

Larwood School

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

Inspection dates 16/11/2015 to 18/11/2015

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The boarding houses present as warm, welcoming, and homely. Children are comfortable whilst staying here and enjoy all aspects of the residential provision.
- Children make excellent progress academically, socially and emotionally from the point of joining the residential provision. The school employs a children's psychiatric nurse to complement the experienced staff team and further promote outcomes for children.
- Tireless support and intervention by care staff enables children to move back into day provision and when ready, on to mainstream schooling.
- A Transition Worker focusses on increasing the early identification of children in need of the provision and improves children's moving on experiences.
- Trusting relationships develop between all children and the stable care staff team. These are characterised by consistency, understanding, and warmth. These dependable relationships provide a stable base from which all children achieve.
- Since the last inspection, the school now has an Engagement Support Worker. Her role starts prior to boarding commences, and continues throughout the time the child is boarding.
- The Head teacher invests in the residential provision. He uses continuous monitoring to inform future planning and expand on positive experiences for children. Children are encouraged to access the independent visitors and all children know how to do this.

- Robust school governance including a Governor specifically responsible for the residential service, drive forward continued improvement.

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

At the time of the inspection, there were six residential pupils.

One hour and thirty minutes' notice was given prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included a review of parent view and surveys completed by boarders and their parents or carers; observation of residential care routines and practice; scrutiny of policies and records; discussion with parents by telephone; meetings with staff and residential pupils.

Discussions took place with a range of staff responsible for leading, managing, and delivering residential care; these included residential staff, support staff, the Head of Care the Head teacher and the school governor with responsibility for the residential provision. Discussions also took place with external professionals involved with the residential provision; this included the local authority designated officer, a member of the local authority review team, a member of the school nursing team and a child psychiatric nurse.

Inspection team

Angie Bishop

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Larwood School is a special primary school with 12 boarding places for children with behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. Residential pupils are accommodated in two boarding houses that are adjoined to the school premises. Boarding nights are Monday to Thursday night with residential pupils staying between two and four nights. The children who board all come from the Hertfordshire area. The school is situated in a residential area of Stevenage. The last social care inspection was in October 2014.

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Relationships between children and staff build on partnership working between the day school and residential provision. Children receive care from an established, familiar staff team who are completely consistent in their approach to the children. Children respect all staff and the staffing hierarchy is not evident in the presence of the children; this reflects the ethos of equal value across the school provision. Peer relationships are strong and staff support children to understand each other's differences. Where children have trouble in their friendships, staff allow each child time to explore their feelings and the impact of their behaviours on each other. A member of staff said: 'We ensure all children know their time is valued. They start to help each other out, even with homework, which is amazing. We use friendship tokens and children go out of their way to support each other.'

Staff respect individual identities, behaviours and characters; they use positive reinforcement and celebration of difference to allow children's individual personalities to shine. A parent said: 'My son has staff of the same race and cultural background as him, they help him to understand his culture and build confidence in his own identity, this is so important to him and me.'

Children make exceptional progress in all areas of academic and emotional development from their starting point in this school. Staff provide predictable, highly personalised care that means residential stays further enhance children's progress. One parent said: 'My son could not shower and his clothing was always spoiled as he would not change it when it was dirty, now he takes pride in his appearance he showers, he does his hair, he puts his clothes into the washing. He has good routines and he respects himself and me.'

Academically, all children join this school following multiple exclusions from mainstream schooling. They join as day pupils and transition into the residential accommodation where a cross section of school staff, external professionals, parents, and carers identify a high level of need. Following varying time periods in the residential provision, children move back into the day school, and some move back in to mainstream education prior to the normal chronological transition. A transition worker develops key links with mainstream education provision; this affords early identification of children in need of the provision and comprehensive support for children who move back into mainstream education. A child said: 'I had been to so many schools and this one has kept me here. I do not want to leave. I started on two nights now I stay for four nights a week. I know they will help me when I move from here. I want to stay here forever and ever and ever.'

Staff develop and implement clear dynamic behaviour management plans. Children collect points for positive behaviour and staff recognise positive behaviour with rewards. Children enjoy working towards the rewards. Staff are skilled at implementing behaviour management strategies and successful de-escalation is at the forefront of all practice. Staff work collaboratively with in house and external professionals, family members, and

carers to allow children to explore and understand their behaviour. All children understand the staff approach and learn from repeat responses and insights into their behaviours. Incidents of concerning behaviour reduce from the time children begin boarding and effective communication enables staff to predict when behaviours may escalate.

Creative approaches to behaviour management complement more traditional responses. Staff are currently trialling the use of a large padded fish with feelings written on it. This enables children to indicate non-verbally to staff what is happening for them and has accelerated de-escalation of presenting behaviours. There is minimal use of physical intervention, four incidents for boarding children since the last inspection; two of these were one incident where two children had a physical altercation. A staff member said: 'the older children have some unsettling times at Easter every year, we start to take them to visit their new schools, and we have to work extra hard with them to help them through this period of high anxiety.'

Staff effectively safeguard children and carefully balance safety in a non-oppressive way to ensure that children enjoy a variety of life experiences when they begin boarding. This includes purposeful and fun activities in the community. Through these activities, children make a valid contribution to other's lives, their social skills develop along with positive feelings of self-worth. An example of this is visits to a neighbouring home for older people where children read books to the residents. The staff value the importance of children meeting people external to the home as a key life skill this complements more traditional life skills education. Children work through targets to receive bronze, silver, and gold awards for life skills achievements. A parent said: 'My son has a fantastic opportunity here. He enjoys doing his homework and he is making really good progress. He is calmer. He is not confused, he likes the boarding routine. He likes boarding a lot and he is learning about how to look after himself. He is doing things he would not have done before.'

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The residential accommodation is well presented and is very warm and welcoming. Staff encourage children to personalise their rooms and consult with them about any proposed developments or changes. Some children have recently contributed to the design of a new outdoor play area. Staff display photographs of the children, posters, and items of particular interest to the children around the residential houses. In the electronic games area age appropriate internet safety advice is present along with contact details for the independent visitors and other key people. The residential houses are identifiable as separate to the day school. Residential and school staff share information daily and staff share a weekly overview during staff meetings. This prepares care staff for any transference of issues between home, day school and the residential provision. All children are proud of their accommodation, they are keen to share it with visitors and unanimously talk positively about their experiences. One child said: 'I want to stay here for ever and ever. It is fun being here, I do not think they could do anything better.'

As part of a new initiative, staff visit parents, carers and children at home. In addition,

parents and carers have been invited to training sessions and additional contact was made with them during the summer holidays. Feedback in respect of this is positive and children receive greater continuity in the care they receive at home and school. A parent said: 'They have really helped me understand what is happening for my son; they involve me and don't shut me out. I feel I am valued as a parent and my views count.'

Interaction between staff and children is relaxed and natural and staff tailor care to each child's needs. An engagement support worker meets with family members and carers and involves them in planning and reviewing the care that children receive. Regular reviews co-ordinated in house ensure that boarding is the right option for each child and if each child is happy with the boarding provision. Children share their views about boarding formally and informally at regular intervals with the head teacher and head of care. Some children make short films focussed on sharing their experiences. All children identify that staff listen to them and know whom they would approach if they were unhappy or worried about anything. Likewise, parents and carers identify that they work together with the staff in a way that they have not had the opportunity to previously. Lines of communication between home and the school are open and staff accessible to parents. A parent said: 'My son is safe; I was able to make sure it was right for him before he started. If I had any queries they answered them, I can phone at any time and I am always kept up to date. I think it is excellent for us all.'

Focussed, target led care ensures that all children enjoy improved emotional health because of boarding. Using consistent routines and responses, staff support children to identify their feelings and develop self-regulation skills. Where the head identifies gaps in services for children he appoints staff and fills service voids. This provides expedited access to specialist advice and support for home, school and the care team. A child psychiatric nurse is onsite and assesses and reviews the approach to individual children's presenting issues. He liaises with community provisions and engages in multi-faceted planning and intervention. As a result, care staff are better informed in terms of their approach to individual children. Children also have access to therapeutic musical intervention. This enables them to channel their emotions into something positive whilst they take pleasure in an ongoing learning experience.

Children have the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities in house and externally. This includes a broad range of physical activity. If children do not choose physical activities staff proactively involve them in activities that children do not conventionally view as physical activity. This includes the use of interactive computer console games. Staff seek children's views about their interests and children think of new suggestions for activities, which they share in regular house meetings. All children look forward to planning a big activity that they do together at the end of each term.

The maintenance of clear, concise records in respect of children's health ensures all staff can identify and respond to children's individual needs. Trained staff follow stringent guidance, policies, and procedures to administer medication to children. A local general practitioner visits the school at least once every half term and takes an overview of the health needs of the children using the residential provision. He offers advice and support, which further promotes children's medical needs. The general practitioner reviews the administration of medication and shares any concerns. Children access the school nursing service for routine health screening and during the inspection, the school nursing team met with all of the boarders whilst administering annual influenza

vaccinations.

Children delight in talking about the meals they receive and meal times provide many with the opportunity to try new foods. The team in the school provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals for breakfast, lunch and evening meals. The head chef and his team understand children's dietary needs and creatively cater for cultural, religious, and preference based diets. Fruit is available to children as a healthy snack and at meal times; children share supper whilst relaxing with staff and each other before bedtime. One child said: 'I love the food here, it is really nice, I like it, and I am healthy that is why I have fruit and I do exercise.'

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The leaders and staff team regularly review the policies and protocols to keep children safe. Staff attend regular training to provide a robust response to safeguarding. They successfully safeguard children and educate them to keep themselves safe. Dynamic risk assessments inform all areas of care and staff comprehend children's individual risk profiles.

Staff proficiently identify welfare concerns and apply procedures without hesitation. Established links with children's services and the police ensure that concerns receive prompt attention. Staff appreciate, understand and communicate with children the wide-ranging risks of significant harm that they may experience; Children identify poignant risks and attribute this to talking to staff. For staff, no topic is taboo and dependable staff child relationships allow children to openly share any concerns with staff. There has been one incident of missing since the last inspection. Staff record their responses to this clearly and concisely.

During regular meetings with children, staff keep bullying a live topic. They particularly focus on how bullying makes people feel. By increasing and reinforcing understanding, staff enable children to attune to each other. This means bullying is not a prevalent issue in the residential accommodation. Whilst children have limited access to the internet on school premises, staff acknowledge that they do at home. Parents and children access up to date information from a variety of key resources collaborated on the school website. Staff also encourage open discussion between parents and carers and their children about the risks of strangers on the internet. Children identify the risk of cyber bullying and meeting strangers during games, they play at home. They attribute this to staff helping them understand about internet dangers.

Along with the head teacher, a new and experienced in business manager co-ordinates staff recruitment. Along with the head teacher, she has safer recruitment training which they both routinely apply in practice when monitoring the key stages of recruitment. The business manager meticulously maintains records of recruitment within the school, and records in respect of people living on the school site. Robust agreements require non-school employees to adhere to a number of requirements, which focus on the protection of the children in the school. There is no unauthorised access to the residential accommodation or school premises. New security measures are appropriate and afford an added layer of protection for children since the last inspection. Children understand the use of the security measures including the new closed circuit television system and

parents are required to consent to its use when their children are resident on the school site.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

The head teacher, head of care and staff form a very strong and stable staff team. They strive to deliver the highest quality care and focus development of the provision on promoting purposeful achievement for all children. The joined up school and residential management and staff teams provide effective and attuned leadership and care across the provision.

The experienced governing body appropriately scrutinise and challenge decision making in the residential provision. They meet with children and understand the challenges children and leaders experience in a school with a residential provision. Collectively school leaders and governors actively update policies and procedures and review how staff implement them in practice. Leaders take time to understand the children, they introduce innovative approaches to care in line with children's needs and up to date legislation and guidance. Alongside this, ongoing research and creative implementation of new methods of working predicate exceptionally positive outcomes for children.

One governor has responsibility for the residential houses. He visits regularly with minimal or no notice and is passionate about the provision. He identifies and reviews shortfalls and his reports take on a new format and are informative, evaluative and reflective. The contribution of the active governing body is integral to children's success and ongoing development. One governor said: 'The heads are constantly looking to improve, constantly asking what can we do next? They strive to make things better for children. Children come first and without a shadow of a doubt everybody here cares.'

All staff are clear about the aims of the provision. They deliver purposeful care, which reflects the ethos of the school. Effective monitoring of children's experiences and outcomes are indicative of care delivery meeting these aims. Leaders ensure that care staff receive appropriate training and development opportunities to enable them to consistently meet and adapt to children's changing needs. Supervision is regular and every staff member has an annual appraisal during which they identify areas of practice improvement and development. All staff describe supportive, approachable leadership who are present and accessible to them at all times.

The leadership team consult with staff, parents, carers, and children to inform improvement planning. The head teacher visits similar provisions outside of the school's local authority to share experiences and learn from other's positive practice models and successes. The recent recruitment of specialist staff and successful engagement of parents and carers continues to maximise the benefits to children in school and at home. A specialist member of staff said: 'The school are being creative in engaging me, and there is healthy partnership working. They are looking at the best they can do for their pupils. They are completely focussed on the individual children.'

There have been no complaints about the residential provision since the last inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	115450
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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	9
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 to11
Headteacher	Mr Sean Trimble
Date of previous boarding inspection	7 October 2014
Telephone number	01438 236333
Email address	head@larwood.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.



To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015