

Larwood School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

Unique reference number	SC056394
Inspection date	18/02/2011
Inspector	Kristen Judd
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Larwood School, Webb Rise, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire, SG1 5QU
Telephone number	01438 236333
Email	head@larwood.herts.sch.uk
Registered person	Larwood School Governing Body
Head/ Principal	Alan Whitaker
Nominated person	Alan Whitaker
Date of last inspection	02/02/2010

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 children.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced, key inspection. The quality of boarding is good with some outstanding aspects. There is good leadership and a commitment to providing excellent outcomes for pupils and staff demonstrate an enthusiasm to create a nurturing environment for them.

Pupils are being well cared for and their educational achievement is strongly promoted. Staff endeavour to promote their safety and to support them to develop positive attitudes and behaviours. There is a relaxed, friendly atmosphere throughout the boarding house. Areas for development are to improve the records made of physical interventions and change the use of the 'time out' room.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made following the last inspection in relation to completing a review of the behaviour management policies in place and the frequency of monitoring visits to the boarding provision. The behaviour management policies have been reviewed as required. A Governor conducts visits on a half termly basis and reports are provided.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focused and committed to ensuring an excellent quality provision for healthcare for pupils staying at this school. Staff are proactive and responsive to

pupil's emotional and health care needs. Clear written information regarding pupils health needs is maintained. Records demonstrate that staff discuss issues relating to health and personal hygiene with pupils. The school's curriculum promotes and addresses personal issues and health and social matters. Where needed such issues are addressed within the individual plans. Parents and carers are expected to take responsibility for the health of their child. They are encouraged to work in partnership with the school in maintaining good standards of health and well-being. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding and awareness of the health care needs of the pupils in their care.

All residential staff are trained in first aid and there is always a qualified first aider on duty in the school. The necessary parental consents for medical treatment, the administration of medicines and the use of first aid are held on pupil's files. Staff receive specific training prior to being allowed to take responsibility for administering medication to pupils. There are clear systems and procedures in place with regard to medication being brought into the school. Medication records are kept to a very high standard and medicines are securely stored. The arrangements for regular auditing of the medication stock and records are sound. The residential staff have regular contact with parents regarding health issues. Pupils return home when unwell. There are efficient arrangements to ensure that medication is safely administered, ensuring that pupil's medical needs are fully met and their welfare is safeguarded.

Significant emphasis is placed on a whole school approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The school provides good quantities of food, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Pupils are provided with a healthy and well balanced diet, all of which is home made. Meal times are well organised with clear routines and expectations to promote the development of social skills. Drinking water is available and pupils who board have access to snacks, fresh fruit and drinks in the boarding house. Food handling and hygiene training is undertaken by catering staff and is regularly updated. Pupils spoken to were positive about the meals provided. Pupils are involved in growing their own fruit and vegetables each year and take photographs of the on-going project. There is an excellent commitment to meeting the nutritional needs of pupils.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupil's privacy is respected and information is confidentiality handled. Information held about pupils is stored securely. Pupil's issues are not discussed openly. Staff are good at ensuring the privacy of pupils when bathing. Facilities are available for pupils to make and receive telephone calls in private. The school has a clear complaints procedure. No formal complaints have been received and the school staff work hard to ensure that any issues raised by the pupils are resolved effectively on an informal basis. Pupils have access to an independent advocate who regularly visits the boarding house. They can identify a range of adults, both in school and the boarding house, whom they feel they can approach with any worries or concerns. The house also provides pupils with further opportunities to discuss their views about boarding

in meetings and informally to raise anything that they are unhappy about.

There are sound arrangements in place to safeguard pupils from possible abuse. All staff have received safeguarding training and fully demonstrate their understanding of the procedures and protocols. Senior staff have also attended advanced training so that they are given the knowledge and skills needed to perform the function of 'designated person' in their school. Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for the boarders. There are good systems in place that ensure that staff are aware of the whereabouts of the pupils and strategies to deal with any unauthorised absences, should they occur. There are clear procedures with regard to bullying. There are displays to help pupils understand when their behaviour may be construed as bullying. Staff are working hard with pupils learning to respect others. Pupils and staff do not identify bullying as a problem in the boarding house and they have a clear understanding of what to do if someone is making them unhappy.

Behaviour management is a strength of this school. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done. All staff are trained in an accredited method of physical intervention. Clear records are maintained and are monitored regularly by the head to ensure compliance with the school's procedures. The school uses a room to provide pupils with time and space to calm down and consider their actions in response to specific behaviours. This is used when staff feel that there is a high level of risk to the pupil or others. Procedures are in place for the use of this room. Pupils are clear about the use of this room and know that when they are calm they can rejoin their peers. This room is rarely used outside the school day. However, records indicate that there have been a few incidents that resulted in staff accessing this facility. Clear records are maintained, however, pupils are unable to leave the room independently. This practice is a restriction of liberty.

Very few sanctions are used by residential staff. Strong emphasis is placed on the positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour; a reward system is operated whereby pupils can earn credits towards rewards at the end of term. Pupils have a clear understanding of this system and they are fully aware of their individual targets. Certificates are given for outstanding achievements. Pupils spoken to are extremely proud of the points they achieve for reaching their targets. Boundaries between staff and pupils are clear and relationships are excellent. Staff are extremely successful in implementing clear structures, routines and positive praise to promote acceptable behaviours from pupils in their care. The atmosphere at the school is warm and welcoming and pupils feel safe and accepted.

The school has robust health and safety measures in place. Required checks and maintenance with regards to electrics, gas and water regulations are carried out and any shortfalls addressed. Recruitment procedures are robust. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and two satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupil's educational progress at the school is actively supported by the residential provision. They receive an excellent level of support. Staff actively support pupils to attend lessons on time. Communication between residential staff and school staff is outstanding. Staff reflect on each pupils day while in education during handover, which ensures that staff are fully aware of any issues that may impact on the support required. The education and residential staff work closely together to provide the best outcomes for pupils. There is an awareness of targets both in education and residential and a positive way of working with pupils which is evident throughout the school. Pupil's achievements are celebrated. Residential staff support pupils with homework when required and listen to all pupils read in the evenings. Excellent opportunities are made available to develop pupils who board life and social skills, thereby supporting their educational progress.

They enjoy their time boarding and there are strong, positive relationships between the pupils and the residential team. Residential staff have an excellent knowledge of the pupils in their care and are highly committed to their work. Pupils confirm that they are able to talk to staff about any personal issues. They also have access to an independent advocate. Pupils continue to receive excellent pastoral care and individual support in line with their needs.

Pupils have excellent opportunities to take part in a varied programme of activities that offers them valuable learning opportunities and expands their life experiences. Popular activities include playing at the adventure park, a nature club and football club. Pupils are extremely positive about the activities that they are able to participate in while boarding at the school. Staff encourage pupils to achieve educationally and socially in order to reach their full potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Pupils are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives. They say that they are consulted about issues and are provided with choices, for example, at meal times and in the range of activities that they can undertake. The pupils have house meetings, minutes demonstrate that boarding issues are discussed and staff record actions to be taken. The individual files contain information that demonstrates that the pupil's needs are assessed effectively. Pupil's needs are assessed and written plans outline how these are to be met. The information about specific aspects of care of the young people ensures that staff have a consistent approach. The plans contain targets which are evaluated and updated on a regular basis. Information clearly demonstrates that planning for pupils who board is of a good standard with a consistent approach towards the positive development of each pupil.

New boarders benefit from a sensitive admission process which helps them to

become familiar with the staff and the daily routines of boarding. Following assessments and discussions with parents, pupils are introduced to the boarding house in a phased and supported manner. Leaving processes are well planned and tailored to individual pupils. For example, the number of nights that they board is slowly reduced in preparation for moving on. Pupils stay overnight at the school for up to four nights a week but they are encouraged to maintain contact with home. The school understands and fully recognises the importance of communication and contact with parents. The school is sensitive and responsive to the needs of parents regarding information about their child's care and progress. Parents are positive about the school and the support provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils who board have single or double rooms that provide suitable storage and a study area. They are able to personalise their rooms. Some of the pupil's bedrooms have alarms fitted, which are activated at night. The use of this monitoring system is implemented following an assessment of the pupil's individual needs. There is waking night staff should a pupil require support at night. Pupils say that they enjoy sharing and are happy with the sleeping provision. The living areas are suitably furnished and equipped. Pupils have access to small kitchen areas and with staff support are able to make drinks and light snacks. Bathing facilities are satisfactory and afford an adequate level of privacy when bathing. The school facilities are available for the pupils who board to use after school, such as the sports hall and outdoor areas. The boarding house is well equipped with games, music and video centres, books and various other activities. Boarding accommodation is pleasantly decorated, furnished and clean to meet the needs of pupil's who board.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is relevant and clear information regarding the ethos of the school. Pupils are admitted to the school in accordance with the Statement of Purpose. Parents are provided with an information pack that details the provision for boarding at the school. Pupils have access to a guide that is produced in a child-friendly format that details life at the school. Each pupil has a file containing a permanent record of their progress.

The monitoring and management of the school means that pupils receive an excellent level of care. The headteacher and head care provide clear and effective leadership of the school's boarding provision. The head of care is qualified, competent and ably manages the boarding provision effectively.

Pupils are looked after by experienced, trained and competent staff who understand their individual needs. The low turnover of staff provides pupils with consistency and stability and promotes positive relationships.

A duty rota is followed in practice and time is scheduled for handover sessions and staff meetings. Pupils know who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times, including during the night. Suitable arrangements are in place for duty cover in times of staff sickness and absence through use of the school's own pool of staff. Staff confirm that they receive regular formal supervision and there is easy access to senior staff for informal support. Pupils placed make excellent progress because staffing in the school is well planned and effectively managed.

The school has an effective governing body. They are making a valuable contribution to the successful outcomes for the school. Governors and the independent advocate undertake regular visits to the boarding provision. All relevant records are monitored regularly in relation to evaluating any trends or patterns that may emerge. The head teacher reports to the board of governors.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff are extremely experienced in meeting the needs of pupils and value individual differences. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met. The school curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to experience equality and diversity and to celebrate this. There is evidence of the promotion and development of social inclusion and work with each pupil to help them achieve their full potential.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that records made of physical intervention include the effectiveness and any consequence of the physical intervention (Breach of national minimum standard 10.14)
- ensure that no unreasonable, idiosyncratic or excessive sanctions are used by staff or others at the school; this is in particular reference to the use of the 'time out room'. (Breach of national minimum standard 10.6)