

Inspection of Linden Bridge School

Grafton Road, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7JW

Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' personal development is a particular strength of the school. Pupils learn important skills which ensure that they are exceptionally well prepared for leading as independent a life as possible in the future. This may mean developing the confidence to work in the classroom, learning about independent personal care, or feeling able to join other pupils for lunch in the dining hall.

The oldest pupils are a credit to the school and illustrate the school's success in preparing them for the next step in their education, training or employment. During the inspection, they willingly accepted visitors without fuss, carrying on with what they were doing sensibly and maturely, and greeting them with an occasional smile or a 'high five'.

Staff develop strong relationships with their pupils, who feel valued and secure as a result. They told inspectors that they feel comfortable asking for help. One said: 'Yes, I feel safe, I always have.' Pupils behave well most of the time and staff are on hand to help if anyone becomes anxious or frustrated. They learn to recognise personal success and grow in self-esteem and confidence. During the inspection, one proudly announced: 'I've done good work this morning!'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school and academy trust have rightly prioritised improving the curriculum during the past few years. They had already begun this work at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, the school has gone from strength to strength. The school's carefully designed curriculum is now well established in most subjects, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have rightly identified that a bit more work is needed to ensure the curriculum is as fully developed in all subjects and in all age groups.

The revised curriculum gives teachers a clear steer about what they need to teach, and when. This has given them the confidence to decide how they will deliver the content so that it is tailored to individual pupils' needs. Teachers do this skilfully and the impact on pupils' learning has been significant. Pupils achieve increasingly well and are securely equipped for their next steps, both academically and personally.

Historic weaknesses in the curriculum mean that some of the older pupils have gaps in their knowledge which are hampering learning. The school is working hard to plug these gaps and there is a real sense of urgency about making sure that this happens as quickly as possible. Pupils relish the challenge this presents and are catching up fast.

Staff use a range of assessments to check pupils' starting points when they join the school. They value parents' and carers' views, which are used to help shape targets and support for each pupil. Strong teamwork between school, therapeutic and residential staff ensures a joined-up approach to support for individual pupils.

Improvements in special needs leadership and provision mean that more pupils are currently on track to meet their early health and care plan targets than in the past.

Learning to read is given a high priority. A new phonics programme has been introduced since the last inspection and is now securely established. Comprehensive training has ensured that staff are confident about teaching phonics. Teachers deliver the phonics programme well, adapting activities so that everyone can join in. Children are introduced to early reading skills as soon as they start school. They quickly learn the rhythms and routines of the phonics programme so that they know what to expect in lessons and how to join in. Improvements in the teaching of reading mean that pupils now make better progress in reading than at the time of the previous inspection.

The school provides an extensive and ambitious range of events and activities. For instance, all pupils experience a sporting event, and the oldest pupils are involved in organising events such as sports week and the school's football festival. The school's residential trip is a high point in the calendar and reflects leaders' aspirations for all pupils. Visits to local shops and cafés enable pupils to practise social skills while applying what they have learned in subjects such as mathematics to everyday situations.

The school's careers programme includes carefully planned opportunities for work experience for the older pupils, as well as visits to apprenticeship providers and colleges. Most pupils achieve nationally accredited qualifications in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school, ensuring that they are in a secure position for the future.

Pupils listen carefully to adults most of the time. Staff follow the school's behaviour policy and protocols consistently, so that any disruption to lessons is kept to a minimum. Pupils learn techniques that they can use when they are finding school hard. The school makes sure that every pupil can communicate their ideas and views. Attendance has steadily improved over the past three years.

Leaders and the trust have identified the right priorities to improve the school since the last inspection. They and their staff are rightly proud of progress in the school during the past three years. Trust personnel work constructively alongside school colleagues. Staff speak appreciatively of the valuable contribution this makes to their own professional development, as well as to pupils' learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not as well developed in some subjects as it is in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they could in these subjects. The school should continue with work to ensure a well-designed and securely established curriculum is in place in all subjects and phases.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	144233
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296441
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Wilson
Principal	Claire Gungah
Website	www.lindenbridge.org
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Linden Bridge is a special school for pupils with autism and complex social and communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school operates a residential facility with 32 places. Pupils typically attend this facility for two nights per week.
- The principal was appointed in January 2023. The vice-principal was appointed in January 2024.
- The school is a member of the Howard Partnership Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings during this inspection. These included discussions with the principal, executive principal, vice-principal and other leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times of the school day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical education. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Dyer

Ofsted Inspector

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