

# 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. 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 promotes a 'waking day curriculum' across a 24-hour period.

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. There are three residential units on three floors.

The residential provision was last inspected in November 2019.

The head of care has been in post since 6 January 2020. She has a suitable qualification in leadership and management of residential childcare.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 141 pupils on roll, of which 21 pupils were accessing the residential provision.

This inspection has only inspected the residential provision.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### **Inspection dates: 25 to 27 January 2022**

**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:** 19 November 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children have very positive experiences during their residential stays. They are cared for by aspirational staff, who put children's safety, welfare and interests first. All children spoken to during the inspection indicated that they liked their residential stays. Children were observed to be relaxed and engaging positively with staff.

Parents are positive about the impact the residential provision has on their child's experiences and progress. One mother said, 'The staff are fantastic and understand her (daughter's) needs and support her fully. She now has confidence to make friends and she's doing very well with her life skills. She is improving in all areas.'

Children receive individualised care and support from staff who know them well. Children develop close relationships with the staff. For example, one child said, 'good staff work here' and 'some staff are special'.

Staff enable children to communicate their views and to make informed choices. This positive support is instrumental in helping children to feel empowered and to be confident about their abilities.

Staff are trained in specialist skills that enable them to meet children's complex health needs. As a result, staff are able to understand and respond swiftly to children's individual health needs safely and effectively.

The system for dealing with medication is well established. However, on one occasion, the count of one child's medication was incorrect and this was not immediately picked up, despite there being a clear process in place.

Children thrive physically, educationally and emotionally. This is helped by the diverse range of therapies available to them at the school. These include physiotherapy and art, music, occupational, speech and language and creative arts therapies.

Staff take extra care to support children's emotional welfare and well-being. The school has well-being champions and mental health first aiders. Children thrive emotionally as a result of this positive attention to their mental health.

The school promotes a 'waking day curriculum' across a 24-hour period. Consequently, residential staff work closely with teachers to help ensure that children are able to continue their learning and development during their residential stays. One parent talked about the benefit of having stretching targets for his son. Staff's ambition has helped this child to develop his mobility further.

Staff have worked creatively during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that children continue to access a range of stimulating activities of their choice. One example has

involved children being able to participate in hybrid-style karaoke, which enabled the cross-bubble engagement of children.

Staff embrace technology to help children develop essential life skills to support their transition into adulthood. Excellent habitation support makes a strong contribution to children's increasing independence.

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

Staff are highly alert to children's vulnerabilities arising from their disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, additional communication needs and complex health needs.

Staff ensure that children are safeguarded from harm. Staff follow safeguarding procedures effectively. For example, staff safeguard children with self-injurious behaviours to minimise them coming to harm. Staff sensitively, patiently and creatively help children to find more constructive ways of having sensory experiences and expressing themselves.

A whole-school approach to behaviour management means that children receive consistent emotional and behavioural support. Children's positive behaviour plans are shared with parents to help children to receive the same support at home.

The school's safeguarding practices are proactive. The safeguarding team meets regularly to discuss any concerns, review practice and identify any learning. When concerns emerge, swift action is taken to escalate these to the right professionals.

The school has good links with the local authority's designated safeguarding lead for dealing with allegations and the lead professional for safeguarding in education. The close partnership-working ensures that any concerns are shared appropriately and that effective action is taken to safeguard children.

The school's thorough procedure for recruiting staff ensures that all staff who work with children are suitable for the role. An extensive training programme for staff contributes to their ability to provide safe care and identify any concerns. The school has recently introduced an electronic system for raising and recording concerns. Staff commented positively about this development.

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

Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for children and lead by example. Despite the significant challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has worked tirelessly to enable children to continue with their residential stays.

Leaders and managers have worked closely with Public Health England. The school contributed to the national strategy for enabling even the most vulnerable children to return to school. Although some children have tested positive for COVID-19,

effective infection controls mean there have been no infection outbreaks at the school.

The school has the utmost commitment to promoting diversity, equality and inclusion. Leaders, managers and staff model this through their actions. One child spoke beautifully about her ethnic and religious background, and the importance of respecting people who are different to us.

The school is very well resourced to ensure that children's complex needs are met. The residential provision is well staffed. Children benefit from individual attention and consistency of staffing. All staff are either suitably qualified or enrolled on a course leading to a suitable qualification.

The residential provision is managed well. Staff said that they are supported in their roles. They spoke positively about all leaders and managers across the residential provision and the whole school. Leaders and managers have made sure that extra emotional and practical support has been available to staff during the pandemic.

Staff receive regular supervision and value this. However, the arrangements for supervising agency staff are at an early stage of development. For example, an agency member of staff who works at night has not had any supervision, despite working full time at the school. Also, there are no formal arrangements for the induction of agency staff. These shortfalls mean that regular agency staff are not given the opportunity to benefit from an induction or to reflect on their work with children through the value of supervision.

Leaders and managers are committed to continued improvement of the school and its residential provision. The school governors provide constructive scrutiny and have an active role in identifying development opportunities, as well as providing effective oversight.

The independent visitor carries out regular visits to strengthen the quality assurance processes further. Their reports are available on the school's website. This demonstrates the school's transparency and accountability.

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

- Ensure that the procedure for dealing with children's medication is followed at all times.
- Ensure that the regular agency staff receive induction, supervision and support.

### **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

**Telephone number:** 020 87880107

**Email address:** head@lindenlodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

## **Inspectors**

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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