

# 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 caters for children with autism and associated complex communication needs. It is part of a multi-academy trust. The residential accommodation is provided on the first floor of the main school building. It has capacity for 32 children. At the time of this inspection, a total of 12 children were using the residential provision. Each child stays for two nights during the school week.

This inspection was an aligned inspection with education. This report is for the residential service only.

### Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024

**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:** 14 June 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The warm and nurturing approach in the residential provision means children make significant progress in their independence, social and life skills. The focus of the residential provision is to prepare children for independence. This is evidenced during the evening routines. Children were seen vacuuming and taking the rubbish to external bins unsupervised, and they clearly relished the responsibility. Staff role model well, taking turns to clear away after dinner and carrying out household tasks. This approach to learning helps children to feel part of a group.

Children have appropriate choice and activities throughout the evening when key tasks are completed, such as colouring, puzzles and board games. Children who may struggle to make a choice are helped to choose what they would like to do. Social workers comment positively about the care and support children receive while in residential, and how well staff keep in contact with children's parents and carers.

New staff have blended seamlessly into the provision. They provide new skills and interests for children, and increase the opportunities for children to access activities away from the school. Parents comment positively about the provision, including seeing their children enjoy new experiences in a video of a trip away. Children grow in confidence as the staff support children to try new things.

All children attend the on-site school and residential and education staff work closely to improve outcomes for children. They share what children have done during the evening or through the school day. Jointly produced plans are highly detailed, meaning children have consistent care and know what is expected of them.

Children are taught about healthy lifestyles, and what this means for them individually. They are supported to try different ranges of food, which is prepared freshly on site. All children engage in physical activities and plans from therapy teams in the school are followed as part of the evening routines. Children's physical and emotional health needs are understood by staff, who have specific training where required to help children. Medication is stored appropriately and safely managed within the residential provision.

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

Children are happy and are comfortable with the staff in residential. Children approach them to play, ask questions or let them know if they are worried or upset. Staff have an excellent understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and do all they can to keep children safe. Staff know the internal process to follow should they be worried or concerned for a child, and how to escalate concerns outside of the organisation if needed.

The school's approach to safeguarding and child protection is effective. They liaise readily with partner agencies when concerns for children arise. Staff are present for child protection and other relevant meetings. Staff keep up to date with how the child is to be best supported in school. Joint working with the local authority designated officer is strong. Records of meetings and agreements are in the main highly detailed. However, telephone discussions and agreements are not consistently backed up with a written confirmation of the agreements and actions.

Staff know each child's individual communication style and recognise when children are becoming frustrated. Staff respond thoughtfully and seek to help the children express themselves, recognising that unwanted behaviour is also a form of communication. Clear plans mean that staff know how to respond when a child is in crisis. Staff respond with patience and care, meaning there is very little need for physical interventions. Children are helped to understand how to respond when they are feeling anxious, worried or upset and learn new coping skills.

Staff allow children to take age- or stage-appropriate risks. Plans are clear on each child's abilities and understanding. Children who can practise greater independence, such as shopping without direct supervision, have the contact details of staff and school should they become disorientated or forget where to meet staff.

Safer recruitment practice is followed effectively. New staff particularly enjoyed the inclusion of children in the interview process.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The residential provision is well managed by an experienced head of care with the support of the designated safeguarding lead. There have been some significant staffing difficulties. However, the provision has continued to provide a service to the children deemed to be the most in need. The recent appointment of staff means the residential provision can increase the number of children accessing the service.

Staff are highly positive about the leaders and managers in the residential provision. They say they are well supported and can approach leaders with any ideas or concerns they have. They have the training they need to meet individual children's needs, and regular supervision to support and develop their practice.

New staff feel well supported by the leaders and the existing team. Staff who have joined are settled and confident, appearing to have always worked in the residential provision.

The leaders and managers in residential, and across the school, have high aspirations for children, wanting them to gain as many independence skills in residential as possible. Children's progress is well monitored and assessed, meaning children are continually stretched to achieve all they can. Joint working with partner agencies means that children have consistency in the approach to their care and support.

Leaders and managers have a strong understanding of the quality of the service that is provided. They have clear self-assessment frameworks that are reflective and representative of the service that is being provided. They have welcomed the support and guidance of the independent visitor, and made changes and developed practice where appropriate. Children are clearly central to the practice in the residential provision. Leaders are keen to continually improve and adapt practice to ensure that children have the best experiences and outcomes possible.

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

### **Points for improvement**

- Leaders and Managers should ensure that records are consistently managed and uploaded onto the school's electronic system, including written agreements made verbally with other professionals.

### **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:** Claire Gungah

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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