

# Larwood School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Andrew Hewston
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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Larwood is a special primary school, with 25 boarding places. Children admitted to the school, all have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Boarding is mainly on a weekly basis, usually including Monday to Thursday nights, but the arrangements are flexible. There is the provision of an extended day for other children at the school. The children who board can come from any area of Hertfordshire, as this is the only special primary boarding school in the county. The school is of modern construction and has well-kept grounds and sports pitches around the building. The school was purpose-built in 1996 and is sited in a residential area of Stevenage. The boarding area of the building has recently been restructured and provides improved accommodation for both staff and young people.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection completed over a two day period. A range of school records were examined and records relating to individual children. Staff and children were also spoken to throughout the inspection.

The inspection showed that staff have a good awareness of the needs of the children. These are met through a sufficiently robust planning process and good care of the children. Children's health needs are well cared for, and procedures are in place to ensure that children are kept safe in the majority of cases. A good range of activities and close links between the school and residential provision promote the development of achievement for all residents. The residential environment is appropriate to meet the needs of the children, and its sufficiently homely. There is a well structured organisational basis for the residential provision, with staff appropriately trained and supported.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection six recommendations to develop practice were made, four of these have been completed appropriately. This has been done through the development of choices for young people and their food, the development of care planning accessibility, accidents being appropriately recorded and the improvements in recruitment information being recorded.

More work is still required relating to the supervision of staff and ensuring that children have access to an independent visitor.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school staff ensure a healthy lifestyle. Children's health needs are discussed on admission to the school and are subsequently planned for within the residential provision. Children have good access to health professionals, with the care staff ensuring that residential children have the ability to visit the doctors when required. Children are also supported with attending dental and optical appointments. Additional external health professionals such as the Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS) are also referred to and accessed.

Staff support children with particular health needs such as diabetes and enuresis, with additional training having been completed by staff relating to the former. Practices to support children with enuresis do not have protocols in place although the recording structures for this are appropriate.

Insufficient staff are up to date with their first aid training, the need for such training is at odds with current Hertfordshire advice for schools but is necessary for the residential provision to be in line with the National Minimum Standards.

Medication records are well kept, with a very good system in place to ensure that correct medication is given to the right children. Medication is stored appropriately although there is no specific storage and recording system in place for controlled medication. Medication is audited on a weekly basis and is only administered by staff that have completed an assessment.

Children enjoy a good range of foods within the residential unit, with a choice being available during the lunch and evening meal, although for the evening this is limited. Menus are provided for the children showing the choice of foods available. The range of choice for the children has increased following the half term holiday. The cook attempts to ensure differing food preferences are responded to, and is aware of specific diets that children need. Young people spoken to enjoy the food within school, and mealtimes are a pleasant sociable occasion.

Main meals are eaten within the school dining area, and the residential units have small kitchens to allow preparation of small meals and snacks as well as drinks. There is sufficient space in all areas for children to sit for meals.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are afforded appropriate privacy arrangements, with each child having their own private bed space. Staff ensure that they respect children's privacy within this area. Children's files are all stored securely within the office area. Children are able to make and receive telephone calls within the units and although this is not in a particularly private area, no young person stated that this was an issue. Children's families are supported in visiting the residential units through a visiting area being made available.

The school has an appropriate complaints procedure and information is available for parents within the school's brochure, although there is a lack of information regarding the ability to complain directly to Ofsted. The residential area has a grumbles book that children have made use of when they are unhappy about a specific issue and children have also raised issues within the school council when they have been unhappy. Records show that issues have been responded to by the staff team.

No formal complaints have been received by the school since the last inspection although there is a reporting and recording system in place should such an instance occur.

All staff within the school have completed training in child protection, and there is a designated person who is responsible for reporting such instances to the local safeguarding board, who has received additional training for this role. The Hertfordshire procedures relating to safeguarding are available within the school. There is a record book available for all staff to report specific concerns with regard to the well-being of young people and this is well used by

the whole school staff team. There is no robust system in place to clearly identify patterns of concerns relating to individual children and insufficient recordings where staff have responded to highlighted concerns.

Staff have been involved with child protection strategy meetings, although the details of these are not fully recorded within the child's file. Child protection concerns regarding staff are seen to be responded to appropriately. Children spoken to during the inspection state that they feel safe within the school.

The school has an anti-bullying policy and children are aware of their ability to raise concerns when they are unhappy. The vast majority of children feel safe from bullying within the residential provision. Recordings are in place showing how staff have responded to bullying behaviours, with support being offered to the victims and discussions held with the perpetrator. Staff are able to discuss how specific instances of bullying have resulted in fixed term exclusions.

Instances of absconding from the residential provision are very low, and staff are aware of how to respond on such occasions. The school has an appropriate policy and procedure regarding absconding, including searching the school grounds, and contacting parents and police if necessary.

The school has a good range of positive behaviour management techniques, with a scoring system being core to this, with differing systems for residence and school. Children engage with these well and are able to discuss scores that they have achieved. Additional certificates are able to be worked towards in residence and children display these within their bedroom spaces. Specific behaviours that are being worked on with children are also involved with the point scoring system. All staff are trained in physical intervention techniques, and there is an appropriate recording system in place when restraint is used. These are completed well and also cross-referenced within an incident log and within the child's recordings. The school also uses a timeout room in response to specific behaviours although the procedures following the use of this room are not followed consistently.

Where children's behaviour has been highlighted as particularly difficult, this is discussed within the management team.

Health and safety checks are completed in a timely fashion, including gas and electrical safety checks. All fire system checks are completed appropriately and drills are carried out. Risk assessments relating to individual children are completed and are within each child's file. Water temperatures are also checked, with temperature restrictors being in place to decrease the possibility of scalding.

The school follows its safe recruitment procedures, with identification checks, references and full applications being required from all staff. Staff have also completed enhanced criminal records bureau checks, although these have not all been completed prior to the staff member working with the children. Senior staff state that staff that have not had their Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB) returned do not work on an individual basis with children, such practices are difficult to ensure.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

There are excellent links between the residential and teaching staff with pertinent information being passed between these two areas effectively. Some staff that work within the teaching side of the school also work within the residential area and are able to discuss the benefits of such cross working. Care planning within the children's files includes an awareness of differing educational targets and these are included within children's personal education plans. Staff are involved with supporting children's educational abilities through supervising homework and also listening to children reading in the evening.

Activities are well organised, and children enjoy a good range of activities on the school site and externally at local clubs or organisations. Children who attend the uniformed organisations are supported through ensuring that these are attended. The Head of Care completes a monthly assessment of activities, ensuring that all children are involved in group activities on a regular basis. Children are enthusiastic about the activities that they are involved with, and state that they enjoy being in residence due to these. Children are given a choice of activities as part of the organised evening programme.

Staff offer individualised support to the children within residence, with each child having a separate placement plan. Additional support is offered through external organisations such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) and speech and language therapy. Staff are able to discuss how programmes are in place to meet the individual needs of the children. The school is in the process of recruiting independent visitors to meet with the young people on a regular basis and be available to children if they wish to contact them regarding personal problems or concerns at the school.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The opinions of young people are highly regarded by the staff team, with children being involved with 'unit' meetings which are recorded. The school has a school council, and there is a representative from the residential unit within this, with children stating that they had had an input into the development of an astro turf pitch being put on the school grounds. Children and their families have an input into the care planning system, and communication books move between home and school to ensure that children's development is shared. There are records available showing staff are in regular contact with families through telephone calls. The school also has a school liaison staff member with a specific remit to ensure all parents are kept up to date with ongoing issues within the school.

Each child has a plan that examines their development within the residential provision, setting targets for improvement, and recording specific needs. Although the placement plan within the child's file does not include fully all areas as necessary within the standard this information is found within a number of school areas, including the medical room files, the main school file and the residential file. All this information shows that planning for children within residence is of a good standard with a consistent approach towards the positive development of the children, educationally, behaviourally and socially.

The residential units do not have a specific key worker system, but children state that they are able to talk to a range of adults if they wish to discuss something. Information regarding such discussions are not consistently recorded.

Contact between children and home is good, with a telephone being available for calls and staff are able to discuss how they have supported parents and family visiting the school and children. Any restrictions relating to contact are recorded on the child's file. There is a good communication book that travels between home and school.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The accommodation provided to the children at Larwood is of a good standard. Each child has their own bedroom space, with some children having separate bedrooms and others having curtained off bedroom areas. There is a variation in the personalisation of these areas, with some children decorating their areas with a range of posters, photographs and completed school work. Children appear proud of their bedroom areas and these are tidy and homely.

Communal areas are available for each residential unit, these are appropriately resourced and there are kitchen and dining areas for children to cook and have meals. The lounge areas are used for meetings and evening activities. Staff sleeping in areas close to the children should an issue arise at night that requires additional support.

Children are able to use other areas of the school during the evenings in residence including the dining area, school hall and external play areas.

Some of the children have auditory alarms attached to their bedroom doors, staff report this is to provide greater awareness of the children's movements and to promote safer care to the other children. Such practices do not have appropriate required permissions from parents or placing authorities and do not form part of children's placement plans.

Children are supported with the development of basic independence skills during their time in residence, through development of self help skills such as personal hygiene and care of their washing.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The school has a clear Statement of Purpose and a brochure regarding the whole school provision including residence. As a collective these give a good awareness of the care provided within the residential units and are in line with the expectations of the standard.

The residential units are appropriately staffed and additional staffing is available to cover for staff absence. The residential units are additionally supported by the teaching side of the school, creating good communication between the child's school day and their time in residence. Each of the residential areas has an identifiable leading staff member. Residence is staffed at night by waking night staff plus additional sleeping in staff.

Staff state that they are appropriately supported by the school's management structure, with constant informal supervision. All staff have received at least two formal supervisions since the last inspection although this is not sufficient to meet the expectations of half termly meetings. All staff have received an annual appraisal of their working practice and a chance to examine their future training needs. Staff meet on a regular basis and there are minutes available from these.



Staff are appropriately qualified to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent relating to the care of children and young people and the care is also appropriately qualified. The staff team have a very good range of experience regarding working with the needs of the children in residence.

The management of the school ensure that some records are regularly monitored, there is insufficient evidence however, to show that all areas as required by the standard are checked consistently. The head of care and the Head teacher have a good awareness of ongoing issues within the residential provision. Records of governors meetings show that they also have a high awareness of practices within residence, although there are insufficient records of half termly visits to the units and reports following these.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure sufficient staff have completed training in first aid (NMS 14.9)
- ensure all controlled medication is stored in line with Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidance (NMS 14.16)
- ensure that all instances of responses to concerns regarding child protection issues are fully recorded (NMS 5.4)
- ensure all responses to behaviour management procedures are followed fully by the staff team and recorded appropriately (NMS 10.7)
- ensure all staff have fully completed enhanced CRB disclosures prior to working with children (NMS 27.1)
- ensure that the school identifies to each child at least one person, independent of the school and/or the child's placing authority, whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school (NMS 22.8)
- ensure appropriate permissions are in place for the use of auditory alarms (NMS 23.7)
- ensure that all staff receive at least one and a half hours one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term (NMS 30.2).