



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



December 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 – 14th December 2021.

Due to the continued heightened level of positive Covid-19 testing across the school, the current situation regarding testing remains the same as at my visit in October.

Fortunately, although the testing is still in place, by reviewing the guidance from the Government, Public Health England and reviewing their own specific Risk Assessment, it was possible to make this an announced visit.

There are some very sensible boundaries and expectations placed on all visitors to the school and Richley House. This was shared with me prior to my visit and abided to throughout this visit.

These arrangements are very clear and designed to ensure the continued safety and protection for all.

I arrived at 3pm and left Richley House just after 6.30pm. The staff team at the Reception area recorded my visit and ensured that I complied with the rules for visitors regarding the provision of a negative Lateral Flow Test and the wearing of a face mask.

This was a very re-assuring, positive and most enjoyable visit. The staff I spoke to presented as confident and proud as to how both the school and Richley House, despite the added challenges presented by Covid-19, had still managed to continue to embed and implement some positive changes in practice and relationships between the two services.

This was echoed in my conversations with the Head of Care, Head Teacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The Head Teacher spoke reassuringly about the precautions being taken. That included the testing of staff and young people, appropriate use of PPE and ensuring the young people were kept informed of changes across the school. I was also told about the support being given to the young people and their families to support their attendance at school or whilst they remained at home.

Throughout this visit, I was impressed by the views and demonstrable commitment from everyone I spoke to regarding the creation and maintenance in creating a shared culture and ethos, that supports and promotes each young person, who attends the school and has access to Richley House, to flourish and reach their full potential.

Attendance.

Any unauthorised absences?

~~Yes~~

No

Due to the impact of Covid-19, unfortunately, not every student who can access Richley House has been able to stay on their allotted nights. Additionally, Covid-19 has also impacted on their school attendance.

These absences have been shared with other professionals involved with the individual young people. The school has remained in contact with all the families and young people who access the school and Richley House. This is via telephone calls, and updates from the Headteacher on the website, as well as through the Residential Hub within the school website.

There continues to be 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.

Alongside this, the Head of Care has access to the school's "Welfare Call/Check" to monitor attendance across the school. This ensures that she can confirm the daily attendance of the young people who access Richley House.

I am confident that the school and Richley House has ensured that as many young people as possible have been able to stay overnight.

This has been facilitated by the overall and specific Risk Assessments in place and the open communication between the school, Richley House, parents and young people, to ensure Lateral Flow Testing is in place and any results or concerns expressed are dealt with promptly.

From talking with the young people at this visit, they were all very pleased that they were still able to stay at Richley House as they enjoyed their time there.

Sanctions.

Any major sanctions since the last visit? Yes No

In discussion with the Head of Care and Designated Safeguarding Lead it was verbally confirmed, that since my visit, no young person staying at Richley House had been given a sanction.

I was able to look at the electronic recording system "MyConcern," that is in use across all of Linden Lodge. There were no sanctions for young people staying at Richley House recorded within it.

There is a plethora of relevant plans in place to support each young person's positive behaviour, successful attendance at school and continued learning whilst staying at Richley House.

I was also view some of the Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSP) and PEEP's in place for the young people who stayed at Richley House.

There continues to be an improved quality and the level of detail in each of the plans and the associated Risk Assessments.

The Waking Day Curriculum also supports a seamless level of care and learning for

each young person whilst at the school and/or Richley House.

Physical Interventions.

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

There were no incidents within Richley House, whereby staff had to physically intervene to keep a young person or others safe.

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

At each of my visits, I am able to observe the quality of the relationships and personal interactions between the young people and staff that create an atmosphere and culture whereby the need and use of physical intervention is negated.

The staff team have participated in specialist training regarding restraint, should it be required.

The majority of this course focusses on diffusing and distraction techniques to avoid the need to physically intervene.

The course also covers aspects of recognising triggers or changes in behaviours that may lead a young person to have a heightened sense of agitation or distress.

In talking with the Managers and staff within Richley House, it is evident that they know each young person really well, so are able to intervene early enough with verbal prompts and gentle support to avoid situations escalating to a physical restraint.

Complaints.

Any complaints/concerns since the last visit? ~~Yes~~ No

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

I am confident that should a complaint be received or made concerning any aspect of Richley House, it would be recorded, shared and investigated in line with the school's policy.

This is based on my professional opinion and respect for the Senior Managers in both services, who at each of my visits facilitate a very open approach access to

members of staff, the environment and young people.

On display in the entrance to Richley House was a display of how the Care Team had responded to ideas or questions raised by the young people this was entitled "Our Voice Matters"

Risk Assessments.

Any Risk Assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes No

There continues to be a very transparent and multi-disciplinary approach to Risk Assessments and the Waking Day Curriculum for each young person.

These working documents have the requisite oversight of them by the Head of Care, Behaviour Support Team, Head Teacher, the DSL and Head of School.

This also provides an excellent opportunity for co-working and learning between care and education.

Individual Care Plans.

Were care plans up to date? Yes No

There are "Waking Day Curriculum" plans in place for each young person. These plans support the collaborative and cohesive working across care, education and therapeutic services, enabling every student at Linden Lodge to develop a positive attitude to learning.

There is both anecdotal and empirical evidence to support the finding that for those young people who stay at Richley House they make greater educational and social progress than their peers.

There is a very integrated approach given to each young person to ensure their individual EHCP targets are enmeshed with all the plans, activities and targets sets for each young person.

There are regular meetings between the school and care managers to set and review the targets set and the "assessing cycle" is termly.

I was also told about the individual life skills identified for each young person, which are shared within Linden Lodge and with the young person and their family.

These plans are highly individualised and for one young person are based on sensory smells to support transitions: Lavender – Richley House / Peppermint – School and Mother's perfume – Home.

Environment.

Were there any premises issues? Yes No

The home and grounds are consistently well maintained and cared for.

I was told that there are some planned improvements scheduled for the playground areas to ensure that it is safe and accessible for the young people.
Each of the floors, within Richley House continue to have their own identity, which is entirely appropriate for the young people who come to stay there.

The top floor is specifically designed to give an increased opportunity for the young people coming to stay there to further develop their independence and life skills.

At this visit there was a relaxed and calm atmosphere within Richley House.

Safeguarding.

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

There were no safeguarding incidents or concerns recorded within MyConcern in relation to a young person staying at Richley House. There is now a greater level of shared scrutiny within MyConcern by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Head of Care.

An additional filter has been implemented within MyConcern that enables the Head of Care to produce details solely relevant to staff working at Richley House.

There has also been further training for and discussions held within the Care Staff to ensure they know how to use MyConcern and the process that follows any information recorded. Further training is planned for the Well-Being and Therapy Team.

In conversation with the DSL, they described the process by which any and all bruises and marks noted on a young person were followed up appropriately with the family and other relevant professionals.

I was also told that from January there will be external "safeguarding" supervision and scrutiny provided by an External Facilitator.

Please can it be confirmed that the Safeguarding Governor and other Governors, have spent time meeting with the young people and staff within Richley House?

Medication records.

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

The continued administration of medicine to the young people by the dedicated Health Care Assistants is a strength of the home.

I will focus on this area of reporting/recording at my next visit.

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal.

Were staffing levels good? Yes No

From what I could observe during this visit, my conclusion would be that there were good staffing levels within Richley House to successfully meet the needs of the young people staying at Richley House.

From what I was told by the Head of Care and the staff within Richley House they are being provided with good supervision and identified opportunities for training. The staff team is stable, which promotes a consistency of approach in the way care and support is provided to each young person.

The Head of Care has sent out a "staff satisfaction" survey, which the earlier indication is that staff feel valued and cared for and have a sense of pride in the work they do.

The HR Team also support the Head of Care and staff morale by providing workshops, the most recent was on the subject of "Equality and Diversity".

Food.

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

From what I could observe and was told by the young people during this visit, the food is "good" with choices being made available and adherence to the specific dietary of individual young people being followed.

Security.

Was the site security good? Yes No

I am confident to record that the level of security and safety throughout Linden Lodge and Richley House is very good.

Activities.

Were there appropriate activities taking place? Yes No

At the entrance to Richley House and within the Residential Hub pages on the school's website there are some really good pictures of the young people participating in a range of activities.

These really capture the fun times each young person has whilst staying at Richley House. There are some activities that are based on learning new skills, having fun and learning about issues in the wider community away from Richley House. I was very lucky to visit the young people living on the top floor. They were having great fun singing and dancing using the Karaoke system on the television. Alongside this Ashley was playing the saxophone to accompany each song.

The care team were supporting each young person to participate and providing them all with positive praise and encouragement. Clearly Ashley is a very accomplished musician

Pupils.

Did the pupils appear happy & content? Yes No

Without doubt each young person I saw and/or spoke to during this visit, was extremely relaxed and enjoying their time at Richley House.

It was really good to talk to the young people on the top floor, some who remembered me from my previous visits or were very inquisitive as to who I was and why was I visiting them.

Staff interaction.

Was the staff interaction positive? Yes No

The visit reinforced my view that the relationship between the staff team and the young people is both positive and based on mutual respect. The staff caring for each young person who comes to stay at Richley House, ensure they are given positive re-assurance and support in order to achieve and develop.

All the staff employed at Richley House work as a whole team and the communication between the adults and young people is appropriate and inclusive.

The staff team work effectively with all the young people with commitment and consistency. This ensures they manage and care for the young people as individuals within a group living situation.

Personnel Files.

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

Was the required information evident?

Yes

No

I was able to view a selection of the staffing records maintained by the Head of Care, this included the supervision records.

The supervision records contained all the necessary and pertinent information to support the learning and development of each member of staff.

General Observations.

At this visit, I was able to further witness and hear about the increased and sustained level of integration and communication between the school and care teams.

From talking with the Deputy Head of Care and Head of Sixth Form the “Coffee Shop” project epitomises the joining of the shared vision to promote each young person’s level of independence and attainment both educationally and emotionally.

The Coffee Shop project was built around giving the young people and adults a meeting place that provided some of the young people an opportunity to develop workplace skills that would increase their level of independence, confidence and employability. One young person J had been very instrumental in developing this project along with care and school staff.

The Coffee Shop will also enable “goods” made within the school to be sold along with the opportunity to purchase a hot drink. Whilst I was at the Coffee Shop during this visit, there was a range of Christmas Gifts for sale.

In my view the leaders and managers within Richley House are now an integral part of Linden Lodge.

There is a shared determination to continually improve, to strengthen the provision for young people who come to stay and to make a real difference to their future lives.

This holistic approach is based around a sense of “No Limitations” on what each young person may be able to achieve.

There is a “Careers Programme” planned that will encompass all of the young people who attend the school. Within Richley House from January there will be the opportunity for the young people to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Scheme.

I also had the opportunity to view the “Tapestry” online recording journal that is being “rolled out” within Richley House.

This is described as an:

“... easy-to-use and secure online learning journal helping staff and families celebrate their children’s learning and development.”

The system builds a record of each young person's experiences, development and learning. It uses photos, videos, and diary entries, that can be made by a teacher or member of the care team along with the young person's family and the young person themselves.

The early entries that I was shown have huge potential for recording and celebrating the achievement and successes of each young person. I look forward to seeing the system in more detail at my next visit.

I am confident to record that all of the young people that have the opportunity to stay at Linden Lodge are appropriately safeguarded and protected from harm.

L Miles

Lance Miles
Standard 20 Independent Visitor

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28th December 2021