



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



July 2021

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.

INDEPENDENT VISIT – 15th July 2021.

The School and Richley House clearly continue to follow and review the Government Guidance and their own individual Risk Assessment.

It was agreed, with the Head Teacher and Head of Care, that this could be another in-person visit. This was an announced visit as it was to coincide with the “leavers” BBQ and would be an ideal opportunity to celebrate with and say goodbye to the young people leaving both Richley House and the School.

The intention now is for the visit in September to be an unannounced one.

As agreed, I arrived at 1.30pm and left at 6.30pm. Overall, this was another very reassuring, positive and most enjoyable visit.

I had the opportunity to meet with many of the young people and staff within Richley House. I was also able to talk, jointly and individually, with the Head of Care and Head Teacher as well as having a meeting with the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors, the Designated Governor with Safeguarding responsibility and the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Linden Lodge. The latter meeting was an opportunity to share and discuss, in more detail, the purpose of the Standard 20 visits and reports, which included a sharing of the expectations and the focus of the reports.

From this meeting, I would suggest that the newly appointed Governors, who took up their role in November 2020, are encouraged to visit Richley House to familiarise themselves with the care and support provided and to introduce themselves to staff and the young people who stay there during the school week, before returning home to their families.

From my perspective I aim to provide a written report of each visit, that gives a snapshot of strengths and areas for development of the care provision. This will also include discussions and conversations regarding areas of practice and care during my visits.

My aim is to provide an opportunity for external monitoring of practice and policy implementation within the care provision of Richley House. My visits also include checks on the school's records, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to each young person during their stay and whether they are appropriately safeguarded. This will also include an assessment of the boarding accommodation and facilities. I also look to facilitate the opportunity for any young person or member of staff, who wishes to do so, to meet with me.

I am confident that the young people are made aware of my visits. Given their specific communication needs, much of my assessment of their emotional well-being and relationships with each other and with the adults caring for them is observational.

The aspect of “safeguarding” starts with the very professional team that staff the Reception Area. They impose the school’s clear protocols for all visitors to adhere to. The signing in system works well and is managed in a professionally welcoming and friendly manner.

All the staff I spoke to were very positive about working at Richley House. The young people were enjoying the very well-planned, “socially distanced” Leavers’ BBQ, keeping to their assigned tables and “bubbles”.

From these observations alone, I would assess that each young person receives a highly personalised and attentive level of care and support.

In conversation with the Head of Care, I was able to hear about the progress that each young person had and was continuing to make whilst staying at Richley House. This can now be evidenced in various records maintained and is re-enforced through the consistency of approach delivered through the “Waking Day Curriculum”.

Each member of staff I spoke to was able to talk about the “Waking Day Curriculums” in place for each young person and the benefits being derived by providing a consistent approach and good communication and engagement between each of the professional teams within Linden Lodge.

This is all to the benefit of the individual young people who have the opportunity to stay at Richley House.

Attendance

Any unauthorised absences? ~~Yes~~ No

In conversation with the Head of Care it was confirmed that all the young people who could access Richley House have done so since my last visit.

There is in place an up to date Register and Rota that records those young people staying at Richley House and the staff on duty caring and supporting them.

The school also utilises “Welfare Call/Check” to monitor attendance across the school, which the Head of Care is also able to access, to confirm daily attendance for each young person associated with Richley House.

The Head of Care is already planning for the new term in respect of the young people who will be coming to stay at Richley House. The aim will be to have 100% occupancy for each night across the whole of Richley House.

There continues to be nine rooms available on the ground and middle floors, with the top floor providing four.

Sanctions

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

Since my last visit no young person staying at Richley House had been given a sanction.

If any sanction was given to a young person whilst staying at Richley House, it would be recorded within "MyConcern," the electronic recording system used by the whole of Linden Lodge.

At each of my visits, it is easy to observe the very individualised and attentive level of care and support given to each young person. This promotes their overall well-being, confidence and enables them to feel safe with the adults caring for them.

The staff are also very good at providing each young person with physical and verbal praise. I was able to observe many examples, during this visit, where the staff team used positive reinforcement to help a young person maximise their contribution to an activity or social interaction.

The support each young person receives to promote and increase their independence and sense of self-worth, equally helps them to manage their behaviour and frustrations without the need for negative interactions.

Each young person also has their own Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSP) which the Head of Care and her staff team have access to.

Physical Interventions

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

Had there been any incident within Richley House that involved a Physical Intervention, it would have been recorded within MyConcern.

Since my last visit, there had been no such incident. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Head of Care monitor all records completed for young people staying at Richley House.

During this visit, I was able to observe the true quality of the relationships and personal interactions between the young people and staff.

There is a genuine level of trust and respect between everyone staying and working in Richley House. When I talk to staff and managers it is easy to recognise how well they know each of the young people in their care.

The staff team are able to contribute to each young person's PBSP, which ensures they are understood and in place. The Head of Care also confirms these plans are

reviewed and updated as necessary.

Complaints

Any complaints/concerns since the last visit? Yes No

From talking with the Head of Care, the DSL and Head Teacher, they all individually confirmed that there had been no complaints made within or received, regarding Richley House, since my last report.

The Head of Care continues to look at ways to ensure young people can express their own ideas, wishes and feelings. This includes the use of the Residential Hub within the Linden Lodge website to show the activities and inclusive nature of the care and support provided by the care staff at Richley House.

Risk Assessments

Any risk assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes No

I was able to read through fifteen risk assessments on file pertaining to the young people who access Richley House.

These assessments are comprehensive and RAG rated. There is a multi-disciplinary approach to these risk assessments, with oversight of them being provided by the Head of Care, Behaviour Support Team, Head Teacher, the DSL and Head of School.

My recommendations would be to clearly evidence when young people's plans/risk assessments are reviewed and/or updated and to demonstrate how these changes are shared within the care and wider staff teams.

Individual Care Plans

Were care plans up to date? Yes No

During this visit, the staff I spoke to were all aware of the individual "Waking Day Curriculum" in place for each young person.

These plans provide a consistency in approach throughout Linden Lodge and the prospect for continual learning for each young person. The "Waking Day Curriculum" also provides the young people the opportunity to consolidate new learning in a social setting.

New plans will be in place for September, both for the young people returning to Richley House and for those coming to stay for their first time.

Environment

Were there any premises issues? Yes No

My focus in this area is to concentrate on the living environment within Richley House for the young people coming to stay there. From what I could see and was told, there were no obvious issues in respect of the physical environment within Richley House.

The associated outside space, including pathways, all appeared to be safe for the young people, enabling them to access other parts of the school whether independently or with support if necessarily.

I was told that the hydro-therapy pool had been out of action for some time. In my view, as this is used by many of the students within Linden Lodge, the responsibility for reporting of such defects rests within the school management team. Equally the monitoring and chasing for repairs is outside the scope of the Standard 20 process.

Safeguarding

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

Any safeguarding incident or concern in relation to a young person, whilst staying at Richley House, would be recorded within MyConcern.

This would be managed by the DSL and the Head of Care.

In conversation with the DSL and Head of Care, since my last visit, no such reports had been made.

I was told about some information that was shared by the Head of Care with a young person's Social Worker, in relation to their home situation and their main carer going into hospital. This, in my view, demonstrates the understanding of their "safeguarding" responsibilities in the widest context.

During this visit, I also had the opportunity to meet collectively with the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors, the Designated Governor with Safeguarding responsibility and the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Linden Lodge. This was a very open and frank discussion regarding the individual responsibility of us all to ensure that the young people, coming to stay at Richley House, are kept safe and protected from harm.

We also looked at the content of the Standard 20 reports and the possible ways to improve them in respect of defining evidence for conclusions made.

It was clear that the Governors are reading these reports with interest.

I would therefore make the following recommendations:

Now that Covid-19 restrictions are easing, all Governors, especially those with specific responsibilities, visit and acquaint themselves with Richley House and the young people living there.

To complement both the Standard 20 reporting and recent Local Authority “safeguarding focussed visit to the school,” the possibility of the Designated Governor with Safeguarding responsibility to complete a Full Safeguarding Audit across Linden Lodge?

Also, as it appears many of the Governors are relatively recently appointed, that the Standard 20 visitor be invited to meet with them to share the remit and responsibilities of the Standard 20 process and National Minimum Standards and associated Legislation, such as the “Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): boarding schools and residential special schools”

Medication records

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

There have been considerable improvements to the Medication practice and recording since my last visit.

All the highlighted areas from my last report have been addressed and, in some areas, the new practice exceeds the suggested improvements.

There are now very comprehensive individual Medication Files for each young person. There is also, in development, a Medical Condition Glossary covering all the known medical diagnoses of the young people within the school.

The individual files cover all aspects of each young person’s medical and health needs. All of these are very thorough and informative.

The commitment from the Clinical Therapy Lead, to address and improve this area of practice, has been excellent.

This has also included the planned purchase of The British National Formulary (BNF), the United Kingdom’s pharmaceutical reference book. This contains a wide spectrum of information and advice on prescribing and pharmacology, along with specific facts and details about many medicines available on the National Health Service.

Information within the BNF includes indication(s), contraindications, side effects, doses, legal classification, names and many other notable points.

My recommendation would be to consider the use of the on-line BNF website, which is continually being updated <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/>, to ensure the most current

advice is being followed.

The improvements will be of benefit to the staff and young people, ensuring there is a shared learning and understanding of the health diagnosis and needs of each young person.

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal

Were staffing levels good? Yes No

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

During this visit, I was able to observe that the good staffing levels supported the very personalised and positive interactions between the young people and staff at Richley House.

The staff that I spoke to confirmed they were receiving formal supervision and on-going support from their managers and supervisors.

Due to the focussed support and supervision provided, the Head of Care has ensured that members of her team continue to make progress in the achievement of suitable and identifiable training and qualifications. Since my last visit, members of the care staff have completed their Level 3 qualification and the Deputy Residential Childcare Manager has achieved his Level 5 qualification.

I was also able to observe the shift planning meeting between the Head of Care and her Deputy Manager. This covered the plans for the evening and the arrangements for the BBQ. There was a thoughtfulness in their discussion and planning, which focussed on pre-emptive thinking and their identifying and solution focussed approach to potential problems that may occur.

Food

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

The food for the evening was provided by way of a BBQ, as part of the "Leavers' Celebration". The staff had also planned for those young people who required specific food or feeding to have their needs met, whilst ensuring everyone could be together for the main activities of the evening.

I was able to spend time with S whilst she was eating her evening meal. Again, she was pleased to tell me that she was having her meals on just one plate. This is a sustained area of progress for her. I congratulated her for this achievement and also the way I had observed her using her cane, enabling her to achieve greater independent movement around Richley House, the grounds and school.

Security

Was the site security good? Yes No

The security throughout Linden Lodge and Richley House is very good.

Activities

Were there appropriate activities taking place? Yes No

There was a BBQ and Disco happening during my visit. This is the established and time-honoured way to celebrate the end of the Summer Term and to recognise and celebrate the leaving of many of the young people who have stayed at Richley House.

This event was well planned and ensured established “bubbles” were maintained.

The young people really enjoy the safe open space around Richley House that enables them to have outdoor activities to participate in.

I was also told about the “Festival Week” planned for the final week at Richley House. This will mirror music and outdoor festivals, with activities planned to make and design speakers, dayglo wristbands and decorations etc., all in keeping with a “festival” vibe. This was an idea from a member of staff, and they were encouraged to make it happen. The theme will be a very sensory approach to Richley House’s very own open-air festival.

Pupils

Did the pupils appear happy & content? Yes No

From what I was able to observe, my view is that the young people staying at Richley House are at ease with the staff caring for them. My professional opinion is that the young people feel safe and secure whilst staying at Richley House because they have nurturing and warm relationships with staff.

Each member of staff that I spoke to has a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities and needs of the young people in their care.

The Head of Care and her staff team understand that young people need to take risks as they prepare for independence and learn new skills. These risks are very well managed and recorded within individual, written Risk Assessments.

There are also very caring relationships between the young people. At this visit, I was able to observe the very empathetic behaviour of W, who recognised that one of his peers was becoming distressed, without prompting he sought to comfort her and

alert a member of staff.

All the young people also received certificates and diplomas in recognition of the success and achievements they had made.

Staff interaction

Was the staff interaction positive? Yes No

Based on observations and conversations held at this and previous visits, my professional view is that the management and care team at Richley House work creatively to promote positive outcomes for each of the young people who stay there.

I also feel that there is sufficient evidence to record that the young people thrive socially and educationally by having the opportunity to stay at Richley House.

From what I observe at each visit, they clearly appear to enjoy the experience. It also gives them the opportunity to increase and develop their levels of self-image and independence.

During this visit, I observed a situation whereby a young person had made a grab for a member of staff's hair. This was managed in a very calm way by the staff involved. There was no drama created and a calmness exhibited by the staff that lowered the anxiety and resolved the situation in a very child-focussed manner.

The confidence exhibited by the staff was very re-assuring and reinforced my view of the positive relationships and respect between the young people and adults around them.

Personnel Files

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

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

This will be a priority at my next visit.

General Observations

Within Richley House, there is a very visible child-centred approach which promotes the development of genuinely trusting relationships between the young people and staff caring for them.

Each young person is encouraged to share their views, either verbally or through non-verbal communication methods. The Head of Care is committed in ensuring that their voice is central and heard in decisions about the care and support they receive.

It has been recorded that each young person makes good progress from their individual starting points, particularly in developing their social skills and educational attainments.

My professional view is that Richley House offers each young person a clear opportunity to improve their social and emotional development, whilst also providing them with enjoyment and fun.

I am confident to record that they are appropriately safeguarded and protected from harm.

L Miles

Lance Miles
Standard 20 Independent Visitor

L Miles Associates - Independent Social Work Consultancy

8th August 2021