



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



July 2020

Independent Visitor Report- Standard 20

As defined by The Residential Special Schools – National Minimum Standards effective from 1st April 2015.

Standard 20 - Monitoring by Independent Visitors.

20.1 The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the head teacher (or school equivalent).

20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

- checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
- evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
- assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
- opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

20.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the head teacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. Monitoring reports should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection.

20.4 The head teacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year:

- a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to:
 - its Statement of Purpose;
 - its staffing policy;
 - the placement plans for individual children; and
 - an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards.

Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

The following is a synopsis of MS Team meeting with the Head of Care on the 21st July 2020.

Due to the on-going safety advice and precautions being taken to protect and limit any spread of Covid-19, both the school and Richley House at Linden Lodge are, very appropriately, restricting visitors to the campus.

The school has re-opened for day students and has undertaken a number of Risk Assessments to achieve this and followed and taken into account the guidance provided by the Government, Public Health England and Ofsted.

Therefore, Richley House remains closed for students that would normally stay overnight during the school week. I was informed by the Head of Care, that it is envisaged and hoped that at the beginning of the new school year in September that this will change and students will be able to stay overnight.

In my conversation with the Head of Care, it was apparent that very careful planning and a great deal of thought had been given as to how to achieve this safely for all concerned.

There are a number of young people who attend the school and would normally stay at Richley House, that have additional health needs/concerns, that would put them in a high-risk group should they become infected with the Coronavirus. These additional risk factors have also been taken into account by the Head of Care and her Senior Team when considering options and priorities for the re-opening of Richley House for overnight stays.

The last night of boarding at Richley House was on the 18th March 2020, although the facilities within Richley House have been used to support the school in delivering education in "safe bubbles" across the campus. From what I was told, this was mainly for students who were familiar with the layout and environment within Richley House.

This report was compiled following a web meeting with the Head of Care on the 21st July and emails received from the Head of Care and the HR Manager. From these interactions, I am able to report that all the outstanding actions, comments and observations have either been completed or there are clear plans in place to address them.

My conversation with the Head of Care was very informative and gave me both confidence and reassurance that the school and care teams are doing all they can to support the students and their families during the Coronavirus Pandemic. This is in relation to outreach support, on-line teaching and support and the safe re-opening of the school with reduced numbers.

We were able to discuss the plans for Richley House to re-open for boarders in September.

These plans are in place and held under constant review to ensure they adhering to the most recent advice and current recommendations from Government bodies.

The Head of Care had clearly considered the necessary changes for September within Richley House, to ensure a “safe” environment for everyone living and working there.

I was left feeling confident that the plans and protocols that will be in place for Richley House, will meet the needs of the students staying there and again permit them to have a positive experience of staying at Richley House, being cared for a very child focussed staff team.

There continues to be “newsletters” to parents posted on the school’s website, along with other interactive initiatives to provide support, advice and engagement with families and carers.

Attendance

Any unauthorised absences? ~~Yes~~ No

The last night of boarding was the 18th March 2020. From that date no student has stayed at Richley House overnight.

I was advised that the care staff have remained in contact with a number of students who would normally have stayed at Richley House. This has been appreciated and proved a very supportive measure to those families and students involved.

The Head of Care shared with me the plans and Risk Assessments that are being finalised in order to safely re-open Richley House for overnight stays in September. These are very much “working” documents and will be reviewed and updated following any changes in Government guidance.

When Richley House opens, all bedrooms will be for sole occupancy and it was clear that some very detailed planning had taken place to maximise the use of the bedrooms to ensure the greatest number of students could stay overnight.

This has necessitated the changing of certain nights that young people will now stay at Richley House. This has been discussed and communicated with the families and young people who will be affected by these changes.

Overall, this has been done to benefit everyone concerned and from what I was told, this has been acknowledged and appreciated by the families involved.

Sanctions

Any major sanctions since the last visit? ~~Yes~~ No

Not Applicable as no student has stayed overnight since my last report.

Physical Interventions

Any physical interventions since the last visit? ~~Yes~~ No

Not Applicable as no student has stayed overnight since my last report.

Complaints

Any complaints/concerns since the last visit? Yes No

I was not informed of any complaints having been received or made with regard to Richley House since my last visit.

Risk Assessments

Any risk assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes ~~No~~

From talking with the Head of Care, the school is constantly updating the Risk Assessment and Protocol in relation to dealing with and managing Covid-19 across the whole of Linden Lodge.

There is now a Risk Assessment in place, specific to Richley House, that considers and plans for the September re-opening in order to enable and support students to stay overnight.

The Head of Care continues to review and update this Risk Assessment, as well as individual ones for each young person who will stay at Richley House. These are personalised to the environment, each individual young person and areas of general care practice and support they will require.

When Richley House re-opens, the allocation and use of bedrooms has been carefully thought through. The plan is for students to be allocated specific bedrooms and for those students that stay part of a week, they will have the same room each week akin to a short-break service, with a deep clean happening between the use of each room.

I was informed that there are clear Risk Assessments, policies and protocols in place, to provide guidance to each member of staff to keep them and each young person safe and protected from harm and minimising the risk of contracting Covid-19.

From what I was told, I am confident that the school and Richley House have considered a number of plans and options that promote the safety and well-being of everyone entering, working, studying and staying within the campus.

Individual Care Plans

Were care plans up to date? ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~

The Head of Care is working on these to ensure they are in place for September, taking into account the necessary guidance and best practice advice received from a number of sources.

Once completed, the Head of Care and her staff team are committed to ensuring that they will be subject to regular review and updating as necessary.

Environment

Were there any premises issues? ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~

It was not possible to assess this due to the constraints imposed by Covid-19 and not being able to physically visit Richley House.

I was told that Richley House will be deep cleaned and subject to continuous cleaning in preparation for young people to stay overnight in September.

Safeguarding

Any safeguarding / child protection issues relating to residential pupils? ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~

During my conversation with the Head of Care, I was not made aware of any "safeguarding" issues relating to the staff or young people at Richley House, since my last visit.

It was confirmed by the Head of Care, that the policy in relation to the use of electronic surveillance and recording, will be incorporated in Richley House's Statement of Purpose.

From all that I heard from the Head of Care and have read within the school's website, I would concur that the education, care, support and therapy teams are doing all they can collectively to ensure the safety and well-being for everyone connected to, studying or working within Linden Lodge.

Medication records

Were medication records up to date and double signed? ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~

These records were all within Richley House/School, so I was not able to view them at this time.

The Health Care Assistants (HCA's) and additional Nursing support has been available within the school since its re-opening on the 23rd June 2020.

They will also be back within Richley House for September.

I have now seen the Medication Audit and Action Plan which were both comprehensive in relation to the school and specifically for Richley House.

Please can it be confirmed that the necessary remedial actions have been completed?

The Medication Policy on the school's website is still dated September 2016. Due to be updated in September 2019. I was told that the new Policy was with the Board of Governors for ratification. Has this now been achieved and if so, please can it be uploaded to the website and circulated appropriately.?

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal

Were staffing levels good? ~~Yes~~ No

Were residential staff supervision and appraisal notes up to date? Yes No

I was informed that supervision and training has continued within the care team, since my last visit.

The Head of Care confirmed that they had received supervision and attended the most recent "Residential Board Meeting" which gave the opportunity to look at aspects of both care and education.

There continues to be a strong focus on encouraging and supporting staff to use every opportunity to work on their L3 Qualification.

I was told that there are now 12 staff enrolled on the L3 Qualification and all are progressing well. There are 5 staff with the previous training provider and 7 with the new one.

The Head of Care is actively liaising with each training provider to monitor each member of staff's progress.

Food

Was the food of good quality and adequate portions? ~~Yes~~ No

Unable to assess as a virtual visit only.

Security

Was the site security good? ~~Yes~~ No

I was unable to directly assess or view, as this was a virtual visit.

However, the restriction of visitors, careful and cautious approach to a staged re-opening of the school and Richley House, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, leads me to believe that the security across the school and Richley House is proportionate and practical to keep the whole campus safe.

In September, I am confident that the security and safeguarding measures put in place across the campus, will be carefully assessed and reviewed.

Activities

Were there appropriate activities taking place? ~~Yes~~ No

There have been no students staying at the home since the 18th March 2020.

Pupils

Did the pupils appear happy & content? ~~Yes~~ No

Unable to assess as there were no students to observe or meet.

From what I have been told, very careful and sensitive planning is taking place to ensure that when young people resume staying at Richley House, they will be able to recommence and maximise the fun and learning experiences they had when staying at the home.

Staff interaction

Was the staff interaction positive? ~~Yes~~ No

Unable to assess.

Personnel Files

Were any residential staff personnel files checked?
If so, how many? ~~Yes~~ No

Was the required information evident? ~~Yes~~ No

Due to the continued Health and Safety measures in place across Linden Lodge it was not possible to cover this area during my virtual meeting with the Head of Care.

I have received an email from the HR Manager which stated “Our single list has had a separate tab for residential for almost a year, which is something your recent report requested happy to talk through how it is done as requested previously advance notice to ensure I am available is useful.”

I am aware that the Head of Care is meeting with HR early in September to look at the single list for Residential Staff and the inclusion of Agency Staff.

Hopefully I can make my next visit an announced one and in person to meet directly with HR and the Head of Care to look at this in more detail.

General Observations

From my conversation with the Head of Care, I am confident that the school and Richley House are working collegiately to ensure the safety for everyone at Linden Lodge.

Some of the initiatives borne out of the challenges presented by Covid-19 do appear to have led to some innovative changes in thinking.

The Head of Care is hopeful that some of the “teletherapy” provided by the Therapy Team to support families and young people via webinars could be redirected to increase the care staff’s learning and understanding.

There obviously needs to be a very careful and cautious approach to the re-opening of Richley House for students to stay from September 2020. From what I was told, this is being achieved with careful planning and preparations already underway.

The Head of Care also shared with me the careful matching and compatibility assessments that will be undertaken to decide which young people are able to safely access Richley House.

There will be the continuation and refinement of clear pathways around the school and grounds. Within Richley House, there will be also be consideration as to the best way to support safe care and social distancing.

I have received feedback on the areas previously identified which are as follows:

- 1) Please can it be confirmed whether each young person now has their own ID card so they can “swipe” themselves into particular areas?

This has been reviewed and will currently not be pursued.

- 2) The identified loose and broken slats on the pathway through the outdoor play equipment, noted in my last two reports, still require repairing.

These repairs will be completed during the summer holidays.

- 3) There was going to be a review of the Clinical Governance and Safeguarding by the Local CCG. I was contacted by someone asking for advice, but I have had no further communique from them, is this still progressing?

This did happen but the Head of care had no further details – I will discuss this at my next visit.

- 4) The home was also looking for a Pharmacist to undertake a Medication Review within Richley House – has this been achieved?

I have received copies of the Audit and Action Plan for Richley House – I now need confirmation that the identified Actions have been completed?

- 5) I would suggest the Fire Evacuation Area for Richley House is reviewed – please see comments in the main report.

This was discussed and my observation and comments confirmed with the Head of Care in the course of our conversation. This precisely identified the area I was talking about. We agreed that the Head of Care would review and reassess the current policy.

L Miles

Lance Miles
Standard 20 Independent Visitor

L Miles Associates - Independent Social Work Consultancy

9th August 2020