailed health and medical histories and further show evidence of these areas being reviewed and updated as appropriate. Signed parental consent forms for medical treatment are also held. Students are taught aspects of healthy living via the school's education curriculum and this is reinforced by care staff in boarding time. A range of healthy living information posters are displayed around the school and boarding areas. A General Practitioner (school doctor) services the school when needed, though most students retain the services of their own doctor. The services of other specialists and health care professionals are sought as appropriate and a range of specialist reports and correspondence are in evidence. The school's menu provides for a balanced and varied diet and students have the opportunity to prepare their own meals under the supervision of staff. The

meals provided are of good quality and of ample portions. Meals are a well ordered social occasion. The school has received the 'schools healthy eating' award. Medication administration policies and procedures are held and provide staff with clear instructions and guidance regarding the storage, handling, dispensing and disposal of medication. Students' medication administration records are clear and consistent and show no gaps in recording. Medication is securely held in a locked cupboard and separate secure provision for the storage of controlled drugs is held. A controlled drugs book is used to record the dispensing of such medication of which two staff sign following administration. The medical storage arrangements are well organised and maintained. All staff are trained in first aid and medication training is held during induction and updated periodically. The head of care said refresher training in medication administration is to be scheduled for the autumn term.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a policy and procedure regarding privacy and confidentiality. The policy is detailed and covers a range of topics in this area. Staff sign to confirm their understanding of such procedures. Confidential records are securely held in locked facilities. There are telephones available for students' use without reference to staff, though some students have limited speech. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy and space is available for students to receive visitors in private. Staff treat students with dignity and respect and any personal or imitate care matters are handled sensitively by staff. Staff have full regard for ensuring that students' needs are addressed and promoted in this area. Any complaints are taken seriously by the school and appropriate policies and procedures are in place of which staff are fully aware. There is also a staff whistle blowing policy. The school's complaints book is available and shows that three minor complaints have been received since the last inspection. The complaint records are detailed and evidence thorough investigation and show action taken and an outcome. The complaints procedure is reinforced to staff periodically at staff team meetings. Students raised no complaints or indicated any concerns during the inspection and are observed to be settled and relaxed in their environment. Parents of boarding students said in discussion they were extremely happy with the standard of care and staff inputs and that they had no complaints or concerns regarding the service provided. The school allows parents and others unrestricted access to the complaints procedures and robustly investigates any dissatisfaction and areas of concern expressed. The school has an internal policy and procedure regarding child protection and the Surrey Council Multi Agency Safeguarding procedures are also held. A range of student help and advice lines are prominently displayed at various locations around the school. Students learn about aspects of personal safety via the school's curriculum and these areas are reinforced by care staff in circle time and other forums. Due to the nature of students' disabilities supervision is close at all times and their movements are diligently monitored. The head of care said there are no current child protection or safeguarding issues regarding the boarding provision at the school. Staff receive child protection training at induction and refresher training in this area is undertaken. Records show and staff confirm in discussion that such training has occurred between 2005 and 2008. The school's arrangements in this area help ensure that students are protected from harm and that their personal safety is not compromised. The high standard of care practice and homely and friendly atmosphere at the school help reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring and no incidents of bullying or intimidating behaviour among the students is evident. There is a clear anti bullying policy and procedure and a detailed pictorial version is available for the students. There is also a range of anti bullying information and literature displayed around the school. The school has held an anti bullying week. Staff are clear that

bullying is not an issue in the school. Staff are also alert to such behaviour and would act quickly to address any such conduct. There are clear policies and procedures regarding the absence of students without authority. There have been no unauthorised absences or absconding from the boarding provision and the homely and caring atmosphere and close supervision which has been established and maintained reduces the likelihood of such incidents. The school has a behaviour management policy and procedure which also includes the use of physical restraint and the use of permissible sanctions. The school uses the 'Positive Options' programme of behaviour management which is a recognised and approved method of behaviour management in residential child care and residential special school settings. Staff are fully trained in the use of this programme and are to attend refresher and updated training in this area in September 2008. The school's sanction book is available and shows that six sanctions have been administered since the last inspection and the school's restraint log lists seven incidents of restraint covering the same period. Recording in both records is clear, detailed and evidences that only permitted types of sanctions and restraint are used. Other incidents involving the students are also clearly recorded. Students' behaviour is exceptionally well managed with excellent relationships between staff and students in evidence. Staff interact and engage students in all aspects of boarding life and have developed and maintained a stable, consistent and very supportive environment where students feel safe and secure in their dealings with staff, each other and learn acceptable standards of behaviour. Students respond favourably to these methods, show appreciation of staff inputs and exhibit no significant problems in terms of behaviour management and control. Staff have a range of experience, skills, patience and competencies which meet the needs of the students and enable the boarding provision to achieve its aims and objectives. The school has a range of health and safety policies and related information and the school's health and safety 'law' poster is prominently displayed. Health and safety audits occur each half term and these are recorded. A full health and safety inspection occurred on 11 June 2008. The school has a current fire risk assessment and records show that fire evacuation drills and fire alarm tests occur on a frequent basis. Current servicing of the school's fire protection systems and fire fighting equipment is in evidence. There are current utility safety test certificates regarding gas, mains electricity and the prevention of Legionella. Hazardous substances are held in locked cabinets and a wide range of written risk assessments covering such substances and other areas and equipment in the school are held and reviewed periodically. Accidents to students and staff are clearly recorded. The head of care said that the County Council will progress to electronic recording of accidents and other information at some stage in the future. Standards of cleanliness are high throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed. The school has full regard for health and safety matters and the school's arrangements in this area help protect students, staff and visitors from the inherent risk of fire and other potential hazards. The school has a staff recruitment and vetting policy and such activity is undertaken by a private company which acts on the County Council's behalf. Staff files have been inspected previously and have evidenced all required information. Only one new member of staff has been appointed since the last inspection and this person's file also shows the school's recruitment procedures to be sound having obtained all statutory information including two written references and a Criminal Record Bureau check at enhanced level. The County Council confirm that Criminal Record Bureau checks at enhanced have also been carried out on taxi drivers that service the school. The school's recruitment and vetting arrangements help ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a detailed policy regarding the boarding contribution to students' educational progress. The policy includes areas such as self care skills, identity, family and social relationships, emotional development, social presentation and work and recreation. The policy gives staff a clear account of the aims and goals which staff aim to achieve with the students. The sample of students' files inspected evidence 'Statements of Special Educational Needs' and 'Individual Education Plans'. Other education related information held on students' files include school reports, speech and language therapy reports, psychological assessments and education review reports. Care staff liaise closely with teaching staff and handover sessions between them occur daily. Care staff engage and support students in a range of education and learning based activities including both sedentary and active pursuits. Students also learn basic life skills and part of this programme is in evidence with older students preparing meals, under the supervision of staff. There is a wide range of student's art and craft work displayed around the school and boarding areas. Students have developed and achieved in these areas and many examples of work displayed are of a very good standard. Care staff encourage and lead students in such activities and clearly achieve with them regarding extra curriculum work. The boarding section fully recognises the importance of students' education and learning and actively promotes their progress and development in these areas to a high standard. All students are allocated key workers who are responsible for individual students. Key workers meet with students on a one to one basis and in daily 'circle time', where they are consulted about their views, opinions and afforded choice. Key workers liaise with parents, teaching staff, social workers and a range of other relevant professionals. Key workers also formulate students' care plans, prepare review reports and attend reviews. The students' care plans and review reports are prepared to a high standard by care staff. Students have access to advocates and a presentation from the 'National Youth Advocacy Service' to care staff took place on the first day of the inspection. Care staff talk with knowledge and authority regarding their allocated students and their individual disabilities and work with them in a committed, caring and sensitive way. Care staff provide excellent inputs into students' all round welfare and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a children's rights policy which is drawn from the 'European Union Children's Rights Articles'. The school has a range of forums where students are consulted regarding their views, opinions and choices. The processes include one to one discussion, circle time meetings and school council meetings. School council minutes appear in word and pictorial form. Students are observed to be consulted by staff regarding decisions on aspects of their daily lives and their responses are acknowledged and acted upon by staff. There is a range of information displayed which explains various cultures and faiths in order that students may develop an awareness of other cultures, communities and groups. The school's arrangements in this area provide good forums and opportunities for students to contribute to aspects of school life and their own personal development. Placement plans and care plans are in place and are prepared to a very good standard and evidence monitoring and review. The plans contain details such as social care skills, child protection assessments, family and relationships, emotional and behavioural development, social presentation, education and health and work and recreation. Some plans also evidence students' 'family trees'. Individual risk assessments on students are also held which show evidence of monitoring and review. The school has excellent arrangements

in this area which provide staff with clear and informative details on students' progress and issues. The school has a policy on working with parents which includes details on contact arrangements. Any contact students have with their parents or significant others is clearly recorded. There is adequate private space where students can meet with their parents or other appropriate persons.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a Statement of Purpose and boarding statement which clearly lists the boarding sections aims and objectives and gives a clear and accurate account of the service and facilities provided. The documents are available to parents and significant others. The boarding section currently has 15 staff inclusive of the head of care. The staff duty roster is available and gives a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. The staff team have a mix in terms of gender. Staff are appropriately deployed and sufficient in numbers. Most of the staff team have substantial experience in working with students with disabilities and carry out their duties in a committed, professional and competent manner. The boarding section has a strong, consistent and established management team who provide excellent leadership, direction and support to staff. Staff in discussion confirm their commitment to the school's management and ethos. The combination of management and staff experience, skill and expertise meet the needs of the students and afford and facilitate a high standard of care and support to the students. There is sound communication between the care staff and handover sessions are held daily. In addition staff team meetings are held weekly and written meeting minutes are available. The head of care holds the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 and also the registered manager's award. Three staff hold the NVQ level 3 qualification and a further three staff are currently undertaking the training. Staff training records show that the school is committed to enabling staff to attend a wide range of courses and staff in discussion confirm their attendance on such courses. Formal individual staff supervision occurs each half term and written notes of supervision sessions are in evidence. Informal supervision can occur on a daily basis. Staff in discussion also confirm these arrangements. Staff appraisals occur annually and appraisal reports are in evidence. The head of care and senior staff closely monitor and track the boarding sections conduct and sign and countersign appropriate records each half term. Standard 33 (monthly) visits occur and reports on the visits for the last year are available. The standard 33 visit reports are comprehensive and add to the existing high level of monitoring and scrutiny of the boarding section. The school has a current insurance liability certificate which forms part of the Surrey County Council's corporate insurance. The arrangements in this area show that the boarding section is managed to a high professional standard and enables the students to receive positive outcomes to an equally high standard.

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.