

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 part of a multi-academy trust, for children with autism spectrum disorder and associated complex communication needs. 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, a total of 36 children were using the residential provision. Each child stays for two nights during the school week.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 June 2022

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 good

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

Date of previous inspection: 11 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and settled during their residential stays. Developing children's independent skills is at the forefront of staff practice. This has led to some children accessing university, performing roles in local politics and, for others, being able to live independently.

Parents are keen to stress that without residential their children may not have friendships or be able to accept other people. Through fun activities, community trips and daily talk time after school, children learn valuable social skills which enrich their enjoyment of the world around them.

Staff know the children and have a deep understanding of their needs. Staff treat each child as an individual and understand their different starting points.

Relationships between staff and children are very positive. Children are clear on their plans for the day and are keen to participate in all the extra curriculum activities on offer.

Parents and professionals are overwhelmingly positive about the communication they receive from staff. One parent told the inspector, 'Boarding is the only time when the family relax and settle, as we know our child is safe and cared for.'

Staff support children through the student council in order to ensure that their wishes and feelings are at the forefront of decisions made about the residential provision. This gives children a sense of belonging and acceptance.

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

Children are happy and want to attend their residential stays. Children feel cared for physically and emotionally. Children who often find it difficult to trust others give devoted staff their trust, and this is reciprocated. As a result, children are able to better manage their emotions.

Some children have complex medical conditions. Staff are aware of children's health plans and work closely with nurses and parents to ensure that children stay healthy.

Staff understand children's risks well. For example, on one rare occasion, a child was able to leave the school grounds without consent, but the quick thinking of the staff meant the child was found within minutes.

Although staff know the children extremely well, children's care plans can be confusing, with information captured in multiple documents. Behavioural plans do not give parents the full explanation of what strategies are being used to support their child. Parents are asked to sign and agree to plans without having a full knowledge

and understanding of the purpose of the measure. For example, a parent was not given a full explanation of how a 'safe space' was used in the care of their child.

Clear rules and boundaries are in place and children know these and respect them. Children follow routines carefully and staff are committed to ensure that these are not disrupted. This enables children to feel secure and cared about.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is now in place a committed and supportive team led by the trust. A supportive head of care has ensured that changes in the residential provision have been kept to the minimum despite several external pressures. Staff enjoy working in residential, they feel well trained and well supported. As a result, children have benefited from having the continuity of a highly skilled team of staff supporting them.

Leaders effectively manage risk, for example they have developed the site to keep children safe by improving fences, adding new door locks, and increasing the staff support for the children.

The independent visitor regularly visits the residential provision. Reports are clear and detailed and cover a wide range of areas. These reports are presented to senior leaders and the principal is held accountable in order to ensure that recommendations are acted on swiftly.

The residential provision has benefited from a large, local multi-academy trust working in partnership with the school. The maintenance of the school site and recruitment of staff has benefitted from an additional layer of scrutiny.

When concerns are raised regarding staff practice, leaders respond quickly and involve external agencies appropriately. Leaders take the advice of agencies and, when required, carry out investigations and take onboard any learning. This open culture ensures that children continue to receive a high standard of care.

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

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should ensure that records to be clearer on staff responses, staff are clear on their roles but have commented on several documents repeating information.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that behaviour plans, where they involve parents' input, need to ensure that parents have the full information before they agree to plans.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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/teacher in charge: Ms Vanessa Wallden

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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