



LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL

Standard 20 Visitors Report



February 2022

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 – 9th February 2022.

Within Linden Lodge and Richley House Covid-19 testing across the campus, for any visitors to the home, continues to be in place.

The Risk Assessment regarding Covid-19 is regularly reviewed and is informed by the advice from Government and Public Health England.

By following the latest protocol for visitors, it was possible to make this an announced visit.

There continues to be 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.

This was a very positive and reassuring visit. All of my observations of the care staff's interactions with the young people were very nurturing and supportive.

In talking with the Head of Care and the Head Teacher, I was impressed by the very child and family focussed approach they implemented when making plans to address the challenges presented by Covid-19. Due to this careful and sensitive approach, both the school and Richley House has been able to remain open, despite the impact of Covid-19 on both the adults and young people.

Attendance.

Any unauthorised absences? ~~Yes~~ No

There have been some students that have not been able to access their boarding nights within Richley House. This has been due a number of reasons emanating from the impact of Covid-19.

In order to “compensate” these young people and families, with careful planning, the Head of Care has been able to “pay back” these missing nights.

Within Richley House, the staff have a very strong connection with the school. This enables information regarding young people to be shared in a timely and professional manner.

The Head of Care has developed a range of ways to communicate with the parents of the young people who access Richley House.

Alongside the Residential Hub, that everyone can access via the school website, the Head Teacher's newsletters also have contributions from Richley House.

The greater use of “tapestry” will also increase the parents' opportunity to see and comment on the progress and activities their child is participating in within Richley House.

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.

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

Sanctions.

Any major sanctions since the last visit? Yes No

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

Had there been any, they would have been recorded and reviewed within "MyConcern," that is in use across all of Linden Lodge.

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

The Waking Day Curriculum continues to support the seamless level of care and learning for each young person whilst at the school and/or Richley House.

All of these plans are thorough and are carefully evaluated to ensure that staff have up-to-date information to support each young person in a very personalised way.

Progress is tracked so that staff in the school and Richley House can support each young person with their emotional well-being, behaviour, education and health. This also provides consistency for the young people, across the two settings, as all staff respond in the same way and know the best response for each child.

Within Richley House this encompassing approach supports the genuine care and "love" given to each young person, so the incidents of challenging behaviour are almost negated. Therefore the use of any consequence is restorative in nature and not dissimilar to those used by "good parents".

Physical Interventions.

Any physical interventions since the last visit? Yes No

Since my last visit, there were no incidents within Richley House whereby staff had to physically intervene to keep a young person or others safe. Again, MyConcern would be used to record this and I was able to verify that none had been recorded.

My observation of the relationships between the adults and young people, staying at Richley House, is that they are warm and supportive and are developed, in most cases, over a number of years. In that time, young people form meaningful bonds with the staff, enabling them to develop trust and belief that the staff will do their

utmost to protect them and help them to reach their potential. This, in my opinion, is achieved on a conscious and unconscious level.

From my observations at this and previous visits, my conclusion is that the young people, who come to stay at Richley House, enjoy their boarding experience and benefit from the excellent caring relationships they develop with both staff and peers.

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.

Risk Assessments.

Any Risk Assessments undertaken since the last visit? Yes No

There are systems in place to ensure that Risk Assessments and the Waking Day Curriculum for each young person is reviewed within a multi-disciplinary framework.

In my view, the management of risks and behaviours within Richley House is effective in promoting young people's constructive and safe behaviours. Consistent praise, trusting relationships, clear rules and firm behavioural boundaries have contributed to each young person's sense of self-worth, achievement and inner security.

Having visited Richley House over a number of years, the progress each young person makes is easily identified.

The Head of Care is very careful to ensure the groupings of young people, who access Richley House, are planned in advance and when necessary, changes are made. All aspects of the young person's needs are considered, including any social care priorities.

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 are regular meetings between the school and Richley House to set and review targets and the "assessing cycle" is termly.

The "Tapestry" electronic recording system is becoming embedded within Richley House. I was able to view some of the young people's records, which were very informative and indicative of the progress each young person was making and the fun they were having participating in a range of activities whilst staying at the home.

Environment.

Were there any premises issues? Yes No

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

Despite the external institutional look of Richley House, internally the staff have sought to create and provide a loved, warm, family atmosphere for the young people to live and play in. Certain areas are very personalised, individual bedrooms are generous, and comfortable spaces.

The main living space on each floor provides young people with designated places to eat, relax, socialise and play.

The home continues to maximise its use and understanding of technology to increase the benefits it provides to the young people attending the school and accessing Richley House.

There was a fire evacuation completed on the 8th February. This was completed satisfactorily without incident or accident. Within this evacuation there was an identified need for a young person to have some additional learning regarding exiting the home. This has already been shared for the Habitation Team to provide.

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.

It was very positive to hear that the Safeguarding Governor has visited the young people and staff within Richley House.

My overall impression is that, within Richley House, everyone's safety is promoted diligently and members of staff implement and follow the agreed safeguarding systems effectively.

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.

Staffing, Supervision and Appraisal.

Were staffing levels good? Yes No

From what I have observed at each of my visits, the residential staff are very experienced and exude a deep sense of caring and wanting what is best for the young people in their care.

The Head of Care and her management team set high standards for staff. These are expected and achieved. Issues are addressed immediately and supervision is both regular and recorded.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 the staff team have rallied and “done over and above,” being flexible in their approach and have demonstrated their commitment in providing a safe and stimulating environment within Richley House.

When talking with managers and staff, they are able to demonstrate the quality in the care they provide and take delight in identifying each young person’s achievements and progress. This, in my view, creates an enthusiasm and motivates the young people to make significant progress.

Food.

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

From what I could observe, the food was of a good quality, with choices being made available and adherence to the specific dietary needs of individual young people was evident.

I was able to observe the care and limitless time being given to each young person in order for them to enjoy their food in an unhurried way,

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~~

Due to the restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19, the mainstay of activities has been utilising the facilities within Linden Lodge.

On 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.

Within the "Tapestry" records for each young person there are many examples of the fun they are having whilst learning.

With Richley House the young people are able to develop their social skills and have opportunities to take part in enriching activities. These not only provide enjoyment, but help each young person to develop confidence, self-esteem and increase their levels of independence.

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.

The quality and genuineness of the care provided by the adults within Richley House means that the young people and staff truly get to know and trust each other.

Different personalities are enjoyed and each young person's idiosyncrasies and needs are very well understood. This results in a sense of acceptance and care for each other in the small community of Richley House.

My assessment is that the young people who stay at Richley House see their "peers" as friends and therefore, noticeably, celebrate each other's achievements and show sensitivity around their individual needs and behaviours.

I know when talking to the young people at previous visits they describe the situation as one where "We look out for each other."

I was able to spend some time with A, who was happy for me to sit in on her "lesson" with the Specialist VI Teacher who provides 3 sessions per week to the young people staying at Richley House, promoting their access and knowledge of assisted and accessible technology.

A was very engaged with this learning and presented as very confident and competent in using her "BrailleNote Touch 4."

Staff interaction.

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

The quality of care that I observed, at this and previous visits, is exceptionally good. In my professional view, this exceeds the National Minimum Standards that underpin the quality of care.

The quality of care and support enables each young person to make positive progress in their social and educational attainments and increase their overall sense of well-being.

Personnel Files.

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

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

This was to be an area of practice focussed on at my next visit.

General Observations.

My professional assessment is that the school's leadership, management and staff teams demonstrate a high commitment to helping children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

The opportunity to board within Richley House, is highly valued within the school community. It is seen as an integral and vital part of the school's identity.

The ethos of high expectations and aspirations for children and young people runs consistently through the various aspects of the school.

The collaborative approach of the "Waking Day Curriculum" promotes the positive impact on each young person's progress and outcomes. It is clearly evident that the opportunity of boarding makes a significant contribution to this achievement.

Progress within Richley House, for each young person, is measurable and evidenced within the "Tapestry" system in place.

I am confident that Richley House is managed efficiently and effectively. It fulfils its purpose of providing additional support and a positive experience of communal living to the young people who are able to access it.

Richley House is appropriately resourced and staffed. The team's stability provides consistent practice and enables each young person to increase their levels of independence.

Hopefully, the latest Ofsted inspection will recognise the positive impact that Richley House makes in the lives of the young people who are fortunate enough to stay there.

I was disappointed to hear that possibly the Senior Leaders and managers, within the school and Richley House, may not have had the opportunity to fully demonstrate and evidence all the systems and benefits that Richley House provides to the young people in their care.

Certainly, by not viewing Tapestry, this in my view and that of Head of Care and Head Teacher, was an opportunity lost to see how the opportunities of learning whilst boarding is evidenced.

The increased use of technology continues to build on the opportunities for young people to work towards improved independence and employment. This is certainly what BrailleNote Touch would provide. The “café” is a good example of the young people within Richley House and the school being given the experience of a workplace opportunity.

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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14th February 2022