

Larwood School

Larwood School, Webb Rise, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire, SG1 5QU

Inspection dates	20/05/2013 to 22/05/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- A strength of the home is the respectful and supportive relationships between residential staff and pupils. There is a very stable and very well trained staff team offering continuity of care.
- Residential pupils live in an environment where their individual strengths and vulnerabilities are recognised. They make good progress in managing their own behaviours and improving their social skills.
- Safeguarding is given a high priority and all staff trained in areas of safeguarding. Residential pupils are well supervised and say they feel safe in the residential environment.
- Excellent communication between the school, residential staff and parents ensures any issues affecting individuals' are known and action quickly taken to support the residential pupils.
- All national minimum standards are met. However, record-keeping and guidance does not fully reflect staff practice.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

Three hours' notice was given prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included: observation of boarding routines and practice; scrutiny of school policies and records; discussions with parents and residential pupils as well as meetings with staff and residential pupils. Discussions took place with a range of staff responsible for leading, managing and organising residential care these included, a school governor, residential staff, support staff and the head of school. There are three residential areas attached to the school. At the time of the inspection, two of these were being used and both were visited.

Inspection team

Gwen Buckley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Larwood School is a special primary school with 25 boarding places for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Residential pupils are currently accommodated in two of three boarding houses that are adjoined to the school premises. Boarding is normally from Monday to Thursday nights, but the arrangements are flexible to fit in with family commitments. 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 situated in a residential area of Stevenage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- further develop record keeping to make sure records are maintained of actions taken by staff when they monitor issues they may have concerns about (NMS 3.11)
- further develop guidance for staff on how to dispose of medication that is no longer able to be given, such as 'spoiled' medication (NMS 13.3)
- consider developing the fire safety procedures and records to include details of exactly who has been involved in fire drills in the residential areas. (NMS 7)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Residential pupils enjoy residential living and speak extremely positively about this. Strong and very positive relationships exist between residential pupils and staff. Residential pupils stated, 'I look forward to my nights here with my friends' and 'I like the staff a lot; they look after us all.' Residential pupils found it difficult to think of ways the residential provision could be improved. Comments made by parents were extremely positive regarding their children's progress and included, 'My son is a different child I am now very proud of him' and 'This school has changed my son's life he has made excellent progress here.'

Residential pupils make good progress in overcoming difficulties. They learn skills such as respect, sharing, patience and how to manage their anger. This means they develop improved social skills and get on with others with different backgrounds and experiences from their own. One residential pupil spoke of how challenging he was when he arrived and was proud of how well he had progressed. Residential pupils respect and support each other. As a result close friendships develop and difference is celebrated. Parents report that their children learn new skills that help them grow in confidence and prepare them to move on to secondary school.

Residential pupils are encouraged to try activities that are new to them. They have a variety of activities, both in the school grounds and in the local community, and they raise money for various charities. Residential pupils are supported to do their homework both formally and informally. They have set homework and learn through carefully considered games that help them achieve at school. Older residential pupils take part in 'bikeability'; which helps them understand road safety while on their bikes. Residential pupils enjoy the boarding experience and have good opportunities for positive new experiences. One said, 'The best bit of boarding is playing with my friends'.

Meal times are friendly occasions where residential pupils have healthy choices and social skills are taught. Residential pupils volunteer to help prepare and serve breakfast and they take turns to clear tables after meals.

Residential pupils air their views in house meetings, through daily discussions with staff and by talking to governors and the independent listener. The views of residential pupils influence menus, snacks and activities provided. A formal survey process is being rolled out which will enhance the opportunities for residential pupils to influence their care.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of residential provision and care is good. Residential staff are a very experienced and committed team and provide a good quality of care in a nurturing friendly atmosphere. Information-sharing between education and residential staff promotes an understanding of individual needs on a daily basis. Parents report excellent communications with residential staff, on a daily basis if needed. This approach ensures residential pupils quickly receive support to manage new or difficult situations.

Boarding houses are clean, tidy and comfortable and provide suitable communal space, bathing and toilet facilities. Double-glazing is being installed across the school and boarding provision; which is improving the standard of accommodation. Both single and double bedrooms are used. Residential pupils report they do not mind sharing a bedroom with their friends.

Links between teaching and residential staff are good and effectively contribute to the monitoring of care provided. Staff ensure residential pupils moving into and leaving the residential provision

are effectively supported. Prospective residential pupils are encouraged to visit for tea and sleepovers. The extra vigilance of staff ensures that they are well supported during an anxious time. Care and attention is also given to help prepare individuals move on to their secondary school in line with their individual needs. This means that residential pupils develop confidence in their own abilities to cope with the changes ahead.

Parents like the 'home-to-school diary' and know staff will contact them to keep them informed. Care planning targets are set each term. These are agreed with the residential pupils and linked to personal development and educational needs. This approach nurtures and encourages development at a pace suitable to the individual.

A healthy diet and exercise is promoted at all times. Staff monitor and take action to address any concerns they may have about the well-being of residential pupils, such as, monitoring to ensure the food intake of an individual is suitable. However this is not always reflected in the records that are kept so progress cannot be fully evaluated.

Residential pupils are able to contact their parents and loved ones and their family can phone them. One parent stated that her son is sometimes too busy to talk with her and wants to go off and play; which she feels is reassuring as she knows he is happy. Staff ensure residential pupils have time outside and regularly take part in activities that promote exercise. Residential pupils are encouraged to try new activities and visit a local elderly persons' home, which enhances the life experiences of both the adults and residential pupils.

A member of residential staff is responsible for the oversight of health matters and medication across the school. Parents maintain the overall responsibility for the health needs and feel staff effectively support them to do this. Records of medication administered are well maintained. However, there is no guidance for staff on how to dispose of spoiled medication, should this occur. Strong communication and close working arrangements are evident between residential staff and parents. Parents feel fully informed about their child's progress and well-being.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Residential pupils' safety is good. The residential provision has effective systems to ensure that residential pupils' safety is promoted to a good standard. Residential staff know the residential pupils well and when needed, skilfully use diversion tactics to manage behaviour. The residential and teaching staff work well together in their response to incidents in school. Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded and residential pupils can progress beyond these behaviour management systems and take pride in taking responsibility for their own actions.

'Communication is great, staff are always available and the way boundaries are used to manage behaviour in the house has helped me to manage my son's behaviour at home.' '(Name of child) has come on leaps and bounds since he started to board and it has really helped him do well in school' are comments made by parents.

Recruitment procedures are effectively implemented; which ensures that only adults who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children, are employed.

The safeguarding of residential pupils is a priority and designated staff take the lead for child protection. All staff receive up-to-date training in safeguarding and display a sound understanding of key policies and protocols. The local authority designated officer stated staff are proactive in promoting and protecting the welfare of residential pupils. Following incidents practice is reviewed and any learning taken forward to improve the care provided to residential pupils.

Residential pupils report that bullying is not an issue. 'It's not allowed the staff won't let it happen here' was a comment made by one residential pupil. Residential pupils feel safe and know that

any kind of bullying is not accepted.

The use of physical restraint in the residential provision is extremely rare, with only one restraint used in the last year. Sanctions are seldom imposed with four used in the last year used. Records clearly indicate why the restraint or sanctions were used with residential pupils commenting on and signing these records.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedure in place to use in the event that a residential pupil is missing or absent without permission. This has not had to be used but staff are aware of the procedure.

Residential pupils say that they feel safe living at the school and all spoke of someone that they can talk to if worried. They are aware of the independent listener who visits and that they can contact her at any time.

Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Fire drills are held regularly and all residential pupils receive an induction that includes fire safety and evacuation procedures. However, records of subsequent fire drills undertaken are not maintained in sufficient detail to establish, over time, which residential pupils and staff have been involved. The governors endorse the risk assessments reviewed and updated by the head of school. These risk assessments include environmental checks as well as on-site and off-site activities.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The management and leadership of the school are good. A committed, well-established and experienced residential team supports the head teacher. The headteacher started at the school after the last inspection and has a clear vision for the future of the school and the residential provision. The residential provision supports the residential pupils to achieve in school and residential pupils become valued members of the community. There is a development plan in place, linked to a self-evaluation summary.

The residential staff are well trained and benefit from regular supervision and appraisal. They have the skills and competencies to care for the residential pupils. Staff are aware of the specific needs, behaviours and vulnerabilities of residential pupils and respond quickly to those who are in need of support. Their training in key areas, such as pupils such as first aid, restraint and child protection, contributes to the protection of residential pupils. Staff work closely to ensure that residential pupils' feel valued and supported.

The headteacher monitors the residential service and governors visit the residential provision each half term. During visits they observe practice and have discussions with residential pupils. These systems provide good oversight of the quality of care and of the records maintained. Parents say communication with the school is excellent and achieved through regular telephone contact and reports to parents. Residential pupils and their parents are provided with information on how to complain. There have been no complaints received since the last inspection. Parents are complimentary about the standard of care provided. Residential pupils know how to complain but feel more comfortable talking to staff about any worries they have.

In line with the head teacher's own evaluation, this inspection found the standards of care provided to residential pupils is good and helps them develop as individuals. Residential pupils enjoy the residential experience. 'We have fun with friends' and 'It's a safe place to live with lots to do,' were two comments made.

Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed and updated the missing person protocol, the fire risk assessments and the arrangements for controlled drug recording. Changes to the way

behaviour is managed has meant some residential pupils now take more responsibility for managing their own behaviour.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131503
Social care unique reference number	SC056394
DfE registration number	919/7034

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Maintained RSS
Number of boarders on roll	25
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 11
Headteacher	Mr S Trimble
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/07/2012
Telephone number	01438 236333
Email address	head@larwood.herts.sch.uk

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