

Linden Lodge School

61 Princes Way, London SW19 6JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is part of Southfields Academy Trust. The school provides boarding and education for disabled children and young people, including those who are severely sight-impaired, multi-disabled visually and hearing impaired, and those with profound physical and multiple learning difficulties, including sensory and communication difficulties. A significant number of pupils have complex medical problems, including some with life-limiting conditions. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school has 24 full-time boarding places. Residential pupils are either weekly boarders or part time for one, two or three nights per week. The school promotes a 'waking day curriculum' across a 24-hour period. The residential accommodation is provided at Richley House, which is situated in the school grounds. There are two boarding units on separate floors. In addition, there is a separate provision on the third floor of the building for young people who are preparing to transition to adulthood.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 141 pupils on roll, and 34 of them were boarders. The youngest boarder was seven years old.

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 January 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers outstanding

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 7 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Good management of risks is integral to staff practices.
- Children and young people enjoy their experience of boarding. They have fun and form friendships with their peers. They also develop positive relationships with staff members.
- Children and young people receive integrated care and support of a high quality.
- The therapeutic provision makes a strong contribution to the emotional welfare of children and young people.
- Children and young people make excellent progress in their learning.
- Children and young people achieve better social integration. They take part in a wide range of activities at the school and in the local community.
- Children and young people receive good support to develop their life skills and independence.
- The physical environment and specialist facilities are excellent.
- The boarding is well resourced and efficiently managed.
- Leaders and managers have established excellent partnerships with families.
- Leaders and managers have created a culture of high expectations and continued learning and improvement.
- Leaders and managers support innovation and creativity. The school has strong links with the research community.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To review the arrangements for protecting the privacy of children and young people when they have only one staff member helping them with personal care.
- To ensure that individual epilepsy plans are updated in a more timely manner and to include new health information.
- To review the arrangements for keeping records of visitors to the school so that it is clear who is in the building and the purpose of their visit.
- To provide more detail in the records of physical interventions so that they describe more clearly what has happened.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people enjoy their experience of boarding. They have fun and form friendships with their peers. One young person said: 'I am happy here. I love seeing my friends.'

Outcomes for children and young people are positive and, in some instances, exceptional. Some elements of boarding practices are excellent. However, this level of quality is not embedded across all aspects of care. In particular, this relates to the protection of privacy and healthcare plans.

Children and young people receive highly individualised care from skilled and caring staff. They develop positive relationships with staff and experience emotional warmth. One young person commented, 'Staff care for me really well, I really like the staff'. One parent described how their son's face would light up every time somebody mentioned the boarding house or the name of a particular staff member.

Most of the children and young people require significant levels of support with their personal care. This is usually done sensitively and respectfully, in line with the school's practice whereby two staff members provide personal support to a child or young person in private. However, during the course of this inspection a staff member was observed supporting a young person with a bath with the bathroom door open. This practice does not protect the right to privacy that every child or young person should have, regardless of their abilities. This practice goes against the school's ethos and is currently being investigated by the school.

Children and young people have their needs met, and this includes those with the most complex, profound and wide-ranging needs. A multidisciplinary team of professionals works well together to ensure that all children and young people are given equal opportunities to realise their potential.

The therapeutic provision in the school promotes the emotional well-being of children and young people exceptionally well. Therapists creatively support children and young people through music, dance, massage and yoga therapies or by simply providing them with a protected space to express themselves. In one example, this work gave a young person the opportunity to develop coping strategies and to explore his fears about leaving the school.

Children and young people have detailed individual healthcare plans. These plans are informed by healthcare professionals and regularly reviewed by staff and the school nurse. However, practice in this area is not always consistent. In one example, a young person's high-priority epilepsy care plan was not updated in response to new information. Staff knowledge of how to respond in the event of an emergency reduced the risk to this young person's welfare.

Staff work together seamlessly across the academic and boarding aspects of the school to provide continued learning opportunities and to support the growing independence of children and young people. The boarding targets for individual children and young people directly relate to their school targets and are devised jointly by school and boarding staff. The effectiveness of this approach is evidenced by the excellent progress that children and young people make in their learning. In the autumn term of 2018, 100% of boarders made expected or above expected progress in their communication skills and English language. Parents also reported that their children made excellent progress in their ability to express themselves and respond to what was communicated to them. This demonstrates that children and young people are able to transfer their learning from the school to other environments. Boarders outperformed non-boarders across all attainment measures, with 97% of boarders reaching expected progress levels or above. This highlights the positive impact of boarding.

Children and young people receive good support to develop their social skills and achieve better social integration. They undertake activities such as helping with charity events and accessing community resources. Some of them are members of a local Scout group.

Children and young people take part in a wide range of activities and themed events, such as arts and crafts, games, music, indoor play, swimming and trips out in the local community. Staff take great care to design activities to be as inclusive as possible. They creatively use social stories to secure participation from all of the children and young people and to help them to discover and develop their talents.

The families are very satisfied with the boarding provision, and some parents have provided moving testimonies of how the school has changed their children's lives. Parents talked about their children having made 'amazing progress' at the school. One person talked emotionally about her granddaughter taking her first steps without support, which she had been able to do in the boarding provision, at the age of seven. Several parents talked about their children helping with chores at home and contributing to their family lives in ways that their families and professionals had not considered likely before they became boarders. Parents of recent boarders praised the way that staff supported their children's transitions into boarding. They felt that staff were very welcoming and quick to form connections with and gain the trust of children and their families.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The boarding house provides a safe, calm and positive environment for children and young people. Staff have good safeguarding awareness and are skilled in identifying areas of vulnerability for each child or young person. Staff ensure that effective safeguarding measures are put in place to reduce any identified risks to the children and young people.

Because of the levels of sensory impairment that children and young people have,

staff often use touch to reassure, guide and communicate with them. Staff respond to challenging behaviour with a high degree of skill, care and patience. They implement individual positive behavioural plans and use positive interventions effectively to help children and young people in distress. Behaviour management practices are effective.

There has been only one recorded physical intervention since the last inspection. The record of the incident demonstrates that the staff members used the physical intervention appropriately to ensure the child's safety. However, this record does not have enough detail to give a coherent picture of what happened. It was not clear what the risks were for the staff members involved, although the form indicated that they were at risk.

The school has a strong multidisciplinary safeguarding leadership team that includes the residential head of care and his deputy. All members of this team undertake regular training. This ensures that they have the knowledge to be effective in their roles as designated safeguarding officers. The team meets on a weekly basis to consider any safeguarding implications of information raised with them by the children and young people, staff, other professionals and families. They take appropriate action to promote the welfare and safety of pupils and boarders.

The school has a clear procedure for reporting child protection concerns, and staff are familiar with this procedure. All staff spoken to said that they felt confident that all concerns would be dealt with appropriately and with the required level of care and sensitivity.

The school is committed to transparency and learning from experts. The leaders have developed close links with the local authority's designated safeguarding lead and the local authority's advisor for safeguarding in education. Safeguarding discussions occur regularly. The school also commissioned an external safeguarding audit, which resulted in an exceptionally positive report.

The school has a good relationship with the local police. Children and young people enjoy when police officers visit. There have been no incidents of children and young people going missing from the school or any other incidents that require police involvement. Appropriate procedures for reporting concerns to the police are in place, and staff are familiar with them.

The physical environment is designed and maintained in a way that minimises any additional risks for young people with different sensory impairments. There is an experienced health and safety team, which includes a sight-impaired staff member who used to be a pupil at this school. The team provides excellent oversight and ensures that the school site is safe and accessible to all children and young people, irrespective of their needs and impairments.

The school has appropriate security arrangements. However, the recently introduced electronic system for keeping records of visitors and the reasons for their visit has

not been consistently implemented. This means that at times the records are confusing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers fulfil their roles with integrity, expertise and passion to provide the best care for children and young people. They see the boarding provision as a vital part of the school and are highly committed to developing it further.

Leaders and managers have created a culture in which children and young people are encouraged to have high aspirations. Meticulously developed systems and structures, including rigorous internal and external quality assurance processes, support this culture. The school commissions independent audits to help leaders to monitor and improve the quality of care. The school's governing body receives monitoring reports on a regular basis. The governors and trustees provide support and challenge to the school in its efforts to pursue excellence in all areas.

Leaders and managers are highly visible. They lead by example and inspire others. The headteacher often spends a significant amount of time in the boarding house, including at night.

The boarding provision is exceptionally well resourced in terms of staffing levels, management capacity and the facilities that are available. Boarders benefit from being able to use the school's excellent specialist facilities outside the day-school hours. These include fully accessible disability sports facilities such as rebound, sunken trampolines, adapted bikes, swimming and hydro pool. They also have a fully adapted multisensory gym and exceptionally well-equipped sensory rooms, sensory gardens and a library.

The school is continually expanding its resources to meet the needs of its boarders. An independent-living flat on the top floor of Richley House was purpose built last summer to enhance the opportunities for boarders to improve their life skills and maximise their independence.

The school has a family centre and excellent partnerships with families. Staff have developed a unique course for parents to support both their communication with professionals and their confidence in participation in team around the child meetings. This work has been highly successful. Families who attended the course reported increased confidence and a reduction in their conflict with professionals. Staff also organise training for families on other topics. One family member highlighted how much she appreciated learning about sleep and how the course helped the whole family to establish better sleeping patterns.

Leaders and managers support innovation and creativity. They collaborate with artists to create sensory-led arts performances that blend live art, sound composition and movement/dance improvisation with high involvement of children and young people. Yoga instructors do specialist work with children and young people and

provide training for parents. Providing excellent opportunities for aquatic learning is another example of using innovative and creative ways to support positive outcomes for children and young people.

The leaders and managers of the boarding provision have the confidence, courage, adaptability and maturity to engage in pioneering work. They provide safe boarding to children with highly complex and rare conditions. One child, who is one of the only three known children in the world with a particular condition, has settled exceptionally well into boarding and is making excellent progress.

The school has recently opened a state-of-the-art assessment centre with the latest technology for visually impaired children and young people with additional needs. Specialist staff in the school, including one with a sight impairment, have worked together on this unique facility to spearhead the development of more reliable techniques to assess vision. These techniques do not rely on verbal responses and are play-based. This increases the opportunities for boarders to have their vision assessed more precisely.

The school has strong links with the research community. It is currently involved in research projects with three universities, helping to expand specialist knowledge. In collaboration with large commercial organisations, this work is helping to develop accessible tools and resources for the visually impaired that will benefit everyone.

The school is an active partner on the international scene for the visually impaired. It has hosted teachers and specialists from provisions across the globe, exchanging ideas and spreading knowledge about effective practices. The school's unique partnership with the local hospital regarding auditory implants has gained international recognition.

All staff talked about how the leaders' expert knowledge and steadfast commitment to children have inspired them to continue their own professional journeys. Staff have excellent opportunities to develop their practice through discussions and reflections at monthly supervision meetings, team meetings and regular appraisals.

Leaders and managers support staff to gain professional qualifications. Staff also have access to a comprehensive training programme. Clinical staff deliver specialist training that is specifically devised around the needs of individual children and young people.

Staff are highly motivated to provide the best care for children and young people. The team spirit is high. The school has a well-being programme for staff to help them to stay resilient.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC010255

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Inspectors

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