

Linden Bridge School

Grafton Road, Worcester Park, Epsom, Surrey KT4 7JW

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make rapid and sustained progress in reading, communication and in their personal development.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an excellent start to their school lives achieving outstanding gains in all areas of development.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make exceptional progress and they all achieve some vocational and academic qualifications by the time they leave the school.
- High-quality teaching across the school results in pupils being fully engaged and thoroughly enjoying their learning. Just occasionally too little use is made of symbols and cue cards to promote decision making and choices.
- Pupils behave extremely well. They say they feel really safe at school. Attendance is above average.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the school and with the residence.
- The very high quality of record keeping in the residence is not always applied consistently in all aspects.
- Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school has maintained its excellent outcomes since the previous inspection.
- Through their efficient planning, the governing body makes sure that money is spent very well for the benefit of all groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons jointly with the headteacher or other senior staff. In addition the inspectors made a few short visits to different sessions to observe pupils' activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the head of care, the school council and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with a local authority representative.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and residential care plans. Inspectors listened to pupils' reading and looked at their workbooks.
- The inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online survey (Parent View). Questionnaires were received from 40 staff members.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Richard Hil

Additional Inspector

Seka Graovac

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Linden Bridge is a special school for pupils with a statement of special educational needs for their autism spectrum disorders. Many pupils have additional learning needs and/or speech and language difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and pupils with a parent or carer in the armed forces) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average.
- There is discrete Early Years Foundation Stage provision for the youngest children.
- The school has on-site residential accommodation for 25 pupils. All pupils have the opportunity to have two nights each week in the residence. Students in the sixth form are offered longer stays.
- Sixth form students have their own separate accommodation and although many of them attend courses at the local college, there were no students attending college during the inspection.
- School staff provide outreach support to several local mainstream schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there is consistent use of symbols and cue cards, particularly for secondary-aged pupils, to enhance their opportunities to make even better responses and choices.
- Monitor the quality of record keeping across the residential provision to ensure that it is always of a consistently high standard.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- All groups of pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, achieve very well during their time at Linden Bridge. As a result, they make excellent progress, achieving particularly well in reading, communication, and in their personal development. Their progress in mathematics is good.
- Reading skills improve rapidly because of the excellent way that phonics (matching letters and sounds) is taught to younger pupils. Pupils say that they really enjoy reading. This is evident in the way that they choose to read for pleasure, regularly taking books home and often reading their books in the residence before they come to school in the mornings.
- A clear focus on improving pupils' personal development ensures that they are challenged to take on responsibilities and make decisions and choices about their own lives. This culminates in highly competent young people in the sixth form running their own community cafe.
- Children in the Reception class benefit from both indoor and outdoor learning. They show excellent progress in recognising initial sounds in words. Records show that they make rapid progress in all areas of learning.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 pupils showed very good reading skills as they read words together. They reinforced their new knowledge of sounds by blending so that they could write them successfully on their whiteboards.
- The vast majority of pupils make excellent use of communication aids, such as pictures, symbol or cue cards to achieve their aims. These are used best in the younger classes where pupils' interact and make decisions, respond to questions and indicate their needs. They are less evident in older classes and sometimes this limits opportunities for a few pupils to make choices.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well because of their full inclusion in all activities. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as other pupils.
- All groups of pupils make excellent progress in swimming so that many learn to swim during their time at the school. Pupils benefit from the high-quality on-site pool and the very good skills of staff.
- Parents and carers are rightly pleased with their children's progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Lessons are exciting. Teachers promote a calm and productive atmosphere and provide challenging tasks that fully engage pupils in learning and inspire their interests. Outstanding teaching is evident in all areas of the school.
- The teaching of phonics is a major strength. Very effective strategies enable pupils to learn at a fast pace.
- Pupils' achievements are accurately recorded, often by photographing their learning, noting outcomes, and through observations. For older pupils, work is regularly and accurately marked. Learning journals and records, including for the youngest children, are of a very good quality showing a comprehensive history of past work.
- Teachers expect the best from pupils. Questioning is used very well to deepen pupils' knowledge, extend their understanding and to link skills across different subjects. An example of this was evident in history where pupils in Years 7 to 9 were learning about the history of trains. Commenting on how a French train travelled at 600 kilometres an hour, the teacher asked how many miles an hour pupils thought this would be. Immediately pupils responded with the correct answer showing high-quality calculation skills.
- Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support individual needs and encourage learning. Pupils regularly work with them to share learning, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons, benefiting from their support and guidance.

- Specialist teaching and high-quality provision for the teaching of subjects, such as food technology, information and communication technology, swimming and woodwork means that pupils have the best possible chance to enjoy their learning and succeed. This enables secondary-aged pupils to develop their interests and skills to their highest abilities.
- Teaching in the sixth form is usually inspirational. Relationships are highly positive and staff and students work collaboratively to design the best possible courses for each student.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through celebrations of different cultures and through stories and songs and regular drama and assemblies, preparing them very well for the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils really enjoy all aspects of school life. They are polite and helpful and eager to please. Most show their enthusiasm by joining in happily with all the activities. Those who find engaging with others difficult, because of their autism, are guided carefully to their own specific choice of activity so that they can quickly settle. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- No evidence of any bullying was seen during the inspection and none is evident in the school's records. Older pupils told the inspectors that there is no bullying of any kind at the school.
- Older pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy and benefit from healthy school food. They all have regular opportunities to engage in movement, dance and swimming with many pupils learning to swim by the time they enter the secondary department. Pupils regularly raise funds for charities, make and sell cakes and perform in their own productions.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and is above that found in other special schools despite relatively high numbers of medical appointments.
- Pupils' personal development is very well promoted through regular community trips, links with other local schools and independence training which results in some older pupils travelling independently on buses to college.
- Staff manage behaviour well and there are examples of pupils, who have difficulties with their emotional and social skills, improving their behaviour because of specific targets both at school and in the residence. Joint practices and collaboration between school and residential staff ensure that approaches are consistent.
- The vast majority of parents and carers rightly say that behaviour at the school is good and all of the parents and carers who responded Parent View said that their children enjoy school and are safe and secure.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and the governing body have made effective use of the Teachers' Standards in their commitment to maintaining high-quality staff. They have made sure that all staff receive high-quality training. For example, a 'middle leadership' programme resulted in the successful phonics programme that is having a very positive impact on pupils' literacy skills.
- Leaders at all levels are fully involved in improving teaching and seeking excellence.
- A very strong emphasis on supporting pupils' individual needs means that pupils do well whatever their difficulties. For example, the few pupils with behaviour difficulties have their own specialist areas where they can learn to be calm while still part of their class. This is successful in ensuring full inclusion.
- Performance is very effectively monitored by senior leaders. Teachers are regularly challenged to improve their skills and are fully involved in measuring how well the school is doing.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding achieve very well because the extra funds are used to employ additional staffing to meet these pupils' individual needs.
- The exciting curriculum provides a wide range of activities that fully meets the needs and abilities of all pupils. High-quality enrichment extends their learning and personal development,

including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

- The local authority gives effective support to the school, especially in training staff and helping to improve teaching.
- All of the staff who responded to the inspection questionnaires said that they were proud to be a member of staff at the school.
- The school fosters good relationships with parents and carers. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal access to all the opportunities available. No evidence of any discrimination was seen during the inspection and none was evident in records.
- Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body gives very clear direction to the school, promoting high-quality values in which pupils thrive. Governors are extremely supportive of leaders and provide regular and rigorous challenge. They evaluate the school’s strengths and areas for improvement, receiving regular updates and reports. They fully understand the importance of managing the performance of staff and allocate sufficient funding to high-quality training to ensure that teaching remains strong. They manage the school’s finances extremely well and make sure additional money allocated for the support of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium benefits those pupils. Governors understand the importance of maintaining high-quality of teaching. Good teachers are well rewarded through the school’s performance management structure and any underperformance is tackled through additional training, observation and regular monitoring.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	are outstanding
Residential pupils’ safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	are outstanding

- The residence makes an exceptionally strong contribution to the life of the school and to the extraordinary success of its students. Close collaboration between staff along with the flexible residential arrangements, ensures that provision is uniquely tailored to each student’s individual needs.
- Very skilled staff provide excellent support in a nurturing, safe environment. Precise individual learning targets are highly individual.
- Students thoroughly enjoy their residential experiences and value their opportunities to form close relationships. A sensitive key worker system, combined with shared living arrangements, facilitates social development, empathy, life skills and the formation of safe attachments.
- Resources are excellent, giving students access to comfortable and stimulating accommodation and a varied programme of activities which all help to widen students’ horizons.
- The residence has a strong impact on the development of students’ self-confidence and on their openness to explore new things. It helps to lower their anxieties and self-doubts so that they feel valued and respected. They say they feel empowered to voice their feelings. There are examples of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties making outstanding improvements in the way they relate to other people during their time in the residence.
- Health care arrangements are excellent, including robust management of medication and easy access to a range of therapies. Together with the schools’ own excellent educational provision on health-related topics, this results in highly effective promotion of students’ physical, emotional and psychological health, helping them to understand and manage their autism and emerging sexuality.
- Nutritious, balanced meals and the dining arrangements ensure that students’ health and social skills are extremely good and prepare them very well for their futures.

- Comprehensive risk assessments and safeguarding strategies ensure that students' welfare is protected and promoted. This includes encouraging them to take safe risks both at school and in the residence.
- There are clear and robust policies to prevent bullying, including various forms of intimidation, such as cyber bullying and homophobia. Excellent practice supports students' understanding of right and wrong. Students are very much involved in the school's current project that focuses on the universal rights of the child.
- Partnership with parents and carers is excellent. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View overwhelming said they were extremely pleased with the residential provision. Students told the inspector that they 'adore boarding'. The school's family support worker provides parents and carers with ways to support their child's learning and welfare.
- Leadership of the residence is extremely robust. High-quality record keeping is a key feature of the vast majority of the provision but just occasionally this very high standard dips slightly resulting in a few records lacking rigour.
- There have been no complaints, no major incidents or child protection concerns since the last inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	125475
Social care unique reference number	SCO13884
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	403576

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of residential provision 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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Number of boarders on roll	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlotte Byrne
Headteacher	Rachel Watt
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2008
Telephone number	020 8330 3009
Fax number	020 8330 6811
Email address	info@linden-bridge.surrey.sch.uk

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