

Linden Lodge School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

This specialist residential school provides boarding and education for children with a wide range of visual impairment and other very complex physical needs. Those needs include severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. This is a maintained school which provides weekly or part-time residential accommodation for pupils in four units in two separate buildings. There are 54 full and part-time residential places available for pupils aged 6 to 19 years of age and currently 47 are in use.

The school is located in south west London and is easily accessible by public transport. The residential provision in the school was previously inspected in December 2010.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Linden Lodge school is outstanding. The school provides an exceptional boarding experience to residential. Staff show a high level of commitment to the development of students. This is achieved through hard work and excellent communication between all parties involved in students' care. The strong links between the school services and the residential provision mean that students enjoy consistency of care and shared targets.
- Students benefit from excellent detailed assessment, care planning and delivery. Staff always take students wishes and feelings into consideration while delivering their care plan. Staff ensure that support to students is highly individualised and they are actively encouraged to make choices.
- The safeguarding of students is outstanding. This is central to the organisation of the school and the residential provision. Recruitment and selection is robust and risk assessments of all environments that students use, demonstrate a commitment to their continued safety.
- The accommodation and facilities available are exceptional. These are designed to provide comfort and opportunity for students to continuously develop.
- The residential provision at Linden Lodge is extremely well managed and organised. This is a major achievement given the diverse needs of the students. The atmosphere created by senior managers, unit managers, residential workers and one-to-one staff is excellent. Individual units are unique in their personality but all provide a safe, warm and special atmosphere that students respond positively to.
- Parents rate their children's experience in the school highly and are confident

about leaving their children there. Parents describe the staff as very good and One parent said, 'They are the best professional I have had the pleasure of working with, 100% trustworthy.' Another stated, 'We are very pleased with Linden Lodge.'

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. One parent said, 'This place is fantastic, my child has been coming here for years, I am very happy with the support.'

Students look forward to overnight stays at the school. This is an opportunity to spend time with their peers and make good use of facilities and trips organised for them. Residential and extended school activities such as yoga, scouts and hydrotherapy are popular with students. Off site activities take place on a weekly basis and include fun trips out in the community such as eating out and laser quest.

Participation in the weekly drumming session showed students having a wonderful time expressing themselves through music. Those who did not play instruments danced to the music.

Staff go over and above their role in meeting the wishes of students to participate in an activity or pursue an interest. A birthday party saw one student take on the role of DJ for the evening using donated professional equipment to entertain his peers and staff.

Students at Linden Lodge communicate in a variety of ways using a number of communication methods. These include electronic and other forms of communication. Students are friendly, happy and relaxed. Relationships with staff in the residential accommodation are excellent and enhanced using their chosen methods of communication which include body language and facial expressions. These cues are well known and understood by staff.

Students have established friendship groups and are able to make new friends through shared activities and interests. Students mirror the behaviour of staff by showing kindness, compassion and understanding for each other, particularly to those students with complex needs.

Meal times are orderly and very relaxed with students receiving sensitive assistance at the table. Bed-time routines depend on students' age and all routines and tasks are explained to students. This ensures that students are not taken by surprise and understand what happens next.

Clear and measurable targets are identified for students. These are worked towards, reached and in many cases excelled. For example more able students have learned

to improve their independent living skills such as setting the dinner tables or running their bath. Other students are now better at using the stairs or finding their own way around buildings with helpful prompting. Students with more complex needs receive the same level of high quality support that helps to increase their independence and communication. Students have learnt to use equipment to activate their wheelchairs or make known to staff particular choices offered to them.

Students are prepared for their move to the next provision through practical 14 - 19 provision in the school and residential environment. Transition planning is seen as positive and this is discussed with contributions from all relevant partners about what will best suit students to enable them to continue their development.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. One parent said, 'They know my child really well and really care. I cannot praise them highly enough.'

There is highly effective communication between parents and the residential staff. Students benefit from very detailed, inclusive assessments that are holistic in nature, addressing all their needs. The interface between parents, medical and therapeutic specialists, teaching and residential staff is excellent. However the school believes this could be even better. A number of staff across the school have undertaken training in the family partnership model which commits to considering parents' views equally in discussions around the planning of the provision.

Medical support is provided within the school by a dedicated and skilled school nurse in conjunction with an additional nurse who has valuable continuing care experience. Permission for medical administration and treatments are in place. The administration and storage of medication is very robust and medication within the residential provision is monitored by the school nurse. The role of the nurse includes training and assessing the competency of staff in areas such as gastric feeding, epilepsy management and the use of adrenalin pens.

The complexity of the health needs of students and the medical equipment needed to support their health increases year on year. Although these health needs are expertly managed by the medical team, the area in which the nursing staff operate is not conducive to continue in meeting these increasing needs projected in the future. Practically, more wheelchairs, additional equipment and additional nursing support required to support students will not fit into the current consulting space or the sick bay. This is recognised as an area for development and consultation is underway with relevant partners to address this.

The diversity of students and the staff team add to the richness of the experiences that are on offer in the school. Any attitudes or behaviours which compromise this are addressed and so clear messages are given about acceptable language and behaviour. Staff respect and fulfil individual religious and cultural practices.

The accommodation and facilities available to boarders are exemplary. Equipment necessary to promote good health and hygiene is available and in working order. Bedrooms are personalised, bright and welcoming. The communal areas are attractive, decorated and furnished to make the areas feel homely. Personalised portraits of the students and pictures showing them engaging in activities are displayed around the building. This gives students a sense of self, presence and belonging.

Residential pupils' safety

The safety of students in Linden Lodge is outstanding. Linden Lodge has four designated child protection officers around the school. The officers are senior school, medical and care staff. The robust child protection policy and procedure is underpinned by excellent knowledge and training provided to the designated officers and the school community. Child protection officers make good use of external support. One senior education officer confirmed, 'They are very thorough in their dealings with child protection issues and attend a whole host of safeguarding training.'

The safety of pupils is further promoted through a meticulous approach to the recruitment of staff and checking of other adults as appropriate. Senior members of staff have completed safer recruitment training and interviews do not take place without at least one trained representative on the panel. Staff receive induction training and are provided with a detailed induction pack which is read and signed as understood.

Students feel safe and are safe. One student confirmed that they felt safe, another said, 'I also like staff checking on me at night it makes me feel safe.' Care plans, informative risk assessments, reflective practice and specialist training ensure that staff manage challenging behaviour well. Linden Lodge has behaviour management strategies in place for those students who require this. These take account of students' understanding of the situation and the potential harm or disruption to others. Plans are agreed in partnership with parents and professionals. The focus is on reward, not sanction. Praising positive behaviour has proved effective in minimising more difficult challenges. One student said, 'When I am cross or upset I go into another room and speak to the unit manager.' The school has an anti-bullying campaign and strategy. While incidents of bullying are very rare, staff remain vigilant. Additional risk assessments undertaken by staff cover all activities that students participate in. The staffing ratio is high, allowing students to take controlled risks, appropriate to their development and understanding.

Health and safety around the school is considered to be of paramount importance. Equipment is regularly maintained and repaired. Staff report repairs to ensure standards of health and safety are maintained. This is managed to a high standard through a number of external contractors. Some maintenance is completed by the in-

house team. Records of a small number of in-house maintenance jobs do not always sufficiently demonstrate that work has been completed. Excellent arrangements are in place to evacuate students in the event of a fire. Students confirm that fire drills take place. Robust security measures are in place to protect students around the school and when they leave the premises.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. Practice within the residential provision echoes the aims and objectives of the school. This enables all staff to develop the knowledge and understanding of each student and deploy flexible approaches according to students' needs. The management team are proactive in ensuring that the provision focuses on the development, safety and welfare of students.

Overall, parents state that they are very happy with all aspects of the care provided to their children. They agree that students make good progress while accessing the residential provision. Any concerns or issues are promptly dealt with and recorded, outlining the resolution and the level of satisfaction of the complainant.

Monitoring of the provision is completed regularly by an independent visitor. This is effective in highlighting areas for development and the strengths of the provision. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and participate in unit meetings. Residential students are also represented on the school council and eco council.

Staff receive extensive training relevant to their role. There is an increase in the level of support that students require in order to enhance their quality of life in all areas. More and more students have life limiting conditions that require planning and management while making their experiences of school and residential support as normal as possible. This is a major challenge which the service recognises and fully embraces while ensuring that the experience of the service received by parents and students is of exceptional quality.

The intensity of work with students can be challenging. Senior managers take care to ensure staff do not have too many shifts. This minimises the risk of exhaustion and sickness which directly affects the consistency of care offered to students. Linden Lodge is a National Vocational Qualification assessment centre and recognises training as a crucial part of the development of the workforce and the service. Staff learning comes from a variety of places including colleagues from other disciplines for the benefit of the students.

Staff are regularly supervised and annual appraisals take place. This provides training and development targets for staff which feed into the development plan for individual units and the residential provision as a whole.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- continue to address the issue of space within the medical area to ensure the facilities remain fit for purpose
- revise the current system for recording that maintenance work undertaken in the school is sufficiently completed.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30/01/2012

Dear residential students,

Inspection of Linden Lodge School

Thank you so much for spending time with me when I visited Linden Lodge and letting me know what it is like to stay there.

I believe that the staff do a brilliant job looking after you and making sure that you are safe and happy. They really care about you and talk to your parents and other school staff to make sure everyone looks after you in the same way.

You all have friends there and that makes your stay more enjoyable.

The staff make sure you have plenty of activities to keep you entertained and also help you to learn to be more independent. I really enjoyed the drumming and the party and could see that you enjoyed those activities too. You have plenty of space to move around and explore.

School house and Richley house are really comfortable and well furnished. Your bedrooms are nice and personal. It is great to see photographs of you all on the walls.

I really enjoyed visiting you all and I wish you the best

Yours sincerely,

Tola Akinde-Hummel