

# 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 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 the inspection, there were 141 pupils on roll, of which 18 were accessing the residential provision for up to two nights during the school week. The inspector met several boarders during the inspection.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at the school.

The residential manager has been in post since March 2019 and has a relevant qualification.

### **Inspection dates: 18 to 20 March 2025**

**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:** 30 January 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children greatly enjoy their residential time. They said that staying in residence has enabled them to make friends, have fun and build their independence skills. Staff know children well and have a thorough understanding of their individual needs.

Staff provide highly individualised support in accordance with a tailored plan for each child. Children make good and sometimes considerable progress in developing their independence, self-care and social skills. Staff confidently support children with approaches that are matched to children's developmental stages. Parents highlight the meaningful difference that this has made to children's home life.

Residential staff and school staff work extremely well together. Children who stay in residential have higher school attendance and are more likely to achieve the educational objectives set out in their plans. Children's reading, writing, phonics and mathematical attainment levels accelerate at a faster rate compared to children who do not board. Strong monitoring by school leaders and bespoke support provided by staff have enabled the children's progress in these areas.

Children experience well-organised introductions to their stays. Detailed assessments ensure clear and personalised goals are identified for each child. Thorough planning between the child, their family, school staff and residential staff mean that children are introduced at a pace that is right for them.

School leaders and managers obtain and consider children's views in relation to their time in residence well. The children contribute their ideas to development plans that provide continuous improvement in the provision. This has included school leaders purchasing new recreational equipment to reflect children's preferences.

Staff use alternative communication strategies skilfully for children who need additional support to express themselves. An independent person and advocate visit children regularly. This helps staff gain a better understanding of children's wider feelings and wishes.

Children participate in a wide range of activities that enrich their school day. These include swimming, trampolining and going to the cinema. Children recently enjoyed an exciting residential trip at a themed holiday resort. There is a good range of recreational arts and crafts resources that meet children's interests. Important occasions such as children's birthdays are celebrated. The varied range of opportunities greatly improve children's social confidence and well-being.

Some children have complex medical conditions. Staff are aware of children's health plans and work collaboratively with nurses and parents to ensure that children's health needs are met.

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

Children feel safe, secure and relaxed in residence. They enjoy positive relationships with one another. Parents have strong confidence that the staff support their children's safety and well-being at the school.

Staff understand children's additional learning needs and vulnerabilities. School leaders and managers ensure that good-quality and up-to-date risk assessments are in place. This provides effective guidance to staff and ensures that they are well informed to respond to risks.

School leaders have provided thorough training for staff in line with new statutory guidance. Designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained. School leaders ensure that regular safeguarding meetings take place to review and prioritise any emerging concerns in the wider school. When child protection concerns arise, school leaders promptly respond to these and liaise effectively with safeguarding professionals.

Children participate in frequent and informative group discussions with staff. Important subjects are explored including online safety, managing health and hygiene and understanding community risks. This improves children's knowledge of their personal safety.

Staff respond to any behavioural challenges and follow proactive strategies. Staff have a good awareness of potential triggers and are confident in de-escalation interventions. As a result, there are very few incidents of concern among children.

There has been one instance of physical restraint in residence since the last inspection. This was necessary and proportionate. The residential manager reviewed this incident to identify learning.

Safer recruitment processes for staff are followed in accordance with statutory guidance. School leaders are further strengthening processes to ensure additional verification is completed on the receipt of staff's employment references.

Staff have suitable procedures to record and escalate any safeguarding concerns. In most instances, any emerging concerns have been actioned promptly by the designated safeguarding leads. However, when one child shared concerns about another child, the support to resolve this issue is unclear. Although staff have taken actions in response, improvement is needed to ensure that these actions are documented.

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

A qualified, experienced and well-respected residential manager leads the staff team diligently. She has high expectations of staff to provide children with high-quality support and enjoyable experiences. The residential manager is supported extremely

well by dynamic school leaders. There is excellent leadership at this school which has enabled a positive culture of achievement for children.

School leaders and managers ensure that there is a strong emphasis on staff's well-being. Mental-health first aiders are available to staff and children. Staff receive high-quality supervision sessions, annual appraisals and attend well-planned team meetings. Staff feel exceptionally well supported by school leaders and have ample opportunities to reflect on and enhance their practice.

School leaders have overseen several recent improvements. These include additional bespoke training for staff to equip them with the skills they need to meet children's needs. School leaders have introduced a new life skills qualification for children in residence. This ensures that children's progress in their independence, social and employability skills can be accredited. School leaders have a clear action plan to support further development in residence

School leaders, managers and staff have tremendous relationships with parents and professionals. They all provided unanimously positive feedback about the quality of care, high levels of communication and the positive impact that residence has on children's lives.

School trustees have robust oversight of the residential provision. They visit residence regularly, spend time with children and consider children's views. An independent visitor provides rigorous external monitoring. Any recommendations made are swiftly responded to by school leaders.

Staff demonstrate a highly positive and effective working team ethic. Most staff are long standing and have worked in residence for several years. Staff continue to be energised and show great enthusiasm and pride in children's experiences and successes at the school.

There are no unmet national minimum standards

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

### **Points for improvement**

- School leaders should ensure that records relating to issues raised by children are complete and provide clarity of the exploration and actions undertaken by staff.
- School leaders should ensure following receipt of staff's employment references that verification is completed in relation to the information provided.

### **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:** Mrs Claire Gungah

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector

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