

Linden Lodge School

61 Princes Way, Wimbledon Park, London SW19 6JB

Inspection dates

31 January – 1 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors have worked effectively to improve the school. They have a clear vision for further improvement which is supported by most staff.
- The governors know the school well and provide a good balance of challenge and support.
- The early years classes give the youngest pupils an excellent start.
- The strengths in the primary and secondary sections of the school are also present in the sixth form.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet legal requirements.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching very regularly and provide training and support for staff so that they can improve their skills.
- Teaching is good because staff plan carefully to meet pupils' individual needs. This helps them to make good progress.
- Attractive displays show what pupils are capable of achieving and encourage everyone to aim high.
- The school's ethos reflects British values such as respect for others and democracy. Through the school council, pupils are involved in making decisions about the life of the school.
- Pupils enjoy school and make good progress particularly in communication skills and mobility, often from very low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making broadly the same progress as other pupils, as are those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and friendly to each other and to adults, and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers and support staff work closely together to provide good support for their pupils.
- Middle leaders contribute strongly to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Surveys of parents' views show that most parents believe that their children like school and are well cared for.
- Staff know that expectations have not always been high enough for older pupils, particularly the most able. They do not have enough opportunities to take recognised qualifications where this is appropriate.
- Where teaching is best, teachers give good feedback throughout the lesson which helps pupils to make really rapid progress. This is not consistent across all classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Building on the existing best practice in the school:

- improve teaching so that pupils make more rapid progress by ensuring that teachers give feedback within lessons more consistently so that
 - pupils not only know what they are doing well but also what they need to do to make faster progress
 - support staff can work more effectively with pupils to help them make outstanding progress
- raise staff and pupils' expectations of what they can achieve by widening the range of appropriate qualifications which older pupils, particularly the most able, can take.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and interim headteacher, supported by the senior team and most staff, are determined to see that the school becomes outstanding. They focus constantly on ensuring that pupils receive an education which is closely matched to individual needs and prepares them well for their future lives.
- Leaders and governors have made extensive use of external evaluation to make sure that the changes are having the desired impact. The local authority has worked well with the school to help it improve. The task group set up following the previous inspection has challenged and supported the school very effectively.
- A national leader of education has worked very effectively with the school. She has helped the governing body to challenge leaders more rigorously and has also provided an external check on key issues around safeguarding, teaching and pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders make a good contribution to the drive to improve the quality of teaching. With senior leaders, they have been involved in identifying ways in which teaching and assessing pupils' progress can be improved. They are encouraged to develop their ideas for their own areas of responsibility.
- Improving the quality of teaching has had a high priority for leaders and governors. Senior leaders regularly check the impact of teaching on learning by observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and teachers' records of progress. This provides good information on which to base staff training programmes. Staff are also encouraged to take relevant additional qualifications to improve their skills.
- Leaders and governors understand how important the therapies are in supporting pupils' development. The school and the health authority who employ the therapists share parents' concerns about the provision of the different therapies and are working to see how it can be improved. A clinical lead has been appointed to the senior management team to work with the school and the health authority. There are regular discussions to try to ensure that this provision meets pupils' needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the pupil premium funding and make progress as good as, and sometimes better than, the progress of other pupils. The funding is used to provide additional support and to enable pupils to join fully in all the school activities such as instrumental music lessons and visits to places of interest.
- The curriculum is reviewed regularly to make sure that it meets pupils' complex needs. The current focus is on key stage 4 and sixth form to raise expectations and prepare pupils better for adult life. The support and guidance focuses strongly on preparing them, wherever possible, for independent living.
- The school has introduced some additional relevant qualifications for pupils but staff know that they need to do more to cater particularly for the most able.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Opportunities to take part in sport, music and drama, visits to the theatre, concerts and places of interest are a regular feature of school life. Drama and music groups are

regular visitors to the school. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and is inclusive in its approach.

- Assemblies cover a wide range of topics, including matters of national interest such as elections. Pupils gain a practical understanding of democracy when electing the school councillors. They also learn about different cultures and faiths, such as the celebration of the Chinese New Year, as well as Christian and other religious festivals. This helps them to understand and respect the beliefs of others.
- Staff work effectively to keep parents involved and informed through the use of home books, reports and meetings. The monthly newsletter on the school's website gives parents good information about events and also reminders about key elements of school policies and procedures.
- Most parents responding to school surveys and the online parent questionnaire, agree that their children are happy at school, feel safe and make good progress. A number of parents, however, do think that they are not kept well enough informed and that their concerns are not taken seriously enough. The interim headteacher is very aware of this and has introduced initiatives to resolve these issues.
- The additional sports funding is used well to provide specialist equipment such as hoists to enable all pupils to participate in a range of sports. The funding also helps pupils to take part in external competitions.

Governance of the school

- Governors visit regularly to observe the work of the school to see how it matches the reports and information that they receive. They also now have a good grasp of data and as a result they are more knowledgeable and better able to challenge the leadership team through probing questioning, as well as providing support. They have been prepared to take difficult decisions.
- Governors know where the strengths and weaknesses are in the school and receive regular reports on pupils' progress. Governors also receive information about the performance of teachers and understand that this information is used to inform discussions about pay and promotion.
- Governors check regularly on how well additional funding is spent. They are aware that these extra funds, along with funding from the Linden Lodge Trust, support highly personalised opportunities for pupils, as well as providing additional equipment and support in class.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The work to keep pupils safe and secure is much improved but leaders know that that they need to be vigilant to ensure that this improvement is maintained.
- Following a comprehensive review of policies and procedures, major changes have been made to how information is recorded and concerns are followed up. This is

supported by regular external review and a rolling programme of training to ensure that all staff know their responsibilities and what to do if they have any concerns.

- Some parents and staff expressed concern about the impact of staff turnover. The leadership team have put measures in place to ensure that temporary staff are given the necessary information on arrival and take part in staff training. These have been externally checked very recently to ensure that systems are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' abilities and good subject knowledge to plan lively sessions which help pupils to make the next steps in their learning. The individual planning for each pupil enables staff to focus their efforts very precisely.
- The systems to assess and record pupils' progress have been updated and refined in line with the national changes. The school is working closely with other similar schools to ensure that their judgements are accurate and that the teaching challenges all pupils, including the most able, to achieve as highly as possible.
- Staff make notes on what pupils have done both during and after lessons. Teachers make good use of the information to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and pick up on any misconceptions. They use the information well to plan the next stage of work for each pupil.
- Teachers and support staff give pupils good individual feedback at the end of lessons, which enables staff to plan the next steps. In the most effective teaching, teachers use good questioning and give pupils feedback throughout the lesson. This helps pupils to make faster progress. This is not yet consistent enough in all classes to ensure that all pupils make outstanding progress.
- Helping pupils to acquire literacy and numeracy skills is central to all teaching. From an early stage, pupils are encouraged to listen to different sounds in music and words through songs and stories. When ready, they are introduced to alternative reading and writing systems such as braille.
- Wherever appropriate, staff make sure that pupils have opportunities to work in small groups as well as individually. In one class, some pupils were enjoying sharing a book while others were working on computers or reading individually with support.
- Staff recognised that their expectations for what pupils could achieve in reading were not always high enough, particularly for the most able pupils. They have therefore revised their approach.
- Phonics teaching has improved at all levels and teachers are introducing more challenging books and plays. The impact of this was very evident in a lively session where older pupils were enjoying reading 'Romeo and Juliet', discussing plot and character as well as how they were going to act it.
- Much of the mathematics curriculum is taught through applying mathematics to everyday situations, and records of pupils' work show good progress. In a key stage 4 lesson designed to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education or for possible employment, pupils were successfully carrying out tasks involving the use of money.

- The ratio of adults to pupils is high because so many pupils need one-to-one support. This is to ensure that all staff understand each pupil's individual needs. The pupils' 'passports' contain a great deal of valuable information which helps staff know what different pupils need.
- Both staff and pupils know that classrooms need to be well-organised and safe places. Routines are well established and protocols such as 'counting down' to signal a change in activity are very effective and used consistently across the school. These give pupils a sense of security.
- If there are unexpected changes to routines, staff make sure that these are not allowed to upset pupils or disrupt learning. For example, a lift temporarily out of action did not mean that pupils missed their food technology lesson. Equipment and materials were quickly taken to the classroom and pupils enjoyed making heart-shaped ginger biscuits.
- Staff have access to a good range of resources, often produced by the in-house team, which helps to support pupils' learning. The school council also commented on how much they appreciated the library and other resources available for them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils on the school council said, 'Our school is good and helps us in lessons and with other skills such as independence.'
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school. When they arrive in the morning, they settle quickly in their classes and are ready to learn. They respond well to the praise they receive for achievements. If unable to respond verbally, their expressions and body language show how much they are enjoying activities.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of activities and experiences which encourage pupils to be physically active. Trampolining, swimming, boccia, horse riding and athletics are just some of the many sports available. During the inspection, a group of pupils were taking part in a sports competition with other schools. These are a regular feature of school life.
- Other areas which contribute to pupils' personal development are not neglected, and pupils take part in art, music, dance and drama in school, often with visiting groups and through visits. Pupils also have many opportunities to take part in activities which help to develop their confidence and independence. As pupils get older these activities are increasingly aimed at helping them to prepare for adult life.
- The personal, social and health education programme is carefully planned to introduce topics at a point where they are appropriate to the pupils' age and maturity. The programme for older pupils includes discussion of sensitive issues such as radicalisation and female genital mutilation at a suitable level.
- Every class is involved in electing the school council and pupils have taken the lead in developing the idea of a 'pupil voice' in relation to mental health and well-being. Minutes of meetings show that they take their responsibilities seriously and have the

confidence to raise important issues. For example, they have had discussions on preventing bullying as well as on improving the range of activities available at lunchtime.

- To help pupils learn to take responsibility and manage a budget, classes have been given £300 which they can spend on facilities for their classroom. Pupils understand the need to ensure that health and safety requirements are met, for example that electronic equipment is compatible with school systems.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is an attractive, calm and orderly place in which pupils can make real progress in all areas of their development, whether academic, personal, social, emotional or physical.
- Pupils are friendly and polite, smiling at visitors and greeting them in a friendly manner. Those with whom inspectors held conversations said that they got on well with each other. They said that bullying doesn't happen very often and is quickly dealt with. The school council is currently planning an assembly on bullying to remind pupils about expectations.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there are adults to whom they can turn and that they know that adults will help them.
- Attendance is often affected by pupils' complex medical conditions and therefore is below the average for mainstream schools. It is, however, above that of most special schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from very low starting points. They learn to communicate with those around them, so that they can make positive choices and express their ideas well.
- Expectations for what pupils can achieve are rising and pupils, including the most able, do well. Targets are focused clearly on individual needs and identify the small steps which, over time, make a real difference to pupils' personal development and achievement.
- The impact of this is seen in the good progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics. From key stage 2 onwards, the most able pupils read aloud confidently and could talk knowledgeably about the books they enjoyed. Pupils were observed using their mathematics skills to help them make progress in other subjects such as science and food technology.
- Pupils' use of technology is good and supported by an appropriate range of equipment. They learn to use switches and boards to indicate choices. They are supported well to maintain their concentration for longer periods of time as, for example, when using a joystick to write a sentence on a computer screen. Another group used computers successfully to draft their plans for an assembly to celebrate a Hindu festival.

- The wide range of sensory equipment helps pupils to explore and respond to a range of different stimuli through sound, touch and smell. Pupils also take full advantage of the opportunities to develop their physical skills through activities such as dance, rebound therapy and swimming as well as through the support of the other therapists. Sports funding is used effectively to give all pupils the chance to take part in different sports.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are used appropriately to give additional support in class and ensure that all pupils can benefit from the range of activities the school offers.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years classes give children an excellent start. The provision is very well managed and the strong partnership between teachers and support staff enables children to settle well and enjoy a wide range of activities.
- Teachers plan carefully to meet the children's different social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs. From very low starting points, children make rapid progress because their individual needs are quickly identified and then met successfully.
- Classes are very well resourced with good indoor and outdoor areas, including an attractive sensory garden. These are used very effectively to support a range of play-based and fun activities designed to develop communication skills and improve children's mobility and physical skills.
- Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Staff use a range of stimuli to engage and introduce them to different experiences. Children are introduced to the early stages of reading, writing and mathematics at a level which is appropriate to their understanding.
- The use of music is particularly effective in giving children an understanding of sounds rhythms and counting, which then supports the development of literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in one session observed, children made excellent progress in listening and responding to different sounds and rhythms. They were also enjoying experimenting with instruments which required different physical movements.
- Teachers give very good feedback during, as well as at the end of, sessions. This helps children to know how well they are doing. It also helps teaching assistants to know what children should be doing next.
- Staff carefully record children's progress and use the folders to build up a good picture of their progress and achievement, however small the steps may seem. This information is use very effectively for both day-to-day and longer-term planning. Staff work well with parents, but this is an area which they plan to develop further to increase parents' ability to support their child's education.
- Children are helped to behave very well. They are happy and have very good attitudes to learning and to each other. This is because staff have high expectations and use very effective behaviour management techniques. Staff work effectively to ensure that children are kept safe.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Under the guidance of a new sixth-form leader, and with support from the local authority, the school is working towards more specific provision for the sixth-form age group which will raise their aspirations for what they can achieve.
- Students in the sixth form are still often taught alongside pupils in key stage 4 because this is appropriate for their current attainment. The good teaching is planned to meet their individual needs. This helps them improve their literacy, communication and numeracy skills.
- The very good progress in personal development noted in the previous report has been maintained. All sixth-form students also follow programmes designed to develop independent living skills. Sixth formers become increasingly independent and many are able to function with less support.
- The focus on independent living skills is now being matched by a stronger focus on enabling students to take appropriate nationally recognised qualification. The emphasis on work-related opportunities is increasing and it gives those working on ASDAN employability qualifications access to work experience placements, either in school or in the community.
- The academic work and the wide range of social and leisure activities, including a residential visit, are supported by the individual transition guidance and arrangements which help students to move successfully to the next stage. This is usually to further education or training.
- A sixth-form committee and the student council give students a chance to contribute to decisions which affect them as a group. This helps them to develop their confidence and independence. Students make a positive contribution to the whole school community.

School details

Unique reference number	101093
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10023584

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

Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Lovelock
Principal	Roger Legate
Headteacher (Interim)	Deborah Rix
Telephone number	020 8788 0107
Website	www.lindenlodge.wandsworth.sch.uk
Email address	info@lindenlodge.wandsworth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Linden Lodge accepts pupils from a wide range of local authorities in London and the south east.
- The school caters for children from the age of 2 to 19, though currently there are no children aged two or three on roll. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils all have visual impairment and many have other special educational needs and disabilities, including

hearing impairment, autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Many children have profound and multiple physical disabilities as well as educational needs.

- The school has boarding provision on site for 40 pupils. This provision was last inspected in November 2016 and judged good. The provision was not part of this inspection.
- The school does not use any off-site training.
- The management of the school is in a state of transition. The principal has executive responsibility but the day-to-day running of the school is now the responsibility of the interim headteacher. The governing body is about to start the appointment process for a substantive headteacher. A clinical lead was appointed in September 2016 to work with both the school and the health authority.
- Just over a third of pupils are from White British families. Other pupils come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The largest other group is of Black African origin.
- Just over a third of pupils speak English as an additional language, though few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is slightly above average.
- The school holds a number of awards, including the Arts Mark Gold, the Safety Mark and Investors in People.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 22 lessons or parts of lessons. Most observations were undertaken jointly with senior staff.
- A meeting was held with members of the school council and another group of pupils. Other pupils were spoken with during lessons. The inspectors also listened to some pupils reading.
- Inspectors met a group of governors and representatives from the local authority and from the local health trust who manage the provision of therapies for pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with several school staff, including the subject leaders in English and mathematics, the early years and sixth-form leaders and the school nurse.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) and the school's own surveys of parents and spoke informally with a number of parents. They also took account of 67 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including records of pupils' work; the school data on progress; school improvement planning; leaders' checks on the quality of teaching; external checks on the quality of education; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bzikot	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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