

Linden Bridge School

Linden Bridge School, Grafton Road, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7JW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is an academy school, providing for children who have autism spectrum disorder and associated complex communication and interaction needs. At the time of this inspection, 127 children between four and 19 years of age attend as day students. The residential accommodation is provided on the first floor of the main school building. It has capacity for 16 children. At the time of this inspection, 35 children aged 12 to 18 years old were using the residential provision over one or two nights during the school week.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 February 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 6 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Safer recruitment practices are not consistently followed as set out in the school's policy. This has led to two staff being employed without sufficient references.
- Fire safety is compromised through some doors being wedged open. In addition, records are not available to confirm that routine testing occurs of fire prevention systems.
- Inspectors have concerns that some areas of health and safety are not adhered to. The safety of children, and staff, is at risk when children enter the main school kitchen to use a sink to wash their hands at mealtimes. To support this practice, the fire door to the school kitchen is wedged open.
- There are gaps in the maintenance of some health and safety records. There is no evidence that the emergency lighting has been tested in the residential accommodation within the last year. Portable appliance testing is overdue, with the last tests completed in August 2017.
- Leaders do not monitor all the required records effectively.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Children enjoy their residential experience and make significant progress in their personal and social development.
- Systems and processes for the management of safeguarding concerns directly affecting children are sound. Leaders monitor the well-being of children and appropriately report any concerns to external safeguarding agencies.
- Working in partnership with families is strong, to achieve progress for children in the home and school environment.
- Residential staff are knowledgeable and nurturing in their approach. The members of the residential staff team are suitably trained and supported in their roles.
- The residential provision is led and managed well by an experienced practitioner.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured. (National minimum standards 6.2)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (National Minimum Standards 7.1)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National minimum standards 13.4)
- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (National minimum standards 14.1)

Recommendations

- Improve the environment of the residential accommodation by completing the project of laying a new floor covering to the entrance hall and stairs.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Significant weaknesses are evident in how well children are helped and protected. While there are no widespread failures that currently result in children's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted, these weaknesses have the potential to impact on children's progress and experiences.

Children stay for one or two nights in the residential accommodation. Each week, children sleep in the same bedroom and are cared for by the same member of residential staff throughout their stay. This continuity of care is very beneficial for children, contributing to their feelings of being safe while staying away from home.

Through small-group living, children learn to help and respect others. Individually, children know what skills they are working towards. The staff create opportunities for children to practise and develop these skills during their residential stay; for example, using a knife and fork, dressing themselves, making a bed and shopping. Progress is recorded on a bespoke computer system clearly showing achievement over time.

Parents report very positively about the benefit of the residential provision. One parent said, 'Our son is very happy here and has come along well in all areas of his development. The staff go above and beyond their duty in terms of their care.' Numerous parents support this view with their contribution to the inspection and through their feedback in school questionnaires.

Children enjoy the many activities available. The residential provision provides opportunities to make friends and to play with others. The on-site swimming pool is a great resource, where qualified staff supervise the children enjoying water play. Off-site, children enjoy horse riding, visiting local parks and leisure facilities. Throughout the activities, the residential staff are encouraging children in their personal development and independence.

Children's wishes and feelings are considered by the dedicated and caring staff team. In addition, an independent person visits to seek children's views through an advocacy project. Children have raised a concern about cold showers. With the advocate, they recorded the water temperature and provided the reading to the manager to sort it out. This is a good level of engagement; children are now satisfied with the showers and feel listened to.

Children have chosen the colour of the new floor covering for the stairs and entrance hall. The new flooring will improve the entrance to the residential accommodation as currently the old flooring is beginning to curl up at the edges and could become a hazard.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The recruitment process is not sufficiently thorough. There is a lack of scrutiny in considering whether staff are suitable to work with children. Staff who are responsible for the recruitment of staff do not follow the school's safer recruitment policy. For example, not all staff have two satisfactory references and application forms are not always scrutinised to identify any gaps in employment histories. The lack of rigour applied to the recruitment process allows the potential for children to be at risk of unsuitable adults.

Improvement is needed to ensure that children, and staff, are in an environment that complies with fire safety requirements and matters relating to health and safety. A fire risk assessment of the residential accommodation was completed on 5 December 2018. This assessment identified 23 actions required; 11 of these actions are assessed as a high priority. Leaders and managers have responded by arranging for contractors to complete some of the high-priority work required. However, portable appliance testing remains overdue, with the last tests completed in August 2017. Similarly, the emergency lighting is yet to be repaired and maintained. There is an absence of records to show that emergency lighting in the residential accommodation has been tested since the last inspection a year ago.

A new fire detection system has been installed in the residential accommodation and testing has occurred during the installation process. However, there are no records to confirm the routine testing of fire call points in the residential area since October 2018. Indeed, the records prior to October 2018 are mislaid. Areas where children and staff sleep should be given priority compared to other areas of the school site. Children and staff do practise an evacuation of the residential building each term and children confirm they know what to do when the alarm sounds.

Fire safety is compromised with some doors being wedged open, for example the door to the main school kitchen from the dining room. Children enter through this door to use a sink in the main kitchen to wash their hands at teatime. Inspectors have concerns that some areas of health and safety are not adhered to.

Leaders and managers ensure that all staff are trained appropriately to manage safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding records are comprehensive and include a chronology of any concerns. A new software program to report and record safeguarding concerns has successfully been implemented since the last inspection. Staff report positively about its use. Such records confirm that suitable reporting occurs to other agencies and that concerns for children are escalated swiftly, and appropriately.

Information and advice are provided to children on how to keep themselves safe in relationships, in the community and in their use of social media and technology. Group work is arranged to respond to emerging issues among children. There are no reports of children going missing or the police being called to manage behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The level of monitoring completed by leaders and managers lacks depth. Not all the findings from this inspection were fully known by leaders and managers. However, lack of compliance with some health and safety matters, and fire safety, were known about and leaders and managers have failed to take swift action. For example, the fire risk assessment completed on 05 December 2018 highlights some matters that required attention in August and November 2018. Routine testing of portable appliances and an electrical inspection were overdue at the time of this inspection.

External monitoring by an independent visitor provides informative reports to assist with the development of the residential provision. The most recent reports make recommendations to address some health and safety issues with the maintenance of the residential accommodation. The independent visitor consults with children and their parents about their experiences. This feedback assists leaders and managers to make improvements.

Residential staff are very enthusiastic about their work. They report that they are supported well through supervision and training. Weekly team meetings focus on the children's needs and how staff can help them progress. This contributes to the good consistency of care that children receive.

Since the last inspection, an experienced member of staff has been appointed to manage the residential provision. The staff team reports that this manager is very approachable and supportive. A restructure has led to a senior leader within the school having oversight of the residential provision and being present for some time during the evenings. This collaboration promotes a joined-up approach and strengthens the partnership working between teaching and care staff.

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 differences 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: SC013884

Headteacher: Ms Rachel Watt

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 020 8330 3009

Email address: info@linden-bridge.surrey.sch.uk

Inspector

Clare Davies, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019