

Linden Bridge School

Linden Bridge School, Grafton Road, WORCESTER PARK, Surrey, KT4 7JW

Inspection dates	09/09/2013 to 11/09/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Students are at the centre of practice. Their emotional, social, physical and educational needs are met to the highest standards. Students make significant progress during their time in the residential provision in their independent living skills and social communication/integration.
- There is a culture of safety and the school is not risk averse. Students are able to participate fully in the things they enjoy. Students are safe and well cared for with safeguarding embedded in the culture of the school. A point of improvement is to review the risk assessment for legionella annually.
- There is strong and robust leadership and management of the residential provision. Established systems run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. A highly motivated care staff group operate very well together as a supportive team. Staff are well qualified and experienced to meet the needs of the students they care for.
- Disability is not a barrier to achievement. This is a fully inclusive environment where all students, including those with communication difficulties, are able to make their views, wishes and feelings known. Staff are attentive and responsive to individual needs.
- Arrangements for health are excellent. Staff engage fully with other professionals and parents to ensure individual health needs are met. Students benefit from a healthy, varied menu with food cooked and presented to a very high standard. Students engage in healthy activities enthusiastically, such as swimming in the school's own pool.
- The quality of care is excellent with students clearly benefiting socially and educationally from the residential experience. Care staff ensure the emotional well-being and readiness to learn is clearly communicated to education staff at the start of every school day. This enables students to make outstanding progress during their time at the school.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was notified of the inspection four hours before it commenced. Time was spent in both boarding provisions during the inspection. Lunchtime and evening meals were attended as well as activities. Observations were made of the interactions between staff and students. Meetings took place with students, the principal, head of care, care staff, school manager, catering manager and premises manager. Discussions were held with parents, governor and occupational therapist over the telephone. Students' views were sought through copious time in face-to-face contact and through observation of behaviour. Parent-View was also used to assess the provision. Records, policies and procedures were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Keith Riley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- implement an annual review of the risk assessment for legionella as recommended in the survey report.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students thrive in a nurturing and supportive environment. Their unique, individual needs are known and responded to. This means that students make remarkable progress during their time at school, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. Students speak in the most positive of terms of their experience in the residential provision. They say, 'it is great' and that they feel very safe. Students are accepted for who they are and benefit from living in an environment where an understanding of their needs, associated with autism, are fully understood. This means that students develop greatly in their self-confidence and self-esteem. Their emotional well-being is promoted to a very high standard so students are able to attend the school environment every day and develop educationally as well as socially. Parents say that staff are, 'so good at everything' and that staff are not phased by any challenges that they are presented with.

Students on the autistic spectrum, who find social communication and integration a challenge, make significant progress in their social skills. They are respectful of each other, have friends and communicate effectively in social situations. The school encourage and support community cohesion, for example students run a café for the local community once a week. Students speak enthusiastically of their participation in this. Their feelings of self-worth and achievement grow enormously as well as their social skills.

Outcomes for independent living skills are exceptional. Pathway to independence programs are detailed, comprehensive and kept up-to-date. There is excellent progress in domestic skills, eating and drinking and personal care. For example, students who have struggled to access the toilet are now not only able to do so independently but have also developed the confidence to use public conveniences if necessary.

Transitions to adult life are prepared for in an individual and detailed manner. Students benefit significantly from careful preparation at a rate suitable to their vulnerabilities and level of understanding. There are excellent outcomes such as students going on to college, work experience or employment.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care provided for students is outstanding. Highly individualised care and support is provided consistently by an extremely experienced and well qualified care staff team. There is a sensitive and coordinated approach to meeting the individual needs of each student. Pastoral support offered to students is extremely supportive and nurturing. Students are relaxed and comfortable with their key care worker. They benefit from consistent support, care and guidance in all areas of school life. The residential experience strongly underpins the educational achievement of students. Parents say that the provision is 'absolutely magnificent' and that the head of care 'deserves a medal'.

Accommodation is of a very high standard throughout. There is a calm and homely environment in each 'flat' where students are able to relax and enjoy a multitude of in-house activities. Students can personalise their own area which gives them a sense of identity and belonging. Students say, 'it is really peaceful here'.

There is a thorough approach to ensure students are as healthy as possible. Students are positive about the healthcare arrangements and engage enthusiastically with physical activities, such as swimming, on a regular basis. Staff ensure they consult with other professionals and parents to agree strategies to keep students physically and emotionally healthy. Sensitive issues, that

individuals with autism can find difficult, such as puberty and their emerging sexuality, are dealt with extraordinarily well. Students benefit from having their privacy and dignity totally respected as they grow into young adults.

The quality of the food is high. Students benefit from a varied diet and healthy menu. Individual needs are catered for such as cultural or health needs. In addition, staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the challenges that students on the autistic spectrum may face in regard to food. There is a meticulous approach to ensure students have the best choice of healthy options available, for example staff consider the colour or texture of food and the impact it has on each individual.

Students have a voice in the school. As well as individual dialogue, daily meetings and student council, independent advocates are actively involved with the school. This ensures that the views, wishes and feelings of students are made known. Students engage in a wide range of activities, both in the school and in the wider community. They develop skills and confidence to access activities, for example in major cities, that were once thought impossible.

Care plans are of an excellent standard. It is clear that care staff know the students they are caring for extremely well. An experienced and stable staff group work closely together to implement the agreed strategies and approaches to enable students to develop exceptionally well. Annual reviews clearly record each students educational, emotional, behavioural, social and physical development.

Contact with parents and other individuals important to the student is strongly supported. Parents describe the relationship and communication in the most positive of terms. They say they are, 'kept fully in the loop' and, 'staff do not do anything without double-checking with me first'.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The school makes excellent provision for ensuring the safety and well-being of students. Students report they feel very safe and happy in the residential provision. Staff ensure they adhere to robust policies and procedures to ensure all are protected and supported. There is a robust and rigorous approach which treats students emotional and physical safety as paramount. The culture embedded in the school ensures students are protected from harm. Designated and specifically trained senior staff take responsibility for child protection. The school works closely with the local safeguarding board in addressing any child protection issues.

Robust recruitment procedures are effectively implemented, which ensures that only adults who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children are employed. The environment is subject to stringent checks and assessments. External contractors certify the safety of the environment and conduct surveys to guide the senior management team. This includes the risk of legionella. Although checks are being carried out, the risk assessment has not recently been updated. There is no immediate impact on students.

Behaviour in the residential areas is exemplary. Clear boundaries, routines and expectations ensure that students know what is acceptable and what is not. Staff are readily available to help students interpret the social world around them and manage their emotions. Consequently the environment is extremely calm and there is no need for the use of any kind of physical intervention. Since the last inspection, there has been one occasion where a student has needed extremely low level guidance. Equally, there is little need for sanctions to be imposed. There has been one sanction since the last inspection which was proportionate and appropriate.

Going missing is not an identified issue. There has been no incidents since the last inspection of students going missing from the school. There is an excellent procedure in place should this

occur.

Risk assessments of activities and the school environment are of an excellent standard and are conscientiously reviewed. Personalised risk assessments are in place where necessary to ensure that students can access those activities that are of interest to them while being kept as safe as possible.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The residential staff team's enthusiasm is stimulated to provide care and support to a very high standard. A common ethos and drive to secure the best possible outcomes for students are shared by all. Established staff, with many years service, say they continue to, 'really enjoy working here'. Newer staff are subject to a comprehensive induction programme that provides them with the skills and guidance to be effective in their roles. All staff are aware of the structure, expectations and practice in the school. Excellent staffing ratios and deployment provide students with continuity in their care and support.

Staff are supported through regular supervision and personal development to maintain an excellence of care. Students benefit from staff who are well supported themselves and extremely motivated to meet the individual needs of each student and seeing them develop to their utmost potential.

The senior management team ensure there is continual reflection and challenge to practice. This includes regular visits from an independent visitor who provides a report to them. This is used to look at current issues and for future development. Development plans are realistic and achievable such as making modifications to outdoor areas for better access and enjoyment. A strong and active governing body provide an overview as to how well the school is running and developments and changes that are happening.

There is excellent communication with parents. Students and parents know how to access the formal complaints system if they are dissatisfied in any way. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

All information is appropriately and securely stored to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The previous recommendation to monitor the quality of record-keeping is met. Records are thorough and provide a comprehensive account of each students experience and progress at the school.

What inspection judgements mean

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	SC013884
DfE registration number	936/7060

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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Ms Rachel Watt
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/02/2013
Telephone number	020 8330 3009

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