



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



September 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 my MS Team meeting with the Head of Care and Head Teacher on the 23rd September 2020.

It was hoped and discussed with the Head of Care, prior to our MS teams meeting, that this visit would be in person. 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.

The new term started on the 3rd September. In order to achieve this the school and more importantly, specific for overnight stays to re-commence within Richley House, comprehensive and individualised risk assessments have been undertaken.

The school has followed and taken into account the guidance provided by the Government, Public Health England and Ofsted. The school and home have been very pro-active and sought specialised input from the Infection Control Team at St George's Hospital. This has included liaising with the Lead Nurse there. They have provided Linden Lodge and Richley House with advice regarding visits to the campus, as well as audits and weekly updates.

Richley House has re-opened for boarding since the beginning of the Autumn Term. All the staff across the school and home are having their health and well-being checked and monitored. This is both a protective and caring approach to ensure the safety and health of everyone.

I was informed, by the Head of Care, of the many practical and practice changes that have been implemented within Richley House. These all seemed perfectly sensible and very much geared to keeping everyone safe, whilst maximising the number of young people that could receive the boarding element of their EHCP.

All the young people staying overnight will have their own room, which will be regularly cleaned and then deep cleaned before another young person has the use of it.

Increased care is being taken with personal and general hygiene as well as additional attention in the laundering of clothes and bedding etc.

Attendance

Any unauthorised absences? ~~Yes~~ No

From the 23rd June until the end of the summer term, the school was partially open for 30 students. There were no students staying overnight in Richley House during this time, the last night of boarding was the 18th March 2020.

Educationally all students were supported to attend the school, after careful risk assessments had been carried out.

For those students whereby it was not possible or safe enough for them to come to

school, they and their families were supported and provided with “remote education”.

For those students who are now boarding, careful and sensible monitoring of their health needs is in place. Within Richley House certain changes have been implemented, from what I was told these are in place to promote the welfare and safety of each young person.

There has been careful planning and negotiation in relation to which young people can stay on particular nights. This has logistically been a challenging task, with all the possible variables. However, from what I was told this has been achieved successfully and the young people now boarding are enjoying themselves.

There have been two new students accessing Richley House, so each floor is at virtual full capacity, with up to eight young people staying each night.

From talking with the Head of Care, it was apparent that this had been a gargantuan achievement. It has taken the co-operation of some staff to be even more flexible and for parents to accept a change of nights. The main focus was clearly to ensure each young person had the opportunity to stay at Richley House and in so doing, remain safe and well cared for. Another dynamic was to ensure they had a social group to be part of.

From what I was told, this has all been successfully achieved and the staff, parents’ and young people’s response has been extremely positive and promoted an “inclusivity” with Richley House and across Linden Lodge.

Sanctions

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

I was not made aware of any young person receiving a sanction or consequence since Richley House re-opened at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

All the young people are in receipt of individual care, which promotes and allows a respectful and trusting relationship to be developed between the young people and the adults caring for them.

Physical Interventions

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

I was not made aware of any young person needing to be held since Richley House re-opened at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

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.

There had been three compliments received and I encouraged the Head of Care to formally record them.

Risk Assessments

Any risk assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes No

From talking with the Head of Care and Head Teacher, the school is constantly reviewing and updating the Risk Assessment and Protocol in relation to dealing with and managing Covid-19 across the whole of Linden Lodge. The current risk assessment in place totals 76 pages.

This is indicative of the risks and concerns for the health and wellbeing of the students and staff within the school.

Individual Care Plans

Were care plans up to date? Yes No

The Head of Care has ensured that these are in place for all the young people coming to stay at Richley House. These are highly individualised, taking into account the necessary guidance and best practice advice received from a number of sources. These are also subject to rigorous review and challenge.

There is a clear waking day curriculum across the school and Richley House, which ensures a consistency of approach, increasing staff's confidence and the young people's sense of safety and security.

There has been a concerted and considerable commitment to looking at a joined-up thinking approach to each young person's EHCP and achievable outcomes in the current "climate", taking into account Covid-19.

The main foci will be:

Communication / Social Interaction / Emotional and Mental Health.

These will all be considered and delivered in a creative and enjoyable way whilst a young person is staying at Richley House.

From what I was told, the collaborative work across all parts of Linden Lodge has been excellent. With everyone working hard to ensure the safety, positive

experiences and learning opportunities for each student.

The Head of Care and her staff team are committed to ensuring that all plans and risk assessments will be subject to regular review and updated 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 was deep cleaned and is now subject to continuous cleaning in order to keep both the students staying overnight and all the respective staff teams safe.

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 report and the re-opening of Richley House.

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.

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 and Richley House.

The staff teams have been given bespoke training regarding infection control and the use of PPE.

There is one student who requires medical intervention by the use of an aerosol generating procedure (AGP). As this medical procedure can result in the release of

airborne particles (aerosols) from the respiratory tract, the school have taken some very specialised advice. This has included the compiling of a very detailed risk assessment and procedure for the use of AGP. This has come from engagement with Public Health England (PHE), meetings with the Clinical Commissioning Group, conversations with two other specialist schools and engaging with other professionals and the family, to have in place a very comprehensive and specialist Health Protocol.

Outside of this visit, I have also spoken to the Senior Pharmacist who is supporting both the school and Richley House to review their medication policy and practice. This will also include increased rigour, auditing, ordering of and administration of medication.

The CCG has also agreed funding for six extra nurses for the school, currently a separate case is being presented to increase the nursing capacity with Richley House.

There are also flu vaccinations planned for all the young people at Linden Lodge, this will also involve consideration on the best way for this to be achieved.

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal

Were staffing levels good? ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~

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

From what I was told, the staffing levels continue to meet the needs of the young people who come to stay at Richley House.

I was informed that the commitment to professional supervision and training has continued within the care team.

The Head of Care and the senior staff within Richley House are staunchly focussing their attention on enabling staff to enrol and complete their L3 Qualification. There are now a further seven staff enrolled and they were supported during the summer, via Team Meetings, to keep working on their portfolio and evidence of work.

This clearly demonstrates the value and importance being placed on the training provided for staff.

There has also been training provided regarding hygiene and safety, staff have also been fitted with individual face masks.

There is a further training day planned for the care and school staff at the next inset day, the topics are still under discussion.

Food

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

Unable to assess as a virtual visit only.

Although, I was told that menus continue to be prepared in advance and focus on the dietary needs of each young person. Emphasis, is also centred on taking into account any expressed preference and choices voiced by a young person.

The menus and choice of food was always a positive within the home and I have no reason to think that the quality, presentation and healthiness of the food will have diminished.

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.

Activities

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

I was unable to verify the activities being offered. But I have every confidence that what I was told by the Head of Care was accurate and being delivered.

The plan, alongside the outcomes mentioned within the care plan section, is for the team to focus on exercise, fun and mindfulness for each young person when they stay at Richley House.

There are numerous activities planned within the facilities across the campus, making use of social bubbles and groups as an extension of the school day.

I was told that the day following my visit, there was a “yoga workshop”, being delivered via MS Teams, for everyone to participate in.

There will also be a renewed focus on the opportunities for playing in the garden as well as using time to replant areas outside.

Pupils

Did the pupils appear happy & content?

~~Yes~~

~~No~~

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

I was told that each floor within Richley House is being treated as its own “bubble”.

It was good to hear that W had made a very successful move to the top floor, where he will be supported and encouraged to be more independent. He is already a very able and engaging young man, this will hopefully equip him with further independent living skills.

The Head of Care has also developed a “student voice” questionnaire to get each young person’s views on the return to school and Richley House. This will also be used to get their ideas for activities etc.

From what I was told during my virtual meeting, each young person who has come to stay at Richley House has adapted well to the changes and the difference in approach since they last stayed at the home.

This was all facilitated by the use of social stories etc to prepared them for the changes, this something home has been consistently good at doing, even before Covid-19.

The staff have access to a wide range of PPE, especially different types of face masks. This includes full face clear ones so those young people who rely on lip reading are not disadvantaged, such is the degree of personalised care and thinking in relation to each young person’s very bespoke and individualised needs.

Staff interaction

Was the staff interaction positive?

~~Yes~~

~~No~~

Unable to assess.

Each young person was supported to understand the changes in place for their return to school and Richley House as from September.

This involved Social Stories and examples of the types of PPE that staff would be wearing, in an attempt to alleviate any negative connotations with a more medical presentation from the care staff.

Personnel Files

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

Was the required information evident? Yes No

Due to this being a further virtual visit, it was not possible to cover this area during my virtual meeting with the Head of Care and Head Teacher.

I was told that there was a new member of the night care team now in post and that all the correct checks and references were obtained. Their induction was planned and was facilitated by one of the Deputy Managers at Richley House.

If my next visit needs to be a virtual one, it has been agreed that I will be able to meet with the HR team to verify as much as I can via a video link.

I know from talking with the Head of Care, she has had the opportunity to talk with the HR Manager to verify Single List and Staffing Information. They have also been able to complete Agency checks and verifications on staff have been provided.

General Observations

The Head of Care had clearly considered the necessary changes necessary for boarding to recommence, whilst constantly re-assessing practice and plans, to ensure a “safe” environment for everyone living and working within Richley House.

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 there.

From talking with the Head of Care and Head Teacher, it was easy to recognise the mutual respect and positive relationship between these two senior leaders.

I was also made aware that the new leaders within the school are equally excited and committed in the way the true partnership way of working within Linden Lodge has developed and how responsive and available outside agencies have been to promote the safety and well-being for everyone at the home.

It was really good to hear that the young people staying at Richley House have really enjoyed the opportunity stay there.

The daily checks on everybody’s temperature and well-being are being carried out in an unobtrusive manner and form part of the “meet and greet” process adopted by the home.

There is a real imperative to keep a record of the compliments received and the innovative ideas and thinking within the school and Richley House.

From my conversation with the Head Teacher and Head of Care, I am confident that the school and Richley House are working closely with a range of specialist professionals and organisations to develop the best practice model possible, given all challenges presented by Covid-19.

The Head of Care is ensuring that the careful matching and compatibility assessments that have been undertaken to decide which young people are able to safely access Richley House are kept under review.

L Miles

Lance Miles
Standard 20 Independent Visitor

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