

Linden Bridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125475
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328339
Inspection date	3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	119
6th form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Charlotte Byrne
Headteacher	Mrs Ronwen Smith
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2005
School address	Grafton Road Worcester Park Epsom KT4 7JW
Telephone number	020 8330 3009
Fax number	020 8330 6811

Age group	4-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. A Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspection was carried out on 3 and 4 July 2008.

Description of the school

Linden Bridge is a day and residential school for pupils with autism. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. It has a boarding unit with 25 places that caters for pupils aged nine and upwards. The school mainly serves the Surrey Local Authority (LA), but there are a very small number of students from neighbouring authorities. Currently there are no looked after students nor any who speak English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Sportsmark and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Linden Bridge is an outstanding school. Strong and determined leadership and management has enabled the school to move forward at the rapid pace seen at the last inspection. The achievement of the majority of pupils is excellent and the achievements of the rest are at least good. Pupils' personal development is excellent based on the support and guidance that all staff, including those in the residential unit, give to this aspect of learning. The school is held in high esteem by pupils and their parents. As one parent commented, 'Linden Bridge provides an outstanding environment in all respects'.

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school should develop. She is ably supported by her senior leadership team and governors. They have established a caring and supportive ethos that contributes significantly to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. There are very strong systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision so that managers are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses and have drawn up a comprehensive improvement plan. There are excellent systems to monitor and develop teaching and learning. These are used extremely well to ensure that all staff receive regular training about how to manage the learning of pupils with autism. Across the school, teachers' planning has a clear focus on the needs of individuals, based on the challenging targets that are set for pupils' personal and academic development. Teachers and support staff make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve in all the subjects they study. The professionalism and commitment of the support staff play a significant part in helping all pupils to achieve of their best. The curriculum is excellent with a very wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, particularly through out-of-school activities and the emphasis on physical education. The school uses information communication technology (ICT) extremely well to enhance learning. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and the attendance of the majority of pupils is well above the expected level. Most pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.

A significant feature in the success of the school is the strong teamwork and sense of purpose, which the headteacher and senior team have established. This is the cornerstone for the excellent relationships that have been built up with external agencies such as the local authority psychological and social services as well as with other schools and colleges. Middle managers support their subjects well and through well-focussed training are gaining the confidence they need to take more responsibility for monitoring performance. The governing body is very strong. It supports the school well and acts very effectively as its critical friend. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their safety are robust. By sustaining the quality of education seen at the last inspection, the school has clearly demonstrated that it has excellent capacity to improve further and can look forward to the future with confidence.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The achievements of students in the post-16 Further Education Department (FED) are at least good. Many achieve very highly. This is because of excellent teaching and learning. The curriculum and accreditation arrangements are very well matched to the needs of students so that all are prepared well for life after school. A particularly strong feature of the provision is the way in which students help their younger peers. An outstanding example of this is the weekly coffee and snack bar run by the students for the other classes in school. They prepare the food and drinks in their cookery lessons and serve at the tables. This ensures that they

develop skills that will set them in good stead for the future. At the same time, it makes learning fun. The FED is very well managed with excellent support from the headteacher and senior leadership team.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The school ensures that all staff working in this area have the skills needed to develop the learning of children with autism. Consequently, achievement is outstanding based on excellent teaching. Children settle very quickly and develop the daily routines and independence that are the cornerstones for their future learning. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very effective. The coordinator has a very clear view about how the provision will be developed to fully meet the needs of the forthcoming new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 8

The last Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report, judged the residential provision to be outstanding. The minimum national standards were fully met and through a very focussed action plan the school has ensured that all the recommendations in the report have been put in place. From the age of nine, the vast majority of pupils enjoy the residential facilities that they access on a rolling programme for two evenings each week. Students in the FED undertake nine-week placements in the residential unit. This ensures that the older pupils and all students have excellent opportunities to experience and develop the independent living skills they will need when they leave. The links between the day and residential provisions are excellent and very effectively support pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the role of middle managers so that they take more responsibility for the school's performance in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

In all areas of the school, the majority of pupils make excellent progress and achieve highly given their very low attainment on entry. The school has rigorous and robust systems to track pupils' progress across the school. These are used extremely well to show the small but critical steps in their learning and ensure that activities are very carefully adapted to the needs of pupils. Very good examples of this were seen in a FED cookery lesson where recipes were very well matched to students' learning needs and in the cricket tournament where the rules had been adapted for players with autism. Like many special schools it is not easy for Linden Bridge to find other schools with which to compare itself and it is somewhat conservative in making such comparisons. Rigorous and challenging targets are set for all pupils relating to both their personal and academic development and these form the basis for continued improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

All staff respect each pupil's dignity and, consequently, ensure that the personal development of all is outstanding. All pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and the majority have excellent attendance rates. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary because of the consistent application of the behaviour policy by staff and the excellent role models they provide. Pupils are very aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and the take-up of sporting activities, such as cricket and football, for both boys and girls is very high. These good habits are endorsed fully in lessons. Many of the older pupils make a difference to their community by acting as mentors and advocates for their younger peers. In all their activities, pupils pay particular attention to acting safely. They feel safe and secure and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent. There are excellent opportunities, through college links and work placements, including some within the school itself for those pupils for whom it is appropriate, to develop work-based skills which prepare them extremely well for life after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Through a very focussed programme of training, all staff are able to gain the skills and confidence they need to address the diversity of pupils' needs. This is reflected in the thorough planning for every lesson that focuses on the needs of individuals. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are the bedrock for the very successful learning that results. Teaching is particularly well supported by the support assistants and this ensures that all pupils quickly develop the self esteem and confidence they need to succeed. This teamwork is much appreciated by pupils and is the reason why, in the words of one of the older pupils, 'Teaching is cool'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop the skills they will need in the future. A very wide range of accreditation is available and the school provision is supplemented very effectively by opportunities at the local college and through work experience and placements. Physical activities and the use of ICT play a significant role in the provision and play a significant role in helping pupils to value and appreciate their achievements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support the school gives to promoting pupils' personal and academic development is outstanding. Central to its success is the commitment and time that all staff devote to the personal mentoring system. A safe and secure environment enables all pupils to address successfully the challenges of school life. These aspects of the day provision are very effectively supported and promoted through the work of the residential unit. The school is a very harmonious community with little or no bullying and very few exclusions. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. A particular feature of this area of the school's work is how quickly all newcomers across the school settle into routines which are crucial to their future success. The excellent support that all staff give to helping pupils ensures that they always meet and very often exceed the targets set in their individual education plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership and vision of the headteacher is outstanding and has been central in ensuring that the school has maintained the very high standards seen at the last inspection. The energy and enthusiasm of the senior team ensures that the school continues to develop rapidly. Governance is excellent. Governors have been extremely supportive of the school. The effort that has been invested in developing the skills of staff has paid dividends in ensuring that all have the skills to work successfully with pupils with autism. The school is now helping other schools and colleges by providing training in how to work with pupils on the autistic spectrum. The school has identified the need to develop the role of the middle managers further to enable them to take a more active role in monitoring the effectiveness of its overall provision. Since the last inspection, the senior team has put a great deal of effort into developing its assessment and tracking systems. This has enabled it to set more realistic and challenging targets that ensure all pupils achieve of their best. This very strong track record of improvement shows that the school has excellent capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

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	

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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	1	

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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

15 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linden Bridge School, Epsom, KT4 7JW

Thank for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school on 3 July 2008. We particularly enjoyed the opportunity to watch the cricket tournament, visit the cafe and tuck shop as well as our discussions with the school council. You all told us that Linden Bridge is an excellent school and that you really enjoyed coming each day because learning was such fun. You also said that staff were always available to help you and that you especially enjoyed PE and ICT lessons. Most of you stay in the residential unit on a regular basis and the FED students were particularly pleased with the way in which their placements in the unit helped them to prepare for life after school. We agree with you on all these points and judge Linden Bridge to be an outstanding school.

The senior management team is helping those teachers who have responsibility for subjects to look more closely at how well you achieve across the school. This is to ensure that the school is doing as well as it can in every aspect. We want them to continue with this and you can help by doing your very best in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Charlton

Lead Inspector