

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 147 students on roll, of which 16 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: 21 to 23 February 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 25 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy and benefit from staying in residence. They are supported by skilled and dedicated residential staff who understand their individual needs. The care and support provided results in children making excellent progress with their functional communication and social and independence skills, and adds significant value to the children's school experience.

Staff are particularly skilled and creative in their approach to gaining children's views and helping them to communicate. Meaningful alternative communication methods and technologies are used to great effect. Because of the strength of these approaches, all children make measurable progress in their self-expression and capacity to make informed choices.

Children make notable progress with their independence and self-care skills. The staff help the children to develop these skills through using tailored and precise levels of prompting. Highly individualised approaches are matched to children's developmental stages and regularly adapted so that the children make progress that is significant for them. Some children are supported to take advantage of work experience opportunities. Well-planned and personalised life skills work for children is a continued significant strength of residence.

There are effective communication links between the residential staff and the day school staff. Children who stay in residence are more likely to achieve their educational targets than day students. Staff identify and work towards unified residential objectives with children which are matched to their education, health and care plans.

Children enjoy a range of on-site activities. Weekly Scout groups, additional music tutoring, swimming and access to a recently revamped library support children's interests and talents. A residential camping trip has been planned for the summer term. These activities encourage children's social growth, confidence and positive well-being.

An integrated therapy team of specialists, including physiotherapy, music, art, occupational, and speech and language therapists provide targeted support to children and staff. Good implementation of therapeutic interventions has helped children to have their complex health needs met, and helps them overcome their previous barriers to education.

Accommodation in residence is spacious and generally well resourced. Children can personalise their bedrooms and individual spaces meet children's sensory preferences. However, three bathrooms need refurbishment and some furniture is worn and needs replacing. School leaders and managers have recognised that these areas need attention and plans are in place to address this.

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

Staff are exceptionally nurturing, kind and committed to children. Interactions between children and staff display high positive regard and are based on mutual respect. Children receive personalised introductions to residence that are centred around their preferences. Compatibility assessments do well in supporting safer matching and friendships between the groups of children who stay. Consequently, children develop the sense of safety and stability that they need to flourish.

School leaders and managers have provided additional training to staff to increase their knowledge of child-on-child and domestic abuse, in line with new statutory guidance. Staff are highly alert to children's vulnerabilities arising from their visual and hearing impairments. They have excellent knowledge of additional communication needs and provide high-quality support in this area which helps children to be more resilient and safer.

Staff have robust procedures to record, monitor and escalate safeguarding concerns. Systems to monitor lower-level safeguarding concerns are highly effective in recording and guiding proactive actions to further safeguard children. Designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained. Weekly safeguarding meetings take place. Although no significant concerns have arisen in residence, there are rigorous procedures to identify, pre-empt and act on any such concerns.

Parents and social workers are unanimously confident that the staff advocate for children's best interests, safety and well-being. The relationships forged with parents and professionals are strong and enduring. This enables honest and open conversations and ensures children's best interests are central to all decisions.

Managers and staff work closely with the specialist behaviour support team to create personalised strategies for children. Staff have a good awareness of children's potential triggers, which successfully reduces situations that can increase children's anxiety. There has been one instance of physical restraint since the last inspection. This was necessary and proportionate. Managers have systems to monitor and identify learning from these incidents.

Staff's approach to risk assessments is thorough but not risk averse. Managers maintain strong health and safety monitoring systems in residence. This ensures that children can safely navigate new experiences and have access to a wide range of activities.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A new and qualified head of residential is in post. School leaders have ensured this change was managed very smoothly. The head of residential has child-centred values and high aspirations for children, which are reflected by the staff.

The wider school leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the children. This creates a constructive culture that promotes children's achievements and progress.

School leaders and managers ensure staff well-being is a priority. This includes provision of mental health first-aiders and staff achievement recognition schemes which support a positive team ethos. Recent staff recruitment drives have been successful and staff turnover has reduced. This period of stability has ensured that children receive good continuity of care from staff who they know well.

There is a proactive partnership with parents, who all provided positive feedback. They described strong levels of communication and the support for and progress of children as 'absolutely brilliant.'

School leaders and managers ensure good staff induction and training systems equip staff with the skills to meet the individual needs of children.

School leaders actively seek constructive scrutiny and make improvements. Appointed governors have effective oversight of areas for development. Good-quality external monitoring by an independent person successfully contributes to improvements in the residential provision.

Staff, including agency staff who are used regularly, receive supervision and appraisals. However, further development is necessary to ensure records of these meetings capture the depth of discussions held. Staff's annual objectives are not systematically identified or sufficiently challenging to contribute to their professional development. Supervisions are not recorded in a way that assists monitoring and oversight of staff practice effectively.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that the development plan for maintenance and refurbishment of the accommodation proceeds at an appropriate pace.
- School leaders should ensure that the recording systems for staff supervisions and appraisals capture the depth of discussions held. They should systematically reflect staff's achievements, the practice culture in residence and identify annual objectives that support staff's continuing professional development.

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

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector

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