



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



December 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 derived from my separate virtual MS Team meetings with the Head of Care and Head Teacher, my virtual attendance at Richley House's Christmas Party and telephone and email exchanges with the Head of Care and Head Teacher. The relevant dates for these are the 15th and 16th December 2020.

Unfortunately, due to the on-going safety advice and precautions being taken to protect and limit any spread of Covid-19, both in the school and Richley House at Linden Lodge, the restrictions regarding visitors remains in place. This had been recently heightened by the introduction of further Tiered restrictions imposed by the Government, following an increase in the spread of Covid-19.

The school continues to remain open and overnight stays have been successfully maintained at Richley House.

In order for this to happen and for everyone to remain safe, there are both comprehensive and individualised risk assessments in place. These are for the school day and specific for the young people who are accessing Richley House. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. This ensures that they reflect the guidance provided by the Government, Public Health England (PHE) and Ofsted.

It was positive to hear, from the Head of Care and Head Teacher, about the very practical and good practice changes that continue to be instigated within Richley House.

The conversations and observations made, for the purposes of this report, were all very reassuring. It was great to see the young people enjoying themselves and to hear about their individual resilience and the progress they were all making, despite the challenges and changes in their daily routines due to Covid-19.

Attendance

Any unauthorised absences? ~~Yes~~ No

The attendance at the school and for those having the opportunity to stay at Richley House has all gone to plan.

There was only one young person not accessing their overnight stay, which was due to parental choice and the ever-changing restrictions of travel etc imposed by the Government.

During this term there were three new young people able to commencing overnight stays; this was well planned and very successful for them.

From my conversation with the Head of Care, it was apparent that all the decisions made, regarding boarding and the care provided at Richley House, continue to be based on clear risk assessments and meticulous pre-planning in relation to which young people can stay on particular nights.

Sanctions

Any major sanctions since the last visit? Yes No

From talking with the Head of Care, the behaviour and acceptance of change displayed by the young people coming to Richley House has been exemplary.

There had been no behaviour or incident that necessitated the imposition of any sanction or consequence.

The young people staying at Richley House all receive both individual and a highly personalised level of care and support.

I was able to observe, during the Christmas Party, the very respectful and trusting relationships between the young people themselves and with the adults caring for them.

Physical Interventions

Any physical interventions since the last visit? Yes No

There continues to be a very warm and genuine caring relationship displayed from the staff to the young people staying at Richley House.

I was able to observe the staff explaining things in a very clear and caring manner during the Christmas Party, when technology at times failed.

The young people were extremely patient and enabled to stay relaxed and calm, despite the frustration and heightened excitement of the Party.

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 report.

From talking with the Head of Care, I was told about many of the new initiatives within Richley House to help the young people have a voice and contribute in a meaningful way to decisions within the House and in relation to their care.

There had also been a survey sent to parents, the responses received were all very complimentary and raised no concerns. The return rate was 45%, which was a good indication of the satisfaction parents and families had in respect of Richley House.

Risk Assessments

Any risk assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes No

From talking with the Head of Care and Head Teacher, the Risk Assessment and Protocol in relation to dealing with and managing Covid-19, across the whole of Linden Lodge, is continually reviewed, updated and most importantly shared across the campus with all staff and young people.

Each young person coming to stay at Richley House has their own risk assessment, which is reviewed as necessary.

Within the House, there are clear risk assessments and cleaning/hygiene protocols in place.

Individual Care Plans

Were care plans up to date? Yes No

I was assured by the Head of Care that all the care plans for each young person are in situ.

We talked through some of the content and it was obvious that each plan was very individualised and took into account the aims and outcomes identified within the young person's EHCP.

The Head of Care was also able to give some good examples of the progress each young person had and was making during their stay at Richley House.

It was also confirmed that each young person had a PEEP's in place and where possible, had contributed to the "All About Me" part of their own care plans

Environment

Were there any premises issues? Yes No

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

The cleaning regime continues to be in place within Richley House, across the school and campus.

From seeing each of the living/dining rooms during the Christmas Party, they appeared tastefully and seasonally decorated.

I was not made aware of any particular outstanding or identified maintenance issue.

Safeguarding

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

This remains the same as my last report.

From talking 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 report.

The precautions and risk assessments in place across Linden Lodge are very sensible, in line with advice from PHE, the Government, Ofsted and the local Clinical Commissioning and Governance Boards etc.

For any suspected case of Covid-19, there are clear protocols in place and procedures to be followed.

The Head of Care has also instigated a “feedback” form that is given to each young person when the term starts and checked with them at various times dependent on their individual responses.

This has helped one young person to share how they were feeling emotionally due to the impact of Covid-19 and enabled the staff to specifically support her.

The outcome was that at a later “survey” they were able to share that they felt much better.

This is indicative of the widest possible understanding of the staff’s commitment to ensure each young person is appropriately safeguarded and protected from harm, in whatever manner that may present.

Medication records

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

Due to the nature and timing of my virtual visit, it was not feasible to review these records.

I was told that medication continues to be administered by the Health Care Assistants (HCA’s) and overall, this system is working well.

I discussed the issue of PPE with the Head Teacher and although there were conflicting messages from the Government and PHE, the school and Richley House have sufficient PPE.

Has the request for additional Nursing capacity for Richley House been progressed?

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal

Were staffing levels good? Yes No

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

I was able to see the staff and young people at Richley House all of whom were attending the Christmas Party.

From what I was able to ascertain from this and from what I was told by the Head of Care, the staffing levels continue to meet the needs of the young people who come to stay at Richley House.

The staff team have remained positive and hugely committed to ensuring that everyone who comes to stay and work at Richley House receives the necessary care and support to do so safely.

There are three new staff starting at Richley House on the 4th January 2021, all of whom were recruited following a “safer recruitment” process.

The care staff within Richley House are receiving supervision and the next round of appraisals is due to commence.

Food

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

Unable to truly assess as a virtual visit only.

I was able to see some of the party food which looked very appetising.

In conversation with the Head of Care it was confirmed that the food provided is planned in advance on a weekly basis and young people are made aware of the menu. The menu planning also takes into account an element of choice and specific dietary needs.

Security

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

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

However, the precautions taken regarding visitors all seem perfectly sensible and very much geared to keeping everyone safe.

Activities

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

I was able to virtually attend Richley House's Christmas Party. This was quite a technological feat, with each floor being able to "virtually" and safely party together, whilst remaining in their own parts of the home.

The Christmas Party gave a great insight into the intricate knowledge the staff have of each young person in their care. They were able to make sure that every young person was included in the proceedings and take an active part in the festivities.

Many of the staff and young people were wearing Christmas jumpers and there was lots of waving and laughter throughout the virtual party between everyone in the same room or between the floors.

It was really good to see the positive way everyone was interacting, lots of cheery "hello's" and excited voices and actions.

The celebrations continued unabated even when technology failed. The patience and understanding displayed by the young people was admirable and is indicative of the trust and respect shared between the young people and adults.

There was the opportunity for all to contribute musically, whilst singing and dancing.

I was also told about the range of other activities that had been on offer, which included regular Yoga and Music Nights, along with opportunities to cook, participate in drumming sessions, arts and craft activities and using the gym and pool.

It is extremely fortunate that the young people at Richley House can access some of the facilities within the school after hours and have a staff team that wants to enrich each young person's free time with interesting and varied activities.

Pupils

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

From what I could see within the virtual Christmas Party, the young people were all having a great time.

They were all very happy in each other's company.

As prizes and certificates were awarded, the recipient was heartily clapped and cheered by everyone attending the party. Those that need to have their certificate in another format, such as braille, will be receiving a further copy.

Each young person, whether a prize winner or not, was in receipt of positive engagement and encouragement throughout the party which, in my previous visits, was very much the norm within Richley House.

In conversation with the Head of Care and Head Teacher, there are continued successes identified for each young person who has come to stay at Richley House.

They were also able to identify the positive ways that each young person has adapted to the now established and potential changes across the campus.

This has been achieved by using a range of communication techniques, all of which are specific for the individual young person.

Staff interaction

Was the staff interaction positive? Yes No

This was easy to identify and assess, even given the limitations of this being a virtual visit.

Each young person was visibly enjoying themselves at the Christmas Party. The staff team had prepared well for the event and were actively engaging and supporting each young person to ensure they could fully participate.

The staff, in my view and from what I was told, continue to be ambitious for each young person in relation to what they can achieve and to reach increased levels of independence.

The staff have worked well to ensure the views and contributions from each young person are gathered and responded to.

Personnel Files

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

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

This was due to be achieved, within in the careful planning that proceeded my virtual visit. Unfortunately, due to technical issues this was not possible.

General Observations

Despite the limitations of my visits mainly being “virtual” throughout 2020, I am confident that the care provided to the young people, who access Richley House, remains very personalised and focussed in ensuring they have a positive and enriching experience whilst staying at Richley House.

In my professional opinion, the staff team at Richley House is working effectively and in partnership with the school, families and other Agencies to ensure any young

person, staying at the home, is effectively safeguarded and protected from harm, in whatever form that may take.

The impact of Covid-19 has been a major feature of life at Richley House. In conversations at this and previous visits, it is apparent that the home continues to provide an appropriate level of information to each young person regarding the changes and impact of Covid-19. This is achieved through an individualised approach and uses a variety of techniques to ensure each young person is supported to understand the importance of increased good hygiene.

Each young person is also helped to understand the targets within their care plan, which supports their engagement and successful outcomes.

Throughout this visit there were numerous examples of young people receiving positive physical and verbal affirmations of their behaviour and choices made.

The increased engagement through technology has provided families a more readily available and accessible way to see the workings within Richley House.

Equally, the focussed and planned opportunities for young people to express their views and feelings is also a further positive development within Richley House.

L Miles

Lance Miles
Standard 20 Independent Visitor

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4th January 2021