

Linden Bridge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
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Nominated person	Ronwen Smith
Date of last inspection	22/09/2009

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 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, communication and independence skills through education and leisure activity. A range of communication systems are used throughout the school including picture systems, a structured treatment and education programme for children with autistic spectrum disorders and visual and written cues.

Boarding is provided for students under 16 years in flats on the first floor of an annex to the main school building. Older students are accommodated in a purpose-built further education department building.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The inspection was a full inspection and announced. All of the key national minimum standards for residential special schools were assessed. There were no recommendations set at the last inspection and no recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. The boarding section of the school continues to be organised and managed to a high professional standard. Equally, high professional standards of care and support are provided to the students, having full regard for equality and diversity issues throughout all aspects of its operation. A total of 16 students were resident at the time of the inspection, many of who took an active part in the inspection process conveying their views and opinions of the boarding experience they receive.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations set as a result of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students' health care needs are very well met and monitored on a regular basis. Comprehensive health care plans are in place and signed parental consent for medical and emergency treatment is held. Doctors from a local general practice are available to the school, although students retain the services of their own general practitioner. Students enjoy healthy lifestyles and take part in a range of physical activities that promote their physical fitness and help develop coordination and

confidence. Students are advised on aspects of healthy living and warned of the dangers of leading inappropriate lifestyles, smoking and substance abuse. Students benefit from staff that are trained in first aid and medication administration and who undertake their health care responsibilities to students in a caring and sensitive way.

Students enjoy a healthy diet and are reminded of the benefits of healthy eating. Any special religious, cultural, medical and preferential diets are catered for. Meals are of a very good quality and plentiful. Meal times are a pleasant well-ordered social occasion and students display good table manners. Staff are trained in food hygiene and the school's catering arrangements meet the standards of the local environmental health department.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Students are treated with dignity and staff respect students' privacy meeting their personal and intimate care needs in a sensitive way. Staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality and confidential information on students is securely held in locked cabinets in locked offices. There is a telephone for students use without reference to staff. Secure facilities are also available in which students can keep treasured and valued possessions. There is space available where students can receive appropriate visitors in private. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy.

Students and their parents have unrestricted access to the school's complaints procedure. Students and their parents have no complaints or concerns about the quality of care the school provides and are very complimentary about the school. Comments include: 'I can't thank the school enough for the excellent care they provide', 'my child has made fantastic progress and has become more independent', 'a very committed and professional staff team', 'I am very pleased that my child is at this school'. Staff receive training in the complaints procedure at induction and this is reinforced periodically at staff team meetings. Any complaint is taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and shows action taken and an outcome.

Students are protected from harm and abuse because staff that are trained in child protection and are aware and alert to safeguarding issues. Students learn about their personal safety via the school's curriculum and this is reinforced by care staff in boarding time. Staff are clear regarding the child protection procedures and where they can be accessed. Students are further protected from harm via the school's close supervision arrangements. There are no current child protection or safeguarding issues regarding the boarding provision at the school. Students said they feel safe in the school.

Bullying is not an issue. The homely, friendly and nurturing service afforded the students, coupled with the close supervision arrangements helps to reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring. Students and their parents confirm that bullying is not an issue in the school. There is a missing persons procedure; however no

unauthorised absences have occurred within the boarding provision. The caring and accepting ethos within the boarding provision encourages students to settle and enjoy life at the school.

Students' behaviour is exceptionally well managed by staff that are trained in behaviour management and who establish and maintain excellent relationships with them. There is consistent interaction and engagement coupled with good humour. Students respond to staff requests and instructions in a positive and cheerful manner. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions consistent with their age and level of understanding. Sanctions and restraint are sparingly used, clearly recorded and are appropriate and necessary in the circumstances described in the records. Students benefit from the stability and security of the school's behaviour management arrangements.

The school takes active and diligent steps to keep students, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential safety hazards. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding provision and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

There is a staff recruitment policy and procedure that has full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity throughout the recruitment process. Students are included in the school's appointment process, including the appointment of the new headteacher. The school's staff recruitment procedures are robust and staff personnel files hold all required information including two written references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. The school's recruitment arrangements help to ensure only suitable staff are appointed to look after the students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from an excellent extra curricular programme and care staff actively encourage them to engage in a wide range of physical and sedentary pastimes. Students' achievements are celebrated and accomplishments and attainments are displayed throughout the school and boarding areas. Care staff are highly committed to students education and learning and effective and consistent liaison between the two professions is evident. Statements of special educational needs and individual educational plans are held and show regular review and monitoring. Older students benefit from having clear transition plans and pathway plans in place that are fully supported by the care staff. Equality and diversity matters are an active part of the school's curriculum and these areas are carried over to the student's holistic care experience in boarding life at the school.

Students are happy and secure in the high level of care and support afforded to them by a committed, competent and professional care staff team that are aware and knowledgeable about students' individual backgrounds and needs. There is an effective key worker system in place. Students also benefit from inputs from other

professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. Students are further supported by an independent person as appropriate. There are comprehensive care plans in place that include student's self care skills. Care plans are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Students said they appreciate the excellent level of care and support they receive and that care staff are always available to them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students have an excellent range of communication forums where they can express their views, opinions and exercise choice. The forums are organised to a high standard and ensure that all students engage in dialogue and have their say. Students are encouraged to contribute their views in a calm and confident way and such meetings are made interesting for them by staff that facilitate the group in an effective manner. Students confirm their views are listened to and acted upon by staff. Students also enjoy contributing their opinions via questionnaires and evaluation forms. Students also make a contribution to the wider community and are involved in fund raising for disaster areas around the world. The equality and diversity curriculum is extended to the students' boarding experience.

There is a clear and comprehensive admissions criteria and process that ensures only suitable students are admitted and who can gain optimum benefit from the boarding experience. Students are discharged from the school in a carefully planned way and transition plans and pathway plans are in place for students nearing the end of their stay.

Students benefit from having clear and comprehensive care plans that are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, helping to ensure all key staff are kept abreast of students development, progress and issues. Any contact that students have with their parents and significant others is clearly recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Parents supply student's pocket money, clothing and personal requisites.

All communal areas are decorated and furnished to a very good standard and are well maintained by staff and students. Students enjoy homely and comfortable boarding accommodation which is 'student centred' where an abundance of pictures, posters and photographs are displayed on walls and boards. Students bedrooms are decorated and furnished to a very good standard and are personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard, well equipped and afford good privacy. One shower area is scheduled for an upgrade in the near future. The school grounds are spacious and well equipped with play apparatus and maintained in a safe condition. Students said they enjoy living in the

boarding accommodation and the facilities provided, commenting favourably on the homely and comfortable ambience in all areas. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Students and their parents are provided with sufficient information about the boarding provision that accurately describes the service and facilities provided. Such information is also available in pictorial format for the students and also via a DVD.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a comprehensive equality and diversity curriculum informing students to value and respect peoples differences, beliefs and cultures. The boarding section is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high professional standard of care and support to the students.

Students receive a high level of care and support from a well trained, supervised and appraised staff team that are highly committed to their work and who perform their duties in a highly competent and professional way. Staff are adequate in number, skills and experience to meet the needs of the students and enable the boarding section to achieve its aims and objectives. Staff are very supportive of the school's management and ethos and are clear that the service has full regard for equality and diversity issues. Staff comment on the school's management as 'strong, consistent, open, inclusive and approachable'. Students experience a boarding service that is diligently monitored and scrutinised as part of the school's effective internal quality assurance systems. The school has a current insurance liability certificate that complies with the council's responsibilities as an employer.