

Linden Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jill Marriott
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Date of last inspection	9 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 Lodge is owned and managed by Wandsworth Education Authority. It is a specialist residential resource, which provides education for pupils aged three to 19 years. There are residential places covering a 24 hour curriculum available for up to 47 pupils aged six to 19 years of age. Pupils can reside in the school from Monday to Friday during term time only. There are two residential units, School House and South House.

A large number of professionals, in addition to teachers and care staff, are available at the school including a school nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, school social workers, care staff, mobility officers, classroom support staff, catering, administration and domestic staff.

The school has extensive facilities available including a soft play room, ball pool, swimming pool, hydro pool, sensory room, a music room, library service with large Braille, Moon and picture symbol books, audio tapes and an all weather play area. A computer room, fitness gym, and woodland walks. The school is close to local shops, public transport and leisure facilities.

Summary

The inspection was carried out over two days on 30 and 31 March 2009. The purpose of the inspection was to inspect all of the key standards related to residential special schools. The school offers children excellent education facilities. The residential setting is nicely furnished, warm, bright and comfortable. The home and school are specially adapted to meet the needs of the children. The children receive good support in relation to their health needs and they are protected by the policies and procedures in place and by the staff who receive a range of regular child protection and safe care training.

The children attending Linden Lodge School are from a range of different backgrounds. Their needs in relation to their ethnicity, culture, religion, language, disability and gender are considered when developing their placement plans and children and parents are consulted regularly about specific individual needs.

The high staff ratios support children to engage in the full range of school and after school activities available each day. The excellent communication systems in place ensure that children and young people can get their voice heard. Children are fully involved in school life and they are able to have their say at school council meetings.

The care and support that children receive meets their needs beyond the National Minimum Standards and in line with the Every Child Matters agenda.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The new Harris Centre was opened in September 2008. The centre is bright, comfortable and well decorated. It incorporates a range of specialist equipment to support children and enable them to achieve maximum potential. The centre has a skilled multi-agency staff team who are trained to use the specialist equipment provided.

The whole staff team including the Head of Care receive regular formal supervision in line with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There are policies and procedure in place related to children's health needs. Health care is actively promoted in the school and in the residential setting. Children's individual needs are taken into account when developing care plans. The school has a multi-agency staff team. Appropriate health professionals such as speech and language therapists, mobility officers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and the school nurse manager work on site. They work along side the teaching and residential staff to ensure that children and young people are provided with the necessary support to meet their needs.

Parents said that they and their children are consulted regularly about every day health needs. Discussions take place between children, staff, parents and relevant health professionals about specific issues that may arise. Appointments with doctors, dentists and opticians are incorporated into the school day as necessary. Appropriate records are kept for recording specific health issues and for recording medication.

Children receive excellent all round support designed to meet their individual needs. The school has received a National Healthy Schools Status award for their work in ensuring healthy lifestyles for children. All children have healthy eating programmes in place which are developed with the dietician to meet their dietary requirements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

A high regard for the privacy of children is maintained in the school and residential provision. Staff always knock before entering a child's room. Personal care is carried out privately and in a dignified manner. Parents confirmed that they believe that their children are treated with respect at all times by school and residential staff.

There is an appropriate complaints policy in place and this can be accessed in a range of languages. The complaints procedure is written in plain English. A range of communication systems have been used to make the document accessible to all children. The policy is available in Braille, tape recordings and large print; it is clearly displayed in the school and in the residential unit. Staff show that they are open to responding to complaints. The very few complaints that have been made since the last inspection have been dealt with appropriately within identified timescales. Parents said they would feel comfortable about complaining if it were necessary and would be confident that issues would be dealt with in a fair and sensitive manner.

The school has a very clear procedure in place for responding to child protection and safe care issues. There are good links with the local safeguarding board. The school principal, the head of residential care, the head of school and the school nurse manager are nominated as those responsible for responding to child protection concerns. There are no ongoing safeguarding issues at present. Discussion with staff and the management team indicates that incidents and allegations would be dealt with appropriately and quickly referred to the appropriate agencies. Safe care training for staff is up dated regularly and includes child protection, incidents of

bullying and children missing without authority. The school's comprehensive behaviour management policy ensures that achievement and positive behaviour are regularly rewarded.

Staff and children are very much aware of the fire safety precautions in place. On arrival all new staff and children are given fire safety instruction. Regular fire drills are carried out at different times of the day. Fire equipment is checked and detailed records are kept.

The school has thorough risk assessments in place for all aspects of the premises and grounds. Activities, outings, daily events and specific identified behaviours are also risk assessed. Children are confident about getting around because all areas of the school and residential setting are checked regularly for avoidable safety hazards.

The staff recruitment procedures are appropriate and relevant checks are carried out. Most of the staff records seen were complete and included detailed information about Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, identity checks and references. Two files seen only included one reference. The school has a visitors' policy in place. All visitors are required to sign in and out and are supervised at all times while on the premises.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is a seamless child focussed approach to care and education in the school and residential setting. The support and opportunities available to children and young people encourage them to achieve their full potential both educationally and socially. Specific education arrangements are in place for each young person and appropriate educational documents are held on individual case files. Parents said that they receive information about school and after school activities each week. They said that the information provided regularly by the staff helps them to understand their children's progress and achievements.

The school has a 24 hour curriculum for residential pupils. Opportunities are available for children to develop a range of daily living skills. They are supported by high staff ratios and one to one support workers. There is a multi disciplinary staff team who work together to ensure there is a holistic approach to care and education at all times.

Staff in school and in the residential setting ensure that the needs of individual children in terms of their ethnicity, race, culture, religion, gender, disability and language are recognised and fully met. The school celebrates a range of festivals and ensures that the dietary and religious needs of children are incorporated into their care plans. Children have access to quiet space to study and complete homework in the residential settings.

Children clearly enjoy life at Linden Lodge. The good communication systems in place help them to understand daily routines in and out of school. All children and young people have access to a range of after school activities and outings. These include relaxing activities such as listening to music, discussion groups, cookery and art and craft. The more robust activities include the local youth club, guides, scouts, climbing, swimming, biking and a range of ball sports.

Individual support is detailed in children's files. Key workers are responsible for ensuring everyday needs are met and keeping files up to date. Staff are able to demonstrate their

understanding of children's individual needs and how they are met. Parents said that the school provides an excellent needs led service where the children very definitely come first.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The knowledge and understanding of the staff team ensures high quality care is provided at all time throughout the 24 hour day. Staff are familiar with children's care plans which are comprehensive and include details of general and specific health needs and individual issues related to family background, culture and religion.

Children are encouraged to make their views heard. There is a school council and children are elected to the council by their class mates. Every opportunity is given to children to represent their views and the views of others in their class by using the range of communication methods available. Information for children including relevant policies and the complaints procedure is displayed throughout the school in Braille and a large print. Parents said that staff are very patient ;they explain things to children and wait for them to communicate their response how ever long it takes. They said that their children are confident that staff will allow them to say what they want to in their own time. This practice was evident throughout the inspection.

The school provides residential care from Monday to Friday each week. Staff are pro-active in ensuring children are in regular contact with their families and other significant people in their lives. Details of contact are incorporated into care plans and staff discuss arrangements with children and families at child care reviews. Parents said they are welcome at the school at any reasonable hour of the day. They said they are encouraged to attend open days, school events and festivals. Parents said they believe that staff always listen to them and act on what they say when necessary.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children wear school uniform during the school day and change into more comfortable clothing for the evening. Parents supply a range of clothing and personal requisites. Staff support children to look after pocket money and allowances that they might bring with them for the week.

Planning for all children includes age appropriate independence skills. Once children reach the age of 15 plans are developed for transition into independent living. These plans include budgeting, shopping, preparing and cooking food, healthy lifestyles, further education facilities and work experience.

Linden Lodge provides a homely environment with high quality furnishing. There is a range of private and communal space for children to socialise, for private study, for relaxation and for personal care. The facilities are excellent with appropriately adapted provision where this is needed. Examples of cultural choices are evident in the children's rooms. Bedrooms are personalised with photos and individual choices of soft furnishings.

The school and the residential setting are well maintained, clean, tidy and free from hazards. Children and parents said that the home is like a first class hotel.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document. It is available to placing authorities staff, parents and children. The statement of purpose is reviewed annually along with the children's guide and the school policies and procedures.

The management teams in the school and in the residential setting have a range of appropriate knowledge and qualifications. The head of care has completed a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 in management. There are high staffing levels available at all times. Many children have one-to-one workers during waking hours. During the night there is one waking night staff who covers both of the residential settings and two staff who sleep in each house. There is a senior member of staff on call.

The school has the facilities to provide education and care for children with extremely complex needs. Over recent years the health needs of the young people using the day care and residential facilities have increased considerable. At present this increase is manageable. If this trend continues there may not be enough specialist health staff to support the complex health needs of all the children referred.

Staff training and professional development are fully supported by the school. The staff team are skilled, experienced and committed to their work. They are supported by each other and by the senior team who offer regular supervision within the school term. There is a range of appropriate training and professional training in place. An on site NVQ Assessment Centre provides accreditation for residential workers and support staff who achieve NVQ qualifications. Parents said that they are lucky to have such a dedicated and professional staff team caring for their children.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each child has a care plan in place. Each care plan fully considers the individual needs of children in terms of their ethnicity, race, religion, culture, gender, disability and language. There are positive images of different cultures and disabilities displayed in the school and in the residential setting.

The school ensures quality of care through continuous monitoring and evaluation. Records are reviewed regularly by senior managers. Practice is observed by the independent visitor who reports monthly to the school governors and trustees. There is a robust annual development plan in place which reviews and evaluates the year's work and sets out the plan for the year ahead.

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):

- ensure that recruitment files include two references for every member of staff.