

# Linden Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number101093Local AuthorityWandsworthInspection number335654

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2009

**Reporting inspector** Mick Megee

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

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

**Type of school** Special

School category Community special

Age range of pupils3–19Gender of pupilsMixedGender of pupils in the sixth formMixedNumber of pupils on the school roll130Of which, number on roll in the sixth form31

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

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 Age group
 3–19

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**Boarding provision** 

**Social care Unique Reference Number** SC010255 **Social care inspector** Jill Marriott

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### **Introduction**

This integrated inspection of the school and the residential provision was carried out by two additional inspectors and an inspector of social care. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and activities in the boarding provision, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, and representatives of external agencies. They observed the school's work, scrutinised documentation and data provided by the school and examined 38 questionnaires returned from parents and carers, 115 questionnaires from staff and 8 questionnaires from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work, including the work within the residential provision. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with profound and/or multiple learning difficulties
- the effectiveness of the provision and outcomes in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of the provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the extent to which the school promotes community cohesion and equality of opportunity.

### Information about the school

Linden Lodge provides education for both day and residential pupils with a wide range of visual impairment and other very complex needs, including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection, the school has seen a marked increase in the numbers and proportion of children who have multiple disabilities alongside their severe visual impairment. Pupils are drawn from across the south-east of England but a high proportion is from Wandsworth and neighbouring authorities. The school provides weekly residential accommodation in family groups for about a third of the pupils. The local authority advisory service for the visually impaired is located within the school site and managed by the principal who is responsible for outreach services for pupils in other settings as well as for care and education within the school. The school attained specialist status for sensory and physical needs from September 2009. In 2009, the school was recognised as a National Support School.

## **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

### The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

## **Main findings**

Linden Lodge provides an outstanding quality of education by very successfully reducing the often significant barriers to learning for pupils. The skilled multi-professional staff ' 'very warm and special people' according to one typical parent's comment 'ensures that the vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress and frequently surpass their challenging targets for achievement. The school makes very good use of its new specialist status to provide very high quality local, regional and national support for staff who work with pupils with visual impairment and additional physical, sensory or learning difficulties. The arrangements for boarding are outstanding, and the key National Minimum Standards are exceeded in all areas.

Almost all teaching is planned in considerable detail so that it inspires pupils to be fully involved and make often remarkable progress. The curriculum is relevant, innovative and highly individualised with a huge range of enrichment activities. This enables the pupils to grow into mature young adults full of enthusiasm for learning, and to leave fully equipped with the skills and personal characteristics they will need in the future. The school has garnered, through assiduous fundraising, an abundant array of specialised and innovative resources in order to meet the individual needs of all pupils. From the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 4, pupils make outstanding progress in their learning, which is reflected in their success in the wide range of accredited programmes. Measured against their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. In the sixth form, learning and progress are good rather than outstanding, because occasionally work is not set at the right level for all the pupils in the class, and this holds back the progress of a few.

The principal and his highly dedicated senior team work tirelessly in order to give the pupils the best possible chances of success in life. The school is relentless in its quest to identify where things could be improved in every area of its work, in order to raise achievement further. Together with the governors, the senior team painstakingly analyses the school's strengths and weaknesses, and takes decisive and prompt action to bring about any required improvement. A good example of this is the development of a purpose-built centre that provides a state-of-the-art learning environment for pupils with multiple disabilities in addition to their visual impairment. The school has demonstrated constant success for a number of years in its pursuit of excellence. This track record of success demonstrates clearly the school's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and represents terrific value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the work set for each pupil in the sixth form is always at the right level by:
  - using lesson observations to check that work is always accurately matched to need
  - evaluating thoroughly teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work
  - providing staff with professional development where this is required in order to improve their practice.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

1

All pupils join the school with exceptionally low standards reflecting their special educational needs and, for many, their multiple disabilities. All pupils make at least good progress with their learning in lessons, and they achieve outstandingly well over time. Learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding across all areas of learning. Staff ensure that pupils from Reception to Year 11 are thoroughly challenged in their learning and exceptionally well supported in overcoming the problems associated with their sensory and other difficulties. In the sixth form, learning and progress are good, but achievement is held back slightly because work is occasionally set at too low or high a level. In the main school, achievement in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is outstanding. Pupils successfully achieve nationally recognised accreditation, such as Entry Level, GCSE and Transition Challenge programmes, in a wide range of subjects. There is exceptionally strong achievement in the arts especially in music and drama where the specialist teachers pull out all the stops to promote excitement and enthusiasm for the subject.

The school's careful analysis shows that there is no discernible difference in the achievement of different groups, such as gender groups or types of disability. By the time they leave school, pupils are very well equipped for their next steps in learning and life. Through prize-winning enterprise projects, interesting work experience placements and life skills programmes pupils in the sixth form successfully acquire the important communication, vocational and life skills that they need to take their place as confident young people in the adult world. Pupils show how much they enjoy coming to school through their terrific attitudes to learning in class and their excellent behaviour. One typical comment from a parent was, 'This is a place my child thrives in and adores.' Attendance is around the national average, but pupils attend school whenever they can and almost all absence is for medical reasons such as illness and hospital appointments. A small number of pupils have regressive life-limiting conditions but still attend as much as possible.

Pupils are very much involved in the school's decision-making and they make an outstanding contribution to both the school and the wider community. The very assertive members of the school council give the staff a regular update on what the pupils think about new initiatives and make very sensible suggestions for improvements. They report regularly on health and safety issues such as the need for improving

pathways that become slippery in the rain. Pupils understand very well about the importance of a healthy diet and the need to take regular exercise. The pupils told the inspectors how safe they feel, how there is no bullying and that they know who to turn to if they have any difficulties or problems. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The pupils are extremely kind to one another, respectful to staff, have an acute sense of right and wrong and are sensitive to each other's difficulties.

#### These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning			
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*		
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1		
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1		
The extent to which pupils feel safe			
Pupils' behaviour			
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles			
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community			
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being			
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3		
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			

## How effective is the provision?

The key to the exceptionally strong teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the main school is that classroom staff know the individual pupils very well. All teaching and learning is adapted and modified to accommodate the pupils' visual impairment and other learning needs. Through their very thorough assessment and planning, teachers

The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

<sup>\*</sup> In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

make very good use of this information to meet the pupils' often extensive needs. In this way, their learning and personal development are accelerated. All staff have very good knowledge of their subjects and of how to include exciting sensory activities that will stimulate interest and raise achievement. All classroom staff work well together as a team to support pupils' learning and provide excellent role models in cooperation and sensitivity.

Teaching in music and drama is consistently first-rate and inspires pupils to high achievement in these subjects. The curriculum is flexible and meets the pupils' needs exceptionally well because it is custom-built for every pupil. The school is already making good use of its new specialist status to develop even more extensive facilities for all groups in the school, so that there can be an even more streamlined curriculum to include effective sensory integration and visual stimulation programmes. Sensory and therapeutic experiences are cleverly woven in to the timetable, and essential interventions for personal and physical care are carried out very sensitively so that any negative impact on pupils' learning is minimised.

There is a very extensive physical education programme, including fitness training, rock climbing and swimming. These are much talked about by the pupils. The curriculum ensures that pupils have the opportunity to develop their creative skills to the full. For example, in music the school offers the pupils high quality individual music teaching in drums, piano, guitar and violin. Pupils flock to join the choir and the drumming clubs. All around the residential areas, visitors can hear pupils practising on the keyboards or just playing for fun.

The school collaborates extremely well with a wide range of external agencies in order to make absolutely certain that every pupil's care needs are fully met. Each pupil has frequent, regular functional vision, mobility and multi-therapy assessment to ensure that intervention is always effective. The mobility team makes a very positive impact on pupils' independence, for example by teaching them routes from home to the local shops and in the use of a symbol cane as a warning to motorists and pedestrians. Induction procedures for new pupils and arrangements for pupils to move on to the next stage of their lives are outstanding. There is a very strong relationship with the local careers guidance services from an early stage to ensure that pupils and their families have a good array of options for the future. All staff at every level work extremely positively and innovatively with the pupils' families to develop and implement plans to support their children's learning and personal development.

#### These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:  The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. The principal and his staff team share an absolute commitment to maximising the learning and life chances for its pupils. The drive to bring about and to sustain improvements in the quality of provision and opportunities for the pupils is remorseless, and the school continues to deliver outstanding personal and academic outcomes for the pupils. The principal leads the way in expecting the most from himself, every member of staff and every pupil. Leadership is shared by all staff so that everyone, including pupils, know what is expected of them and how to achieve the best possible outcome.

The school has very effective systems and procedures to ensure pupils' safety, including comprehensive risk assessments. At the time of the inspection, child protection procedures met all government regulations. The school recognises the importance of pupils having access and involvement in the wider community. Accordingly, the school fosters exceedingly strong partnerships with local services, businesses and an extensive range of external support agencies. These relationships, as well as those with the pupils' families, support the pupils' learning and personal development exceptionally well. Parents and carers express a high degree of satisfaction with all the school does, frequently expressing immense gratitude for the care and affection provided to their children. One typical comment was, 'Staff are always happy to have us in the school, for quick catch-ups, observe lessons and discuss strategies for our child.'

There is extensive planning for the provision for community cohesion. The school has completed a thorough audit and implemented most points in its action plan to remedy any identified gaps in the provision. Teachers are expected to note on every lesson plan how they will promote community cohesion within the lesson. There are some excellent outcomes at school, local, national and global levels such as the school's hosting of streams of visitors from Europe and beyond to observe the school's excellent practice. Governance is outstanding. The governors have their fingers firmly on the pulse of the school. They insist on the very best information by which they can monitor the school's performance and provide a timely and robust challenge and support to the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account:  The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1	

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress from their starting points because the highly skilled multi-professional team meets their individual needs exceptionally well. From day one, staff carry out regular in-depth holistic assessments based on frequent well-focused observations. Assessment fully involves the children's family, with whom staff quickly form trusting, strong relationships. Staff very effectively use this wealth of continuously updated information in planning tailor-made activities that will arouse and motivate the children. Teaching, marked by the constant consideration given to managing the children's behavioural, personal and medical needs, is often inspirational. Children love the stimulating multi-sensory activities provided, showing evident delight and great affection for the adults who work with them. The school has developed very secure, well-adapted and stimulating indoor and outdoor environments. The staff provide the children with a superb curriculum, full of rich and creative approaches that meet the very diverse needs of all children exceptionally well. Leadership is vibrant and characterised by a strong sense of purpose to do the very best for the children and to get them off to a flying start. The provision is exceptionally well managed as can be seen in the robust safeguarding procedures, high quality documentation and excellent organisation. Self-evaluation is spot-on, rapidly driving improvement forward.

#### These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	4
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

#### Sixth form

In the sixth form, teaching is of generally good quality and encourages the pupils to build successfully on what they have learned before. Leadership and management are good and staff work hard to update their skills and knowledge in order to get the best

out of pupils with an increasingly wide range of needs. One or two teachers are not yet as skilful as they could be in setting work at the right level for all of the pupils and this slows their learning to a certain degree. Classroom assistants are deployed well and contribute fully to the pupils' good progress and outstanding personal development. Pupils are well motivated by a very well planned curriculum containing a rich variety of activities both within the school and off-site. The curriculum is successful in helping pupils to develop their basic skills, such as communication and literacy, alongside vocational and life skills. The same outstanding care, guidance and support are as evident in the sixth form as in the main school. This enables pupils to leave the school as well prepared as they can be for their future. The school is highly successful in helping its pupils to transfer smoothly on to appropriate placements, and to adjust quickly to their new situations.

#### These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form			
Taking into account:  Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2		
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2		
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2		

## **Boarding provision**

The quality of boarding at Linden Lodge School is outstanding and exceeds the key national minimum standards in all areas. The school's management structure and the strong sense of community within the school ensure the promotion and protection of children's welfare. The clearly written policies and procedures in place underpin the school's practice. Children and parents receive excellent information about the school. Staff recruitment procedures have been revised and personnel files include all required information. This is an area of improvement. There are no outstanding recommendations from the previous inspection.

Children's health needs are clearly identified and addressed with individual health plans in place for each child. The school uses a range of local health services including an optician, dentist and a doctor. There is access to specific services if these are required. There is a strong specialist health team on site, led by a full-time nurse manager who is supported by a qualified nurse, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. The nursing team are able to train and support residential staff to acquire the skills needed to meet the health and intimate care needs of the children. All members of the staff team receive regular first-aid training. The school nurse is responsible for ensuring medication records are correct each day. There are clear procedures in place for the administration, recording, storage and disposal of medication. Quiet medical rooms are available in the school and residential buildings if children are unwell. A range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks are available

throughout the day. Children who have specific needs in relation to their eating and drinking are well supported and are managed sensitively.

Onlidren confirmed that they feel safe at the school. The high staff ratios ensure that any bullying would be identified quickly with immediate action taken. Members of staff receive training in behaviour management and children are encouraged to develop appropriate behaviour. Staff receive regular effective child protection training and are aware of the relevant reporting procedures. Complaints from children and parents are listened to and are acted upon. However, complaints records do not always show that action has been taken and outcomes are not always recorded. The school provides physical safety and security. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for the premises, the grounds, children's behaviours, activities and outings. There is a recruitment policy in place and no one is employed at the school until all relevant checks have been carried out.

Staff actively support the educational progress of children, with many of them also working within the school setting. There is excellent communication between residential staff, school staff, health staff and parents. This ensures that the needs of children are supported and promoted in all areas throughout the 24-hour curriculum. Children confirmed they are treated fairly and they are listened to. They said they are able to approach staff with concerns and personal problems. They are also encouraged to contact their parents if they wish to do so. Formal consultation takes place in the school and surveys are undertaken on a range of issues to gain the views of children. Recently children have been able to advise staff and influence the layout of the residential setting to better meet their needs. All children are able to attend the school council. There are also elected children's representatives who are available to relay the views of those who require assistance. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and there is a balance of male and female staff who reflect the ethnic backgrounds of the children.

Staff are committed to providing high levels of privacy and confidentiality for the children. The residential accommodation is excellent with opportunities for children to have their own rooms or to share with one other person. The accommodation is accessible for those with a physical disability and is fully equipped to meet the needs of the children. The site and facilities are secure and there is a policy in place regarding visitors to the school. Regular training and support are available for staff. Staffing levels are appropriate and enable the needs of children to be fully met. However, the staff rota does not say exactly who is on site day and night. Newly appointed members of staff are well supported and undertake an induction programme that includes guidance on child protection and behaviour management.

A range of after-school activities is available daily on site and in the local community. These include youth clubs, guides and scout groups and the use of the school sports and swimming facilities. Overnight activity trips and outings are also available. There is an excellent system in place for monitoring the welfare of children using the residential facilities. This includes internal monitoring by the head of care and the principal. The school's independent visitor attends monthly to talk to children and staff and look at the facilities. A monthly report regarding the effectiveness of the residential provision is

provided for the principal and the school governors.

#### National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- NMS 4.3 Ensure that there is a written record of complaints that are made to the school. The record will include details of the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome.
- NMS 28.2 Ensure that there is a clear record that indicates the staff that are on duty at all times day and night.

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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### Views of parents and carers

Returns of the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that almost all parents are pleased with what the school achieves for their children. Their views are exemplified by the comment, 'We are so delighted that our child attends this school. I wish all my children could attend a school like Linden College.' However, a very small number of parents expressed a concern about a lack of information available to them. During the inspection, the inspection team found that the school places a high priority on its partnership with families and ceaselessly strives to improve this aspect of its work. There was very strong evidence that communication with parents is outstandingly effective. One comment, typical of many, was, 'I am aware via the school diary what my son's done every day 'even every lesson.'

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Linden Lodge School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Stro Agı		Agı	ree	Disa	gree		ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	87	4	11	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	63	13	34	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	81	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	66	11	29	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	61	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	53	12	32	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	87	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	71	9	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	74	7	18	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	87	5	13	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## **Glossary**

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description	
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An oustanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.	
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.	
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.	
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.	

# Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## **Common terminology used by inspectors**

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	<ul> <li>The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>The quality of teaching.</li> <li>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



15 November 2009

**Dear Pupils** 

Inspection of Linden Lodge School, London SW19 6JB

You may remember that a team of inspectors came to your school recently to see how well you are doing. Thank you to all of you for your assistance while we were there, and a special thanks to the school council who came to meet me and tell me all about your school.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Your school gives you a wonderfully good education, and you are right to be proud to go there.
- You make excellent progress both in your studies and in the way you behave and are growing up.
- You feel safe and happy because of the fantastic support you receive in both the school and in your residential accommodation.
- Your teachers do a really good job of teaching you so that you enjoy lessons and learn quickly.
- You have a terrific range of interesting things to do both in school and after school.
- The staff really care for you and you get along with them really well.
- Those who lead the school do a tremendous job and work very hard to give you the very best education they can.

We have asked the school to do one thing in order to make things even better.

Make sure that teachers always set work at the right level for every one of you, especially in the sixth form.

Perhaps you could help by talking politely to teachers if you think the work is too easy or too difficult for you.

It was a great pleasure to spend time with you.

Every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee

Lead inspector

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