

Linden Lodge School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Angus Mackay

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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 needs. These 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. During the period of inspection 49 residential pupils used the resource.

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 January 2012.

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.

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. The school has a clear strategic approach to the delivery of services always placing children at the centre of practice. The Principal reports on this to school governors outlining how he intends to maximise positive outcomes for students and develop the ethos and culture of the organisation. The Principal is highly valued by the parents, social workers and other key partners. Descriptions of the Principal include; 'He really is a problem solver who offers high quality services to families and children with very complex needs.', 'He is quite exemplary, he always does what is best for the children.' The school plays a very important role in the local authority and now manages the wider sensory support services. Students benefit from this arrangement which provides them with a managed transition from first contact through to adulthood.
- The school has undergone an assessment to become recognised as a coaching institution. The school improvement partner describes the school as, 'constantly striving to improve and not being satisfied with the status quo.'
- The school has gained an Artsmark gold award for the performing arts demonstrating a commitment to providing a stimulating, challenging, creative arts experience for the students. This includes extra curricula activities in the residential settings. The school has also gained green flag status as an eco school. Students are fully engaged in this process. The school has a vast range of additional accreditations and engagements in local and national activities. Examples of this include, the Principal being a National Leader of Education, it is a National Support School, a Mobility and Orientation outreach provider to 5 London boroughs, NHS strategic partner with a local hospital, Makaton centre of

excellence and many others. The accreditations are key in the school's philosophy of putting children at the centre of practice and striving for excellence in all areas.

- The school has a strong commitment to staff development being an National Vocational Qualification assessment centre providing accreditation up to level 7. Staff training is comprehensive and provides the necessary skills base to work with the care, cultural and medical needs of the pupils. Training in safeguarding is a particular strength of the organisation.
- The views of parents are actively sought and valued. Outcomes from this include the formation of the 'Dads' group, an activity based meeting on Saturdays. The school has now implemented The Centre for Parent and Child Support's family partnership model, to structure the positive engagement of parents in the development of their child and the life of the school. Parents comment very positively on the efforts of the school to engage them in the life of the school and the development of their child. Communication from the school is excellent. A parent commenting, ' I have noted that the communication between the school, the care side and parents is superb. They use the daily books excellently and tell us everything.' Teachers, residential staff, nursing staff and therapists share information through shared internet access, school diaries and face to face communication to ensure a consistent approach to working with students. Students and parents are fully involved in reviews and in revising care plans. Presentations at reviews are highly praised by parents who like the visual images and engagement of their children in the process. They said 'they are superb at engaging parents and children in the reviews. We get a lot of detailed information, in advance, which contains lots of nice pictures. They are very good at picking those things which work for individual children.' This unified approach ensures a consistency of approach and the positive engagement of students and parents in all areas of planning.
- The school provides a very safe environment. Risk assessments are exceptionally well laid out are easy to use. This supports the culture of expanding life experiences for residential students, with challenging but achievable targets, in a safe environment.
- 2000 hours of high quality respite care are provided during the summer holidays by suitably qualified staff, in the excellent Summer school. Students from the school as well as from the local authority access a huge range of stimulating activities including sensory experiences, sporting activities and day trips out. The activities are intended to provide fun and are guided by students interests and abilities. The scheme is excellently managed with each student carrying a passport which outlines exactly how staff must communicate and work with them. It includes all information needed to meet health, religious and care needs. Parent feedback included, 'she had a great time. Put her name down for next year.'
- Parents and residential students are very happy with school activities and the care provided. Students make considerable progress during boarding in

relationship forming, motor skills, self-help skills and confidence in negotiating new environments. A typical comment about the school is, 'I have never been in a school which is so driven to be so much better and so warm and welcoming. It is like a highly professional big family.' Staff are excellent at engaging with students and seeking their views when delivering primary care. Students respond positively to the highly personalised care and do make their choices known to staff. Parents are very impressed with how well the residential staff meet their children's religious and cultural needs.

- The safeguarding of students is outstanding. All governors committees address safeguarding as a standing agenda item. Staff are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures in line with safer recruitment guidance. The expertise of staff within the home in safeguarding is recognised by the local authority. Senior staff are involved in providing advice, training in safeguarding children with disabilities and assisting with complex child protection investigations in the local authority. Students' safety is a priority within the home and detailed user friendly risk assessments are applied by staff to aid the safe engagement of students in diverse activities. The Principal Social Worker for Disabled Children said, 'I am very positive about the school and our working relationship. I am very confident in the care disabled children receive. This is not said lightly as they have no voice and it is imperative we ensure we speak on their behalf.'
- The school has developed fantastic resources for students through a combination of local authority capital funding and extensive fund raising. Students benefit from their access to a dynamic, constantly improving environment, designed to meet their complex care and mobility needs. Students develop independence skills through the use of walkways and corridors which are designed to aid their orientation and movement. All areas are excellently signed and modified to allow all students to access leisure, educational and respite resources. The link social worker commented, 'It is a lovely school. Everything is child focused, everywhere there are photographs noted in moon, braille, object of reference and large print.' Residential areas are homely and personalised by the students. Parents and students comment favourably on the facilities available with comments like, 'the facilities are great', 'it is fantastic here', 'I like my bedroom.'
- The school has excellent health care services which are fully integrated into the life of the school to the benefit of the residential students. The close interdepartmental working has aided the school in gaining healthy school status. The head of care has coordinated the programme of healthy eating, good exercise and emotional well being improving the health outcomes for students.
- Residential students are fully engaged in decision making within the school. They actively participate in the school council and in residential meetings. Within the residential setting the views of pupils influence all aspects of their experience including, meals, activities and choice of keyworker.
- The school has successfully addressed one of the previous areas for improvement. The improvements to the space within the medical area is an on-going project and have not yet been completed. All national minimum standards

are met. To further improve the school is asked to publicise the attendance of the independent visitor with posters and appropriate signage. Further the school is asked to ensure that guidance in the use of restraint is modified to reflect current practice.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students enjoy the company of staff who show appropriate warmth and affection to them. A parent said, 'they are so fond of the children, there is always a happy atmosphere here. It is not an easy job but they inject a lot of warmth and enthusiasm into their work. They set the standard for other schools to reach.' The school works closely with parents and has developed the family partnership model to engage parents in a structured way. This engages parents in shaping the service for their children but also in receiving support with specific issues which they have at home. Parents value this support saying, 'They talk to me about what we do at home and learn from us. They got me to come in and show how I floss his teeth and then they put that in his care plan.'

Students and parents work with the transition team to prepare for the initial transition into the school from home. Students benefit from this carefully planned introduction which eases them into school or overnight stays successfully. Parents comment that the most difficulty they experience is leaving their very vulnerable children with someone else to look after. Using transition planning, moves into residential overnights are done at the pace of the young person, improving their positive engagement and enjoyment of their stay.

Students develop positive interactions with others encouraged by residential staff and supported by their engagement in the rights, respect and responsibility programme. A parent commenting, 'they are very good at promoting relationships.' There is a strong culture of respect for individual difference and staff strive to engage pupils in discussion about their own cultural backgrounds. Comments from parents include, 'they are superb at meeting cultural needs. They are incredibly respectful about our religion.'

Students enjoy their overnight stays and say, 'staff look after me and help me to have fun. They read to me and if I want to do drumming, they sit with me.' Students participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities which are on offer. One young person saying, 'We do good things here, lots of activities. We can choose what we do. I like fitness training, I use the jogging machine.' Activities provide opportunities for active sports, interactive social clubs and quiet time. Students enjoy the clubs and some activities are linked to targets to aid their personal development.

Students make progress with therapeutic targets, during their time in the residential setting. They are involved in handovers with residential staff, teachers and therapists which ensure that they understand their targets and have the necessary resources

and equipment to meet them. Therapists encourage the students to manage the handover as part of their development of self-help skills. Parents comment positively on the development of self-help skills, 'he will do much more at school than he does at home. Here he is learning independence skills at 11.'

Students enjoy meal times which are relaxed and pleasant occasions. They have choice as to what meal they would like and receive assistance with eating in line with their care plan targets. Staff display sensitivity and patience in encouraging students to develop eating skills. Bed time routines are highly individual and care targets, cultural requirements and issues of preferences are taken into account when students bathe and prepare for bed. Students are supported to develop their ability to care for themselves but receive sensitively provided assistance where necessary. Parents comment positively at the progress their children make when boarding which transposes to home.' I saw him walking up the stairs here, at home we carry him. We learn from them and he is doing that at home now.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the school's provision for residential students is outstanding. Students have access to a tremendous selection of after school activities. The residential staff make excellent use of the, purpose built, on site facilities, offering students a broad choice of activities which engage, entertain and educate them. One parent commented, 'They do best with activities, the boarding builds on things covered in class.' Students enjoy off site activities including a local youth club which aids their social integration and enhances their self-esteem. Parents comment very positively on the excellently managed summer scheme, which is inclusive of children from other settings. Comments from parents include, 'summer scheme is absolutely brilliant and is run beautifully. My son came back happier than he has ever been. It is fantastic to know your child is in safe hands and well looked after.'

The school is excellently maintained providing students with accommodation which is clean comfortable and safe. All areas in the residential setting have been modified to allow access to all students and to provide assistance to those with visual impairment. Everywhere is clearly signed in a variety of ways; to provide an aid to movement and awareness of location to the wide spectrum of abilities. The school celebrates all achievements. Large, colourful, beautiful portraits of students in activities are in all areas of the buildings demonstrating their successes and their enjoyment. Students are proud of the pictures and gain a sense of personal worth and joy at the celebration of their achievements. Staff document all activities to maintain an on-going visual record for students and parents. Bedrooms are personalised by students and provide them with comfortable happy spaces to relax in. Communal areas are well furnished and homely. A parent commented, 'the residential accommodation is nice. His room was clinical at first but they got him to personalise it. Now he has his posters and pictures up, it is lovely.'

The school has achieved healthy eating status through the close working of the

school, residential, medical staff and kitchen staff all coordinated by the head of care. Students say they can choose meals and can influence the menu. Parents say that the school is excellent at meeting cultural, health and religious needs when providing a healthy balanced diet.

The school caters for a changing population with ever increasing health issues. Students remain registered with their own doctors, dentists and opticians and parents work closely with medical staff to ensure the school can meet all of the health needs of their children. Health care is excellent and administration of medicines is tightly controlled and monitored by the medical team. Residential staff receive a wide range of appropriate training to maintain the safe care of students at all times. Medical records are tightly monitored by the nurse and any changes in students communicated to parents in line with agreed protocols. The school has not yet implemented changes to the medical and therapy area, to improve access and improvements to specialised equipment. The school continue to recognise this as an essential area for improvement and are continuing with their feasibility study.

Students are encouraged to make choices wherever possible and to engage in activities which develop their responsibility for others. Students enthusiastically join in their own scouts and guides groups learning leadership skills, social responsibility and self-help skills. Students are encouraged to show guests around and to explain everything about their experiences in residence. Many students return after leaving the school as helpers or as members of staff.

Staff maintain excellent care plans which provide clear guidance to all staff on how to work with each student in a highly personalised way. Students show significant improvement and benefit from their residential experience, which is evidenced by monitoring students' achievements in meeting stretching targets. Students are encouraged to actively report on their progress in reviews. Residential staff and teachers construct colourful power point presentations which students aid in delivering, in line with their abilities. Parents say they feel fully engaged in the target setting and are reassured about the care of their very vulnerable children by the listening and responding approach the school take. One parent commented, 'I have been fully engaged in discussion with staff about setting targets for my son. They ask what targets I think and what do I think of those they have identified.'

Residential pupils' safety

The school achieves outstanding standards in providing safe care for students. Students benefit from the selection of suitable staff with all appropriate clearances and qualifications, supporting the provision of a high quality service. The school applies rigorous checks to all volunteers, contractors and others with access to students ensuring the provision of safe care at all times. Governors take the safeguarding of students exceptionally seriously including discussion of safeguarding in every committee, to ensure appropriate consideration of students' needs.

The school works closely with the local authority to ensure that students benefit from staff application of comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures, designed to meet their complex needs. All staff have training in child protection and safeguarding of children with disabilities, and apply this in their practice enhancing the safety of young people and improving their understanding of how to stay safe. Safeguarding trainers from the local authority say, 'The school are very good at providing appropriate training to staff. The staff are a very caring group and are very good at applying what they learn.' Senior staff provide specialist assistance to the local authority with safeguarding training and assisting in complex child protection investigations, ensuring positive sharing of expertise in safeguarding children with complex needs.

The school operates a positive behaviour management programme designed to meet the individual needs of each student. Care plans contain detailed guidance on every aspect of how to engage students positively, to resolve difficulties and reward positive behaviour. Behaviour management plans take account of every student's level of understanding and of potential triggers to negative behaviour. All staff work in a consistent manner with students to avoid confusion and encourage positive outcomes. The consistent approach minimises the use of restraint which is applied only by staff trained in the accepted techniques used to safely calm students. New guidance on positive behaviour management, promoting positive relationships, is being introduced by the head of care which enhances the safe care of students and expressly identifies who can engage in a restraint. The school do not use any sanctions with students and focus on positive rewards and praise to encourage desired outcomes.

The school operates a well-publicised anti-bullying programme. Students say there is no bullying, only occasional disagreements which staff help them to sort out. Very high staffing levels, ensure that staff can intervene immediately any incident occurs and take action in line with the individual's care plans. Students say they feel safe in the residential setting and enjoy being there; typical comments from students are 'I like the staff they are nice to me,' 'We all get on well together, there is no bullying.'

The school has excellent arrangements for monitoring and managing all health and safety issues. All relevant checks are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment and installations. Detailed annual audits of the entire site provide an on-going action plan to maintain or improve safety. Students' care is enhanced by the meticulous planning to address identified hazards within the school. Risk assessments are well thought out and enable students to partake in a wide range of activities, which are challenging but safe, such as wheel chair abseiling. Site security is well managed and unobtrusive encouraging parents to feel comfortable about the care of their children. One parent commented, 'Safety at the school is very good. The procedure when I visit is excellent. I am made to feel welcome and am let in by staff and accompanied to my son.' Fire protection is excellent and the school works closely with the emergency services to provide a safe environment for students and robust emergency planning.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. Managers share a common understanding of the direction and ethos of the school which they effectively communicate to staff, children and parents. The head of care works closely with the Principal and other senior staff, ensuring the effective and efficient management of the residential facility, as an integral component of the school. Parents say that the head of care is very well organised, affable and approachable. Parents describe the school as a dynamic, well managed organisation with a Principal who listens and responds to their requests. One parent saying, 'You can talk to the Principal about anything, he is fantastic, he just listens so carefully to what you have to say.' Managers, staff and governors have a shared appreciation of the value of residential boarding to the students. Regular internal monitoring of the service is reported to governors showing improved outcomes for residential students.

The school maintains a detailed evaluation of its performance outlining short and long term targets to improve the facilities and outcomes for pupils. The monitoring is enhanced by the detailed reports provided by the independent visitor, including where relevant, comment on her contact with the students. The head of care ensures that these reports are shared with the governors and that students care is enhanced by meeting the identified actions. The school has significant responsibility for managing the whole sensory service of the local authority providing excellent opportunities to manage transitions for students, from infancy to adulthood.

Managers ensure that all staff share current information on students and have access to the specialist resources necessary to enable them to interact appropriately with students. Many students have complex care and health needs which the school ensures staff are fully trained to meet. One parent commented, 'My child has complex needs and serious conditions; they provide a wonderful balance between care, education and health. Plus it is a very happy place.'

The school is a National Vocational Qualification assessment centre and recognises the crucial part training plays in the development of a staff team able to meet the complex needs of the students. Boarding staff complete comprehensive induction training enhanced by the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction leading to a suitable level 3 qualification. Boarders benefit from the expansive training staff engage in, preparing them to provide the safe specialist care necessary. Staff receive supervision and appraisal to support them in providing a high quality service to students.

Staffing numbers are high ensuring a highly individualised approach to the care of the students. The staff team is diverse in composition reflecting the diversity of the students. The complex staffing deployments ensure staff are available at key times to meet the needs of the students. The head of care is maintaining a review of staff shifts to ensure that staff can continue to provide consistent care to students and

maintain their own professional and personal development.

Students and parents are actively engaged in sharing ideas and contributing to the development of the school. Students participate through residential meetings, eco council, the school council and direct contact with senior managers. Communication to and from parents is excellent. The school has a strong focus on issues of equality and diversity. Staff aid students in meeting cultural and religious needs and assist them in learning how to achieve their potential regardless of their disability. Parents comment on how well the school meets often very complex religious and cultural needs and involves them in discussion about this at all stages. Parents say they are reassured by the openness of the school, 'they are always very welcoming and I can come in at any time, which is very reassuring.' Complaints are rigorously addressed and responded to in writing enhancing the safe care of the pupils. Pupils are confident in residential staff sorting out any issues they have. The residential setting maintains good records of all complaints and representations including many positive comments from parents and students.

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
- ensure that the restraint policy is clear about which staff may be involved in the use of restraint.
- provide posters advertising visits by the independent visitor.

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.



09/10/2012

Hello again to you all

Inspection of Linden Lodge School

I wish to thank all of you who made my visit to your school so enjoyable. I found your school to be outstanding and saw many examples of excellence. I was pleased to hear from you and your parents that you feel safe and well cared for, when boarding at the school and that you like the staff. I wish to give a special thank you to those of you who showed me around and told me about what it is like to stay overnight. I was very pleased to join you at meals and to hear from you that you have healthy, tasty meals and that you have choice in this. I saw the fantastic facilities you have and heard from many of your parents about how well you use them. I have asked the school to move forward with plans they have to improve the medical area. In addition I have asked them to make a poster for you, showing the independent visitor and telling you about her. I have also asked the school to change some written guidelines to staff. Thank you again for such a welcoming visit.

Yours sincerely,

Angus Mackay