

Linden Lodge School

Linden Lodge School, 61 Princes Way, London, SW19 6JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is based in Wandsworth and is part of Southfields Academy Trust. The school provides education and residential provision for disabled children, including those who are severely sight-impaired, multi-disabled visually and hearing-impaired, and those with profound physical and multiple learning difficulties, including sensory and communication difficulties. All students have an education, health and care plan.

The school has 24 full-time residential places. Children can stay for up to four nights a week. The residential accommodation is provided in a separate house, which is situated in the school grounds. At the time of the inspection, the school had 145 students on roll, of which 15 students were accessing the residential provision.

The head of residential has an appropriate qualification and has been in post since 21 November 2022.

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

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 21 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's overall experiences are excellent. They receive outstanding care from a dedicated and consistent staff team. Staff build trusting relationships with the children and have a comprehensive understanding of their needs. They communicate in children's preferred style. Staff are focused on promoting their development and helping them to achieve their goals. As a result, all children are making exceptional progress with their social skills and their overall development. For example, some children are now able to complete their morning personal care including making their own breakfast, learning to travel home independently. Some children work at the school's café at lunchtime to gain valuable customer service skills. These are significant achievements for children.

Staff support children to enjoy a range of activities that reflect their interests and widen their community involvement. The school is fully equipped with exceptional facilities including swimming pool, hydrotherapy, soft playroom, art rooms sensory rooms, a music rooms, and an adapted children's kitchen to promote their independent skills. Children consistently enjoy outings and trips, as well as cultural and religious events. In addition, children enjoyed a summer residential overnight stay at a campsite. This gives children structured time and opportunities to enjoy new experiences in the community.

Staff communicate exceptionally well with children's parents and recognise the importance of family relationships. They involve parents and families in discussions at all stages of their children's stay and visit families. Parents have the utmost confidence in the staff team and said that the staff provide constant reassurance to them. Effective communication with families enables children to have consistency in the care provided and maintain their progress when at home and school.

The voice of children is strong at this school. Children say that they feel listened to, and they know how to complain, they feel that their opinions are valued, and staff encourage them to make choices. Children are encouraged to give their views on their care through regular meetings and surveys. Staff have an exceptional understanding of children's communication methods and complete detailed communication passport together with the therapist. Children are actively encouraged to be part of formulating their care plans, goals and targets. As a result, children feel empowered to take control of their lives.

Children move between residence and school seamlessly. Staff work extremely well with education staff to ensure that children have good transitions. Staff from both sides of the school communicate exceptionally well with each other. Handovers are clear and detailed. Consequently, children receive consistent care by staff who understand their needs well.

Children's complex health needs are met exceptionally well by the onsite specialist nursing team who prepare highly individualised health care plans and manage children's medication. The residential provision has a dedicated trained health care assistant who manages children's medication. The clinical team works exceptionally well with children's parents, health professionals and the local hospital. Weekly medication audits are completed by the NHS Pharmacist from the local hospital to ensure that staff follow school's medical procedures. This means that children with the most complex health needs receive exceptional health care.

Children live in a warm, homely environment that is adapted to meet their complex needs. Each child personalises their bedroom to reflect their personality. Staff clearly value the importance of an environment that is respectful and maintained to a high standard, with children at its heart. A new bathroom on the ground floor has been recently fully refurbished to a high standard. Leaders have a plan to continue with the refurbishment of the general wear and tear of the old building during the next school holiday.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children spoken to on this inspection say that they are happy and feel safe in residence. They know who to talk to when they are worried or upset. Staff understand children's individual needs exceptionally well including their communication methods and provide consistent routines and nurture that help children to feel secure. Children were observed acting freely and comfortably in the residence.

The school's leadership team, which includes the head of residential, has a strong safeguarding focus. Weekly safeguarding meetings in addition to weekly behaviour team that feeds into safeguarding meetings ensure that all relevant staff are aware of any emerging concerns. Comprehensive safeguarding strategies are agreed and implemented, and their impact on children's safety is monitored and reviewed.

Comprehensive safeguarding systems are in place. Staff know their responsibilities and report concerns effectively. These are followed up with the appropriate agencies and ensure that children are protected from harm. Staff undertake a range of safeguarding training, including child exploitation, radicalisation and e-safety. They complete additional training specific to children complex needs. There are safeguarding leads dedicated to e- safety and prevent and complete specialist training in this area that that supports staff and children understanding. This contributes to an all-round effective safeguarding approach.

Staff are alert to and have a thorough knowledge of the lower-level and wider contextual issues that children with additional vulnerabilities may face. Managers and staff work very closely with the specialist behaviour support team to create personalised strategies for children where concerns are raised. Staff are proactive and have excellent awareness of children's communication and potential triggers,

which successfully reduces situations that can increase children's anxiety. As a result, there has been no incidents requiring physical intervention since last inspection. This ensures that children are provided with positive experiences.

Leaders take swift action in response to safeguarding concerns. There is prompt consultation with the local authority designated officer (LADO). Leaders ensure detailed investigations are carried out. Feedback from LADO is very positive about the safeguarding culture of the school including being invited to attend some the weekly safeguarding meetings. Overall, the safeguarding procedures are very effective in keeping children safe and the school's culture of transparency enables effective safeguarding of children.

Staff ensure that the environment is safe for children to live in. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to assess whether there are any hazards to children. Managers respond appropriately and promptly when concerns are raised from checks and complete comprehensive risk assessments to keep children safe. Children take part in regular fire drills and have individualised personal emergency evacuation plans so staff know how to safely evacuate them in an emergency.

Staff have created an environment that is free of bullying, harassment and intimidation. They teach children how to be kind to each other including giving certificate for kindness. Staff are trained in positive behaviour support and recognise behaviour as a form of communication. There is a comprehensive reward system to encourage positive behaviour and celebrates and praises individual achievement however small. Staff have wholeheartedly embraced this approach. This approach helps the child to feel valued, safer and build stronger relationship with staff and other children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The senior leadership team is inspirational and ambitious in promoting positive experiences for all children at the school and in residential. This accomplished and confident leadership ensures that there is a thoroughly cohesive whole-school approach to give residential children the best level of care.

Leaders and managers are exceptional in the way they approach their work with children. They know children very well and carefully monitor their progress. For example, a senior leader dedicated to residential provision oversees children's assessments including signing off all children's risk assessments.

Leaders and managers have successfully translated their ambitious vision in good residential practices. The high-calibre staff across different levels of the school, work together tirelessly to help children to flourish and fulfil their potential including adulthood. School and residential staff work closely together to support children's personalised learning goals which are reviewed weekly. How staff support children's learning to develop their life skills is one of many examples of excellent joint working in the best interests of children.

The school is exceptionally resourced to ensure that children's most complex needs are met in a holistic approach. In addition to the nursing team, they have a team of highly specialist therapists including occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists on site and available for routines support and throughout the day and evenings. They work very closely with teachers, residential staff, children's families and their local health teams when needed. Therapist set individual therapy targets as an integral part of children's learning. In addition, therapist and clinicians keep abreast with current research and make sure that staff have up-to-date relevant knowledge to help them develop further in their roles. This holistic child centred approach results in children making significant progress physically, educationally and emotionally. Staff spoken to during the inspection advised that children always get the support they require promptly due to having on therapist who also visit residential provision to support children when needed.

Monitoring of the care that staff provide in residence is comprehensive. Leaders know their strength and weaknesses and work exceptionally well to address any gaps identified. There is a highly skilled and experienced independent visitor in the residential school whose reports are available on the school's website showing the school's transparency and accountability approach. Governors and senior leaders also visit regularly and provide a supportive listening service for children. These measures contribute to the exceptional positive environment children live in that shows that residential children and their experiences are at the centre of the school's leadership.

Parents consistently say that the leadership team gives them reassurance that their children are safe and make exceptional progress. School leaders, managers and staff have exceptionally good relationships with parents, who provided very positive feedback about the quality of care. Parents highlight the excellent levels of communication, support and the rich depth of children's experiences alongside their academic progress as strengths of the school. Feedback from social worker is highly positive about the care provided and the level of communication with local authorities.

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

Recommendations

- School leaders should ensure that the development plan for maintenance and refurbishment in the accommodation proceeds at an appropriate pace. This recommendation is restated.

Information about this inspection

Inspector has 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: SC010255

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Sarah Norris & Monika Gaweda Co-Headteachers

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Inspector

Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector

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