

Summarised inspection findings

Linn Moor Residential School

8 September 2026

Key contextual information

Linn Moor Residential School is an independent residential special school in Aberdeenshire. The school is part of the Voluntary Services Aberdeen Group care services. The school roll is 19 children and young people aged from nine to 22 years of age. All children and young people have a range of severe and complex needs. All children and young people reside in care services at the school. The school is led by a headteacher who has indicated their intention to leave the post in June 2026.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good
This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are: ■ learning and engagement ■ quality of teaching ■ effective use of assessment ■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

- All staff establish and maintain very positive relationships with children and young people and their families. Staff are highly skilled at developing children and young people’s trust. Children and young people know that staff care and are ambitious for them to learn and attain as well as they can. The ethos of the school is built on staff’s clear commitment to children’s rights. Children and young people are supported well to make choices in their learning, where appropriate. Children and young people’s opinions are used effectively to inform their learning activities. Children and young people’s learning activities build on their sensory needs and personal interests well. As a result, all children and young people engage effectively in their learning most of the time.
- All staff support children and young people effectively in their learning. They are highly attuned to children and young people’s individual needs. Staff embody the school’s values well in their daily interactions with children and young people. They treat each child or young person with high levels of respect at all times. Staff use praise effectively to support children and young people to know when they have done well. Children and young people enjoy having their achievements recognised. In a few lessons there are missed opportunities for teachers to challenge children and young people more in their learning. Teachers should consider how they can ensure that children and young people’s learning provides them with appropriate levels of challenge and supports them to make greater progress in their learning.
- Staff use a wide range of learning environments in the school campus and the local community effectively to enrich children and young people’s learning. For example, children and young people enjoy learning about nature and growing their own food when in the school garden and nearby farm. They learn valuable functional social skills such as using public transport when on outings to local venues. Children and young people access the local community very well through participating in these valuable activities. Staff have introduced a school café, which runs once a week to help children and young people develop their skills in learning together in

groups. This is supported by other class group activities such as circle time. Children and young people are developing important social skills, which they can apply in new and unfamiliar settings. Parents speak extremely positively of the effect that their child or young person's improving ability to cope in social contexts is having on their family life at home.

- Children and young people's class learning is highly individualised. This supports all children and young people to access and make good progress in their learning. Teachers' explanations of children and young people's intended learning are clear. This helps children and young people to know what they are being asked to do. In a minority of classes, teachers use digital technologies well to capture children and young people's interest in their learning. These are used mostly to help children and young people to communicate. Teachers should now consider how they can use digital technologies more consistently and effectively to enrich children and young people's learning experiences.
- Staff use a range of visual aids such as pictorial timetables to support children and young people to access their learning. This includes a range of resources such as picture boards, which support children and young people effectively to develop their literacy and communication skills.
- All staff observe children and young people closely at all times. They identify instances well where children and young people may be becoming dysregulated and disengage in their learning. All staff are adept at using a range of approaches, including redirection and waiting time, to calm each child or young person and reengage them quickly in their learning. This contributes to a calm, purposeful learning environment across the school.
- All staff are supported very well to undertake a wide range of relevant professional learning. For example, a few staff have undertaken higher education studies in approaches to supporting learners with autism. This is supporting them well to develop their understanding of autism and how best they can meet children and young people's needs.
- The headteacher has created plans to develop further a range of spaces such as the soft play room to support children and young people to enjoy more purposeful play activities. All staff have undertaken professional learning on play. They are now engaging with national guidance. As a result, teachers are beginning to develop approaches to play across the school.
- A range of multidisciplinary partners at the school assess each child or young person's medical, sensory, physical, communication, and learning needs very well. This wide range of assessments provides staff with detailed information of how best to meet each child or young person's needs. Staff use this information appropriately to plan learning which ensures most children and young people access and make progress in their learning. Teacher's regular assessments of children and young people's needs ensures staff have accurate and current information. This supports teachers to adapt planned learning to help ensure they meet each child or young person's needs.
- Teachers access appropriate resources to help develop their understanding of national standards. This is at the early stages of development. The headteacher needs to consider how teachers can develop their understanding of national standards better through increased opportunities for moderation.

- All children and young people follow a highly individualised curriculum. Teachers plan learning which builds effectively on each child or young person's existing skills. Multidisciplinary partners and parents work collaboratively with teachers to help ensure learning experiences develop relevant skills important to each child or young person. Teachers plan learning effectively across all curricular areas. A range of community partners support teachers to deliver each child or young person's individualised curriculum.
- Teachers use a range of approaches to track and monitor children and young people's progress. The headteacher has introduced a useful tracker which captures information about children and young people's progress at pre-early level. Teachers use other tools effectively to track and monitor children and young people's progress at early and first level. They use an online platform appropriately to record each child or young person's progress towards achieving individual targets. Children and young people's individual targets are reviewed regularly, which helps teachers be clear as to how well children and young people are progressing in developing their skills. Teachers should continue with their plans to streamline these processes to ensure the information they gather can be more easily analysed. They should consider how simplifying these processes will provide more meaningful information to track and monitor children and young people's progress more effectively.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children and young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. At the broad general education (BGE), the majority of children and young people are working at early level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). A minority of children and young people work at foundation milestones, pre-early level or first level. All children and young people require significant levels of additional support with their learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children and young people are making good progress in literacy and English. A few children and young people could be making better progress, particularly with writing.

Listening and talking

- Children and young people develop their listening and communication skills well. They show good progress from prior levels of attainment. At foundation milestones and pre-early level, most children and young people attend to spoken or signed interactions from a familiar adult. Most children and young people use consistent methods of communication to express their wants or needs. At early level, most children and young people enjoy exploring stories and other texts, in particular sensory stories. Children and young people working at first level demonstrate their understanding by responding to questions, for example when matching key words and photographs. A minority of children and young people are developing their listening and talking skills further when ordering or taking orders in the school café each week.

Reading

- Most children and young people develop their skills in reading well. They listen attentively to stories read by familiar adults as part of their daily routines. At foundation milestones and pre-early levels, most children and young people recognise familiar symbols, pictures or photographs in context. Most children and young people working at pre-early level show interest in books and other texts, such as visual timetables. As a result, children and young people develop their pre-reading attention and engagement skills well. At early level, most children and young people enjoy exploring events in stories. They demonstrate their understanding using their own communication methods, for example an electronic talker. At first level, most children and young people identify key aspects of a short story, for example the main characters and how the story ended. Most classes have a range of reading books available. Teachers should consider how all children and young people access a wider range of books that are age-appropriate and of interest.

Writing

- At foundation milestones and pre-early levels, most children and young people develop their fine motor skills and pre-writing skills well. A few children and young people working at early level develop their writing skills well. At first level a few young people, with support, regularly write emails to family members. Across the school, children and young people need to develop their writing further. They should be supported to communicate their own ideas and tell stories by, for example sequencing photographs and pictures. Children and young people should continue to develop their writing skills with increasing independence.

Senior Phase

- At the senior phase, almost all young people achieve a range of National 1 qualifications. A few young people achieve National 2 qualifications, for example in Spanish. Young people are developing well their functional communication and social skills. For example, when using public transport, participating in community outings or when working in the school café.

Numeracy and mathematics

- A majority of children and young people are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority are making satisfactory progress. Children and young people could be making further progress with information handling and shape, position and movement.

Number, money, and measure

- Almost all children and young people develop their number, money and measure skills within real-life contexts such as shopping within the local community. Most children and young people at foundation milestones and pre-early level show awareness of a quantity in familiar contexts such as within a cup or bowl. They understand concepts of time including days of the week, dates and months of the year as part of everyday classroom routines. At early level, most children and young people use practical materials to count on and back correctly. At first level, a few children use their understanding of place value and written methods to add and subtract two-digit numbers successfully.

Shape, position and movement

- Through play, most children and young people working within foundation milestones and pre-early levels explore and manipulate three-dimensional (3D) objects and two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They successfully match items of the same colour or size and understand simple symmetry when creating pieces of art, for example butterflies. At early level, a majority of children and young people understand simple directions and positional language. At first level, a few children and young people can identify and correctly name simple 3D objects and 2D shapes. Children and young people now need to develop further their understanding of positional language such as 'before', 'after', 'under' and 'over' in a range of meaningful contexts.

Information handling

- From foundation milestones through to early level, most children and young people confidently use charts and signs around the school campus to find information. Children and young people make choices using visual information boards. At first level, the majority of children and young people use tally charts in real-life contexts to collect information. For example, when taking drinks orders during the weekly café sessions. Children and young people now need to develop further their understanding of the likelihood of events happening.

Senior Phase

- At the senior phase, all young people achieve qualifications at National 1 level. Young people develop their functional numeracy skills well in real-life contexts including when they cook, bake, plan a journey, shop or work in the school café.

Attainment over time

- All children and young people attend school regularly. Where there are a few incidences of lateness, staff work promptly and effectively with all stakeholders to maximise children and young people's attendance. At the time of inspection, children and young people's overall attendance was 97%.
- In the BGE, most children and young people attain well over time across most areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff track children and young people's progress via an online system. This system provides staff with significant levels of information which has the potential to be overly complicated and bureaucratic. Teachers are now developing profiles which provide more streamlined information on each child or young person's attainment over time. Teachers should continue to develop this approach to track and monitor children and young people's attainment more effectively.
- All young people in the senior phase achieve National 1 qualifications in a range of curriculum areas including health & wellbeing, science, independent living skills and religious and moral education. A few young people achieve awards at National 2 level. Senior leaders and staff should ensure that all young people's progress within the senior phase is captured through National Qualifications at an appropriate level. They should explore further qualifications at National 2 level for a few learners.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The development of children and young people's skills is a strength of the school. All children and young people experience success and contribute to the life of the school regularly. They participate meaningfully in a range of individualised and group activities. These include outdoor learning, yoga, drumming, working in the school café, choir group, music therapy and community outings. As a result, all children and young people significantly improve their interpersonal skills, confidence and independence during their time at the school. Children and young people also develop their communication, coordination and social skills very well. Teachers should now explore ways to accredit children and young people's achievements more widely.
- Teachers celebrate children and young people's achievements regularly in class and through whole school awards and celebrations. This includes the star of the week awards. As a next step, they should plan to share children and young people's achievements more effectively with parents.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very detailed understanding and knowledge of children and young people's additional support needs. They work very effectively with families and partners to review children and young people's needs regularly. They carefully consider changes to the support that each child or young person requires. Staff ensure that all children and young people's wellbeing, communication and sensory needs are met well. They make sure all children and young people access all activities available at the school, where appropriate. As a result, all children and young people experience learning meaningful to them. Where appropriate, young

people develop their independent living skills well in preparation for leaving school. The school's very effective approach to developing skills supports young people to access a wide range of activities and events. All young people move on successfully to adult care services after leaving school.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

On behalf of the Office of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland