

# 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 part of Southfields Academy Trust. The school provides boarding and education for disabled children and young people, 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. A significant number of pupils have complex medical problems, including some with life-limiting conditions. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school has 24 full-time boarding places. Residential pupils are either weekly boarders or part time for one, two or three nights per week. The school promotes a 'waking day curriculum' across a 24-hour period. The residential accommodation is provided at Richley House, which is situated in the school grounds. There are two boarding units on separate floors. In addition, there is a separate provision on the third floor of the building for young people who are preparing to transition to adulthood.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 148 pupils on roll, 31 of whom were boarders. The youngest boarder was eight years old.

**Inspection dates:** 19 to 21 November 2019

**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 **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 15 January 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Staff provide boarders with warm and patient care, which helps develop close and positive relationships. Recently, this included an eight-year-old boarder making her first steps with staff support. Another boarder has reduced her dependency on prescribed medication, allowing her to be more alert during the school day. This is a source of great pride for all involved.

Boarders live in modern, purpose-built accommodation. They have full use of the school's extensive facilities, which include a hydrotherapy pool and a music suite. Boarders engage well with staff and each other and were excitedly preparing for their weekly Scout group meeting during this inspection.

Boarding and day school staff integrate well and share learning targets effectively. Teaching assistants from the school work regular shifts in the boarding house and relish the opportunity of developing their relationships with boarders.

Boarders' progress is positive. All the boarders are currently assessed as making good progress academically, and their attendance is ten percent higher than that of the pupils who only attend the day school.

Boarders experience good outcomes. For example, all the boarders who left the school at the end of the last academic year moved onto a planned programme of further education. The school organises a 'Transition Fair' each year, which is attended by colleges throughout the country. Recently, staff supported a boarder to attend an induction session in the South West of the country.

Staff use creative techniques, such as a sound board, to regularly find out about boarders' wishes and feelings. Boarders recently chose to hold a Halloween disco rather than the usual karaoke activity and to request a set of Braille chess pieces.

Behaviour management is very effective. Staff understand boarders well and intervene quickly when they are struggling. The use of restraint is rare. Staff understand the enormous impact that a physical hold can have on boarders with sensory impairment. When boarders struggle, staff use effective distraction techniques, for example, singing a favourite nursery rhyme.

Partnership work with parents is good. Parents have access to the school's family centre support programme, which includes signing lessons and access to a two-week summer scheme for boarders.

Boarding staff share behaviour management techniques with parents to ensure consistency. Parents spoken with said that they value this input. One parent commented, 'I don't know what I would do without their help and support.'

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

Behaviour plans and risk assessments are regularly reviewed. They provide staff with clear guidance to gently encourage and support boarders to fulfil their potential. Plans consider a range of issues, for example the impact that shorter daylight hours during the winter months can have on visually impaired boarders.

The progress of boarders is carefully monitored and when concerns arise, such as a deterioration in physical health, medical professionals are swiftly alerted.

Boarders learn to manage their own behaviours, which in turn reduces their risky behaviours such as angry outbursts and self-harming. Wherever possible, boarders contribute to their behaviour plans. This develops a sense of joint responsibility between boarders and staff. One boarder said, 'I know where to go when I don't like things [to calm down].'

The boarding environment is well adapted to meet the complex sensory needs of boarders. Information is conveyed in accessible formats such as Braille and 'Moon'. Staff skilfully use objects such as towels to indicate that there is a planned swimming pool event, while a 'talking hob' is available to help develop boarders' independence skills.

Boarders benefit from using the latest technology. The introduction of an 'I gaze' computer programme allows the views of boarders to be gathered from the movements of their eyes. In addition, the school playground is fitted with a computer tracking system, which allows young people to use their wheel chairs without adult support, where appropriate.

Boarders develop self-confidence and an understanding of themselves. Where appropriate, boarders learn to manage their own complex health conditions. One boarder now cleans his peg feeding tube, with close staff support. This represents a major step forward for him.

Staff advocate for boarders effectively. Parents reported that specialist staff such as occupational therapists advocate for their children proactively. In one instance, this ensured that a placing authority provided a boarder with equipment to adapt the bathroom facilities at her home address.

Case recordings are generally of a good quality and reflect boarders' positive progress. However, one case record failed to confirm which staff members were present during a recent incident. In addition, one medication record failed to evidence the names of staff members authorised to dispense medication. These shortfalls did not have an impact on the care of boarders.

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

The management of boarding is unsettled. A new head of care is due to commence employment in January 2020. This will be the third head of care since July 2019. This inspection was facilitated by the headteacher and the interim head of care. The interim head of care is highly experienced and has worked in the boarding house for 19 years.

The interim head of care knows the boarders well and supports a strong child-centred culture within boarding. One parent referred to him as the 'main wheel in the cog'. The interim head of care has the required management qualification and will remain as a senior deputy manager on the arrival of the permanent head of care.

Managers provide staff with effective supervision, which also supports staff morale. Staff said that they feel valued and highly motivated. Managers encourage staff to develop their own interests in areas such as yoga and mindfulness. Staff then use these skills for the benefit of boarders.

Training is effective and supports staff to improve and develop their own skill base. During a recent training session, staff were asked to navigate the school premises while their vision was restricted. This helped staff to understand what it is like to be a boarder who has a visual impairment.

Two members of staff are still to complete the required national qualification despite their being in post for over five years.

The admissions process is very effective. Induction programmes are bespoke, with the needs of each boarder being prioritised. Managers ensure that the needs of boarders are rigorously assessed prior to their arriving at the school.

Managers advocate strongly for boarders. This includes requesting increased provision for boarders who experience funding issues with their placing local authorities.

Managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service and have created an exciting development plan. Therapists are now employed directly by the school, allowing them to offer more time in the evening to support boarders. Following a recent audit, managers have provided an improved level of support and training to night staff.

The use of agency staff in the late evening and early morning is high. Inspectors identified that only one third of staff on duty during this vulnerable time were permanent members of staff. This presents a lack of consistency at a vulnerable time for boarders.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 19.2 All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all medication files accurately record the names of staff authorised to dispense medication.
- Limit the use of agency staff during evening and early morning shifts, to ensure more consistency for boarders.
- Ensure that all case recordings accurately reflect the names of staff members who are present during significant incidents.
- Ensure that management arrangements of the residential provision are consistent.

### **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:** SC010255

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Deborah Rix

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Barnaby Dowell, social care inspector (lead)  
Victoria Jones



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