

Linden Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101093
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	285965
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	103
6th form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Munro
Headteacher	Mr R Legate
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001
School address	61 Princes Way Wimbledon Park London SW19 6JB
Telephone number	020 8788 0107
Fax number	020 8780 2712

Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Linden Lodge provides education for both day and residential pupils with a wide range of visual impairment and other very complex needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Pupils are drawn from across the south-east but a high proportion is from London. Just over half of the pupils are of White European heritage. Others are from a broad range of minority ethnic groups, particularly those of Asian backgrounds. Around a third is at the early stages of learning English. Residential facilities for close to 40% of pupils are provided in family groups. The local authority advisory service for the visually impaired is located within the school site and managed by the principal who is responsible for outreach services for pupils in other settings as well as for care and education within the school. Extensive building work has recently been completed to support new provision for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'The children rightly come first at Linden Lodge' said a parent. It is an exceptionally effective school that provides an outstanding quality of education and care for very vulnerable pupils. Parents are unanimous in their agreement that the school lives up to its motto of 'growing together' and that it is 'fantastic, with dedicated and enthusiastic staff'.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Linden Lodge ensures the best for its pupils through well-considered therapies, exceptional teaching and very carefully managed transitions to each new stage of education and training. Its greatest achievements for its pupils are their very rapid progress in mobility, communication and independent living. Excellent boarding provision contributes much to this success. The school recognises rightly that boarders make overall faster progress than day pupils and is seeking ways to include them in its out-of-hours programmes, despite overstretched resources.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their progress in communication skills and independent mobility is very well reflected in the excellently run school council, confidently chaired by a senior pupil. Pupils of all ages listen attentively to each other and applaud successes in cricket and young enterprise, for example. They assist younger pupils and firmly but respectfully hold staff to account on healthy living. New arrivals are welcomed generously and staff's attention drawn to difficulties faced by others. Most show a very good understanding of health and safety and access issues across the school site. They contribute well to the wider community, acting as 'consultants' to external agencies concerned with special needs. They are generous in raising money for charities at home and abroad.

Pupils make giant strides academically from their points of entry to the school. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and enables children to make enormous gains in their personal development. Standards overall are low but individual pupils reach close to average standards in some areas such as GCSE food technology or French. Others achieve well in entry level courses and go on to follow programmes leading to further accreditation and satisfying occupations.

Leadership and management, including that of the sixth form, are outstanding. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is very well supported by the exceptional teamwork of the senior managers. This collaborative working has enabled staff to manage effectively the changing and ever more complex needs of pupils. Governance is excellent. Not only do governors challenge and support the school, but many take a very active part in the wide range of events and excursions and visit lessons regularly. Fundraising by the school's Trust has allowed the school to make vast improvements to resources and the environment. The school has made fast progress since the last inspection because of its rigorous self-evaluation and its well-considered striving to do ever better for its pupils. It has demonstrated clearly that it has exceptionally strong capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Post-16 pupils make outstanding personal and academic progress because of their individually tailored programmes and the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. The transition from Year 11 to the sixth form and onwards to further education, training and independent living is very carefully managed. Pupils who are able follow a subject based curriculum that

enables them to take GCSE and entry level examinations. Whilst standards are low overall, pupils are particularly successful in food technology. They also build well on their strong speaking and listening skills to succeed in French. Others, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, make vast strides in independent living, learning to apply life skills in varied situations. All pupils make key contributions to their annual reviews and are keen to help organise themed events for younger pupils. They participate well in sport and other leisure activities and enjoy excursions into the surrounding communities. The rapidly developing sixth form is excellently led.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Boarding provision at Linden Lodge is excellent, a judgement agreed by the most recent inspection by the Commission for Social Care (CSCI). Accommodation is bright, airy, cheerful and very well maintained, in line with the requirements of CSCI. Almost all aspects are above the expected national minimum standard. There is very good teamwork between care staff and teachers so that boarders' needs are well understood in either setting. Pupils feel safe and happy, are well supervised and well supported in making decisions about their daily lives. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Pursue relentlessly the school's intent to extend out-of-hours learning to all day pupils

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Records show that pupils come to Linden Lodge with a very wide range of experiences. Some have had no schooling whatsoever. Learning difficulties and disabilities cover an exceptionally wide spectrum. Pupils' starting attainments are very low compared to what is typical for their age groups. Progress accelerates as they move through the school with the overwhelming majority making at least good and often outstanding progress. Those at the early stages of learning English from across the range of minority ethnic groups make fast progress in communicating with adults and with their peers. The school gives high priority to ensuring that each pupil is equipped with the necessary tools to access learning and to increase independence. As a result, all pupils make exceptionally fast progress in social, communication, mobility and orientation skills. They make rapid strides in speaking and listening because of the priority given to speech and language therapies and draw well on their orientation skills to achieve very successfully in aspects of shape and space in mathematics. The school's records, however, provide clear evidence that boarders make faster progress than day pupils because of the significant amount of planned learning that takes place beyond the school day.

Children in the Nursery and Reception class make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Many display delayed physical development which the school attempts to address through a wide range of fitness activities. Overall performance in the early learning goals is well below that expected for the age range because, initially, children's disabilities seriously hamper their confidence in exploring the world around them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is also excellent. Pupils are very loyal to each other, wait tolerantly for those with communication difficulties to express their thoughts and feelings, and guide those younger and less able than themselves to manage independently. Behaviour overall is outstanding both in lessons and around the school. Nursery children rapidly learn to share, consider others, and listen and respond to instructions. Despite a high level of medical appointments and sometimes lengthy journeys, pupils' attendance is regular.

Pupils of all ages enjoy school very much. They participate well in the wide range of activities offered to them both within and beyond the timetable. 'My son enjoys life very much and speaks very fondly of his teachers and friends. He looks forward to going to school,' noted a parent. Pupils report their real satisfaction in canoeing, horse riding and ice skating. They support strongly the new healthy menus and 'Fair Trade Tuck Shop.' Trust in staff underpins the pupils' sense of security. They know that they are safe in school and that any upsetting incidents will be dealt with immediately. Pupils are actively involved in the school council and know that their views are listened to. They are rightly proud of their influence in ensuring that water coolers are accessible to all and in acquiring the all weather playground. Older pupils act as sports leaders, perform in concerts and make representation to Members of Parliament on the 'Right to Read' campaign. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part enthusiastically in young enterprise schemes. Others experience the world of work through carefully selected placements. All complete independence training programmes, learn to manage money and often prepare their own lunches. This stands them in excellent stead for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Meticulous planning for learning coupled with carefully integrated classroom therapy enables pupils to make the best possible progress. In very successful lessons, such as drama, teachers enable pupils to use a wide range of stimulating materials and artefacts to explore their understanding of the world. In one such lesson, pupils communicated freely in recalling their involvement in a recent puppet performance. A pupil with no English on arrival to school chatted fluently about her work. Teachers' success in developing pupils' independent living skills were clearly displayed in food technology as pupils enjoyed their efforts at 'making scrambled eggs'. Teachers' very detailed knowledge of each pupil and the search for just the right resources enable pupils to move forward confidently to the next stage of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is very well matched and flexibly organised to meet the pupils' complex communication and mobility needs. Each pupil follows a carefully co-ordinated multi-disciplinary therapy programme to maximise independent mobility and safety. Music therapy and physical education rank high in the pupils' day. A high priority is also given to information and communication technology skills. All pupils have excellent opportunities to learn a range of communication modes, including Braille. The school has given much thought to the balance of mainstream subjects with personal, social, health and citizenship education so that able pupils have excellent opportunities to fulfil their academic aspirations. The school day is enriched by a range of on-and off-site opportunities and excursions from cricket and swimming to recorder groups and choir. Activities in the Nursery and Reception class are exceptionally well structured to build children's confidence and sense of security. Attractive and extensive play areas are well equipped and well supervised.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are exceptionally robust. The 'Safe Citizen' annual event involving the school's mobility team, community police and the fire service offers senior pupils first-hand experience of practical situations. Well-established procedures in both school and boarding units provide a very stable environment to underpin high quality pastoral and academic support.

Sensitive care, including on-site medical help, constant one-to-one adult support and well integrated learning plans add considerably to the pupils' progress. Links with external agencies support not only pupils but families and are 'second to none,' as one parent noted. Information on academic attainment as well as on life skills is carefully analysed so that the school is clearly aware of each pupil's progress. The school environment is beautifully maintained and planned very carefully to support maximum gains in independent mobility for all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is led by an inspirational principal for whom 'nothing is impossible'. He is very well supported by the recently re-structured, dedicated and innovative senior team. This exceptional leadership is reflected in the significant improvements in the school since the last inspection. Access for pupils with physical disabilities has improved markedly as have opportunities for pupils who lack speech to interact with their peers. Academic subjects are much better co-ordinated and assessment is used more consistently to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make very good progress.

Governance, under the guidance of a very able chair, is outstanding. Governors keep well abreast of developments in education and challenge the school to become even better. Liaison with

the on-site local authority visual impairment service is excellent as are links with other agencies. The school is very strongly supported by a small Trust. Working closely with the school's administrative manager, the Trust is exceptionally effective in raising additional funds to improve provision. The new hydrotherapy pool is an outstanding example.

Self-evaluation is very rigorous across all aspects of the school's work. Systematic monitoring and a clear analysis of strengths and areas for development in an increasingly complex educational environment have contributed very effectively to rapid improvement. Very committed aspect leaders for mobility and communication are a major strength of the school. Innovative and energetic subject leadership is reflected in pupils' progress. The Foundation Stage is very well led with excellent arrangements to support children's transition from the Nursery to the Reception class. Parents feel fully involved in the life of the school through regular contacts, formal reviews and participation in activities. 'We feel very much part of the school community' wrote a parent.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linden Lodge School, London, SW19 6JB

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to Linden Lodge. We really enjoyed sharing time with you and seeing how happy you are in school and as boarders. We know that both you and your parents appreciate greatly how well staff look after you both in school and in your bright, cheerful accommodation.

We agree with you that Linden Lodge is an excellent school. You are learning well because your teachers make sure that work is at the right level for you and because they use lots of interesting ways to communicate with you. You make exceptional progress in speaking and listening and in moving independently. Sport, sensory rooms, hydrotherapy and the excellent library all help you, especially boarders, to make rapid progress both in and after school. Some of you are doing very well in GCSE and other examinations.

You behave very well, are happy, and are encouraged to do as much as possible for yourselves. You eat healthily and are learning how to manage money sensibly. Above all, you look after each other well and are welcoming to new pupils.

Your exceptional principal and staff never stop trying to make Linden Lodge an ever better place to be. We have asked your school to try to find ways to enable the day pupils to share in the many activities that boarders enjoy after school.

We know you will continue to work with your teachers and care staff to do as well as you can. We hope you go ahead with your plans to welcome the new pupils soon to be coming to the Harris centre.

With every good wish

Sheila Nolan
Lead inspector