

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LARKRISE SCHOOL**

Trowbridge

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126553

Headteacher: Mrs C Goodwin

Reporting inspector: Mr J Plumb  
16930

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 196085

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashton Street Trowbridge Wiltshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Aylesbury
Date of previous inspection:	30 <sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Larkrise is a community special school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 19 years. There are 56 pupils and students on roll. All pupils have statements of special educational needs identifying severe, profound or complex learning difficulties including autism, and some of these pupils additionally have visual or hearing impairment. The attainment of pupils on entry is well below the standards attained by pupils of the same age nationally because of their special educational needs. Thirty-one per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, a figure well above the national average. This is an indicator that some pupils experience considerable social disadvantage. There are few minority ethnic pupils and none have English as an additional language. There is a separate class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. All other pupils are grouped into classes by their age.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Larkrise School is a very effective school. Pupils and students with a wide range of complex special educational needs achieve good standards in communication and numeracy. Because of very demanding teaching pupils make good gains in their personal development and independence. The headteacher provides very good leadership and the headteacher and senior management team manage the school very well. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- A very good communication programme that now allows all pupils to better discuss, choose and comment at all levels.
- Provision of a very good vocational curriculum for Year 11 and post-16 students which is well planned, well managed and very well taught.
- The provision for religious education is outstandingly good and makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual development.
- The leadership of the headteacher and effective management provided by the headteacher and the senior management team.
- The development and effective use of the accommodation.
- Partnership with parents and carers is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- To continue the positive developments in provision for pupils with the most complex learning difficulties to provide a coherent and clearly recorded curriculum throughout the school.
- To build on the existing inclusion initiatives to provide a range of such opportunities, especially for post-16 students.
- There could now be a longer-term strategic plan linked closely to finance to use the very significant underspend that has accrued in the last year.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in July 1997. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. The curriculum has improved. The time allocated to and quality of provision for religious education is much better. The provision for modern foreign languages has improved. There has been a very significant improvement in the consistent use of signing across the school and pupils are much more independent in their communication than at the time of the last inspection. There are

now accredited vocational courses for post-16 students. The provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) is better. The accommodation is now much better.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	very good A
reading	B	B	B	B	good B
writing	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils and students of all ages and with a diverse range of complex special educational needs make good progress in relation to their individual needs and in communication. The effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, the use of relevant age-appropriate literature and the very good use of signing ensures that all pupils make good gains in their use of functional and expressive language. Pupils make good progress in numeracy and the highest attainers gain in confidence in handling small sums of money. Gains in independence and social confidence are particularly good. By the age of 18, pupils are well prepared to cope with the next step into the adult world. Achievement in religious education is very good because of the demanding and relevant teaching. Progress in French is good in Years 7 – 11 and pupils make good gains in their understanding of the way of life in another country. Pupils with challenging behaviour begin to gain in self-esteem which leads to an improvement in their behaviour. Pupils with PMLD make very small but steady gains and some begin to communicate through gorgeous smiles and eye contact in response to the stimulus provided for them but their progress is hindered at times by the lack of specific planned learning outcomes for them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils and students are very enthusiastic and keen to learn. They enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Because of high quality support a number of pupils with very challenging behaviour behave well.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils make very good gains in social confidence and independence. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Very good.

Pupils and students are very positive about school, and work very hard. They participate well at the expected level. Those with the most complex needs access the same experiences as other pupils as far



as possible. Pupils learn effectively and make good progress because of the high quality support they receive.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. During the inspection, 22 lessons were observed. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons, and at least very good in 60 per cent of lessons. The high quality teaching is a very significant contributory factor in the effective learning which takes place and to the good progress which pupils and students make. The strongest element in the teaching is the very good knowledge and understanding which staff have of the special educational needs of each pupil and student. Consequently pupils and students are well managed and develop self-confidence in learning. The quality of teaching is very good in English, numeracy, religious education, French and in personal, social and health education. The teaching of the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) to Years 10 – 13 students is very good. Most of the satisfactory teaching occurs in the class for pupils with PMLD where there is sometimes a shortcoming in that specific learning outcomes are not always planned for each pupil in every session and too little use is made of recording pupils' small gains in learning. However, the strengths now outnumber the weaknesses in the teaching of pupils who experience the most complex needs.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum offered is good from age under five to the end of Year 9. Because of the vocational course from Year 10 to Year 13 it is very good. The strategies for teaching literacy skills are very good. The curriculum for pupils with PMLD is satisfactory. There are not enough inclusion opportunities for pupils in mainstream schools.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Procedures to ensure pupils are not at risk are very good. The monitoring of attendance is very good. Assessment is not used sufficiently effectively for pupils with PMLD.

The school works in close partnership with parents. Parents consider that they are listened to sensitively and that the school responds effectively to their concerns. Because they are valued by the school, parents work effectively with the school and make a very valuable contribution to their children's learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The newly appointed headteacher provides very effective leadership. She works in partnership with the assistant headteachers to provide very good management.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive and meets its statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team evaluates teachers' performance well.
The strategic use of resources	Learning resources are used effectively. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Good use is made of grants available to the school. The principles of best value are being applied. However, the underspend in last year's budget was exceptionally high.

Teachers have a good range of special educational needs expertise. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection through internal modifications. The sensory room, post-16 common room and the room set aside for parents are good. Toilet facilities now ensure privacy for pupils and students. Resources are satisfactory but there are not enough switches and communication aids to support pupils with the most severe needs.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The welcoming, quiet and calm atmosphere provided by the school</li> <li>The fact that their children are safe at school and the needs of every individual child will be met</li> <li>The very good leadership of the newly appointed headteacher and the high expectations of all staff</li> <li>The fact that all children are included in school productions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents would like more regular updates on the progress of their children</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The school had identified parents' concern about more regular reports on pupil progress and an action plan to address this concern was already in place by the time the inspection took place.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**A very good communication programme that now allows all pupils to better discuss, choose and comment at all levels.**

1. The previous report identified the need to 'improve communication across the school, especially through the use of technological aids and the consistent use of signing'. The subsequent development of a signed environment has been dramatic and impressive. In its use of Makaton and the development of its functional communication programme the school can justly boast that its pupils now have access to a highly effective means of communication and a sophisticated awareness of how and when to use it.
2. From the first day of the inspection the team was impressed by the way in which signing is used on a day-to-day basis. It is truly a means by which all pupils can be included in the curriculum, whole-school activities such as assemblies and effectively talk with and support each other. A whole-school assembly exemplifies this. The assembly was conducted by a teacher with a high level of signing skills in partnership with the school's excellent speech and language therapist. From the outset the excitement of the occasion was conveyed by spoken and signed language. Not only did this assist in making the purpose of the assembly clearer to everyone, it also allowed a very high level of participation by every pupil. A senior class provided the choir which modelled very good signing for the rest of the school and heightened the overall enjoyment by its infectious enthusiasm. Thus, six hymns were sung and signed enthusiastically and with verve by the school. The use of Makaton ensured that pupils were physically as well as mentally involved. In addition, individual achievements and birthdays were celebrated. Not only did the assembly provide a purpose for signing, it served as an excellent means of reinforcement and development of pupils' communication skills.
3. Within classes, signing is used on a consistent basis and reinforced at every opportunity. Both teachers and teaching assistants show very good skills and take every opportunity to develop their own and their pupils' facility. In a very good middle stream literacy lesson in the senior school, the class book was read through with full signed support. Teaching assistants provided very good models in this and the enthusiasm of pupils to use signing was most impressive. Individual pupils were encouraged to be involved and answer questions using their growing Makaton vocabulary. The group work that followed saw every pupil writing at their own level. The motive to write was enhanced by the use of high quality materials, involving symbols. Throughout the lesson both sign and symbol was used interactively to support the most effective communication between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves. Thus, one pupil assisted another to complete his work by the accurate use of signing and physical prompts to the symbolic text being used. It was clear that pupils can now express themselves, their feelings and ideas in a far deeper and more immediate way.
4. A second very good, lower school, lesson exemplifies the impact of the functional communication programme. The lesson was conducted by the speech and language therapist, who has recent experience of work with special schools. She was supported by the class teacher and assistants. All displayed very high levels of signing, a very deep understanding of the pupils and their needs and a real sense of joy in the whole activity. The arrival of a visitor was used as an excellent vehicle for pupils to introduce themselves and respond to another adult. This was followed by discussion and games relating to the concepts of 'under', 'on' and 'in'. Both symbols and signs were used to

their maximum and this was followed by fun activities which saw the teacher being directed 'under' the table, pupils standing 'in' a storage box and sitting 'on' the floor. Those who were not being directed responded with intense concentration and enjoyed the mistakes as much as the successes. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the whole lesson was the way in which occasional pairs of pupils gossiped using signing.

5. This development has contributed in no small way to the social maturity of all pupils. It has provided them with a repertoire of social skills that parents value highly. At the end of a very good lesson with Years 8 and 9 pupils on problem solving, a teaching assistant points out that the class has a very real problem. There is no squash for the break time drink; what should they do? The class immediately uses the strategies it has practised in the lesson to resolve the problem to everyone's satisfaction. This unplanned event emphasises both the effectiveness of the programme, and also the very deep understanding that all staff have of the purpose that communication serves.
6. This very good development has taken place within the space of two years and is the result of very good management and teaching on the part of all staff. The therapist has provided an excellent model of what good signing is and the wide range of purposes for which it can be used. Senior management has been very active in supporting the training. In addition all staff have shown great application and a very high level of skill in learning, using and developing their own signing skills. This is developing on a daily basis. Additional work might now be carried out to provide all other ancillary staff, at dinner times, on the buses and around the school, in the regular use of sign. All of the work has been very imaginatively and appropriately integrated in the very good development of the literacy curriculum. This has been managed very well in a short time by the literacy co-ordinator who demonstrates her commitment by ensuring that all aspects of work are underpinned by the highest level of communication and understanding.
7. The development of technological aids has not been as effective. While some use is made of simple response switches, such as the 'Big Mac', there is not enough use of information technology to develop the expression of more sophisticated ideas and writing. The investigation of software and switching systems will further enhance what is already a very strong and effective development.

**Provision of a very good vocational curriculum for Year 11 and post-16 students which is well planned, well managed and very well taught.**

8. Provision of a very good vocational curriculum is a strength of the school as it was during the previous inspection. However, the recommendation that 'vocational education is provided for all Key Stage 4 pupils ... with opportunities to follow accredited courses' has now been pursued enthusiastically and effectively to the point where vocational education for pupils over 14 is coherent, imaginative and underpins very significant social and academic progress by all older pupils.
9. Year 11 pupils now follow the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge' programme for approximately a quarter of their week. It provides each pupil with a nationally recognised accreditation and prepares them well for the post-16 work. It comprises 14 subjects and is supplemented by lessons which jointly cover all aspects of the National Curriculum. The teaching is of a very high quality and pupils demonstrate considerable application, enjoyment and satisfaction. The co-ordinator of this Key Stage 4 provision has sensibly used the accredited course as a vehicle to develop new areas of the National Curriculum. Thus, a very good module on Italian now forms the core of the

modern foreign language experience for pupils. During the inspection this module was coming to a close. It was marked by an Italian meal for staff and pupils, with authentic ingredients and an ambience enhanced with Italian music, both modern and classical. The preparation of the meal and the use of a small, but practical Italian vocabulary had been thorough. The pupils had a clear idea of how Italian cuisine and culture differed from their own and were forming clear likes and dislikes. However, the most impressive aspect of the work was the maturity and interest displayed by all pupils whose awareness of the world and their place in it had been greatly enhanced.

10. The 'Towards Independence' course for post-16 students is also characterised by very good teaching, exciting modules and a strong emphasis on the development of literacy, language and work skills. The course constitutes up to 40 per cent of each pupil's curriculum. A number of stimulating modules have been developed, such as 'Yogacise', 'Creativity' and 'Popular Culture' which now supplement the ever-popular 'Horticulture' and 'Meal Preparation and Cooking'. Observations during the inspection indicated that the sessions are very well planned and pupils are encouraged to develop independence and decision-making skills of a high order. High standards of presentation are insisted upon in both a personal and educational sense. In a very good 'Horticulture' session, students shared the tasks of painting the allotment fences, digging out the winter weeds and planting beans that had been grown in the greenhouse. The practical activities had been preceded by an excellent TV gardening video which was pitched at exactly the correct level for the students concerned. Following the work, students write up or self-review their activities which then become part of their folder of work. The thoroughness of this process and the way in which each pupil is clear about why they are doing an assignment and the outcomes are impressive. The course has the dual strength of building on the basic skills learnt by pupils in earlier stages of their education, while preparing them well for further learning and work experiences.
11. At present these further experiences are limited. Although very good contacts have been made with 'Connexions' and 'Trident', there is currently no appropriately structured programme of work placements and links with local colleges, and sixth form provision is weak.
12. Overall, however, the organisation of the subject and its development by the overall co-ordinator and the 'Transition Challenge' co-ordinator are very good indeed. Discussions with students and a scrutiny of the wide range of work produced indicated clearly that they have the highest respect for the course that has been designed for them. They have enjoyed the work without exception and can coherently talk about what they were able to do and those parts of the programme that were particularly interesting. This is very good preparation for the rest of their lives.

**The provision for religious education is outstandingly good and makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual development.**

13. The provision for religious education is outstandingly good and makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The co-ordinator has robustly and imaginatively made a difficult locally agreed syllabus relevant to the needs of pupils with complex special educational needs. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' life skills through the teaching of the subject.
14. Pupils make very good progress in religious education. In a lesson for reception to Year 3, pupils experienced the feeling of sadness associated with loss and the joy of finding

something special because of very good teaching, which was imaginatively resourced and delivered at a cracking pace. Following the story of the 'Lost Coin' the teacher took the class on a hunt for silver coins which she had strategically positioned in the school's sensory garden. The joy and amazement on the pupils' faces when they discovered the silver coins was a delight to behold. Through this experience pupils with severe learning difficulties experienced the feeling of discovering something which had been lost whilst higher attainers were enabled to express verbally how they felt about losing something which was special and precious to them. High expectations from the teacher resulted in very good looking for the lost coins and once found they were shared out equally amongst the class. This made a very good contribution to the pupils' development of numeracy skills as they counted out aloud the number of coins, and a significant contribution to their personal development. Throughout this lesson ambulant pupils assisted non-ambulant pupils, whilst the teacher always encouraged the maximum independence in mobility. Through sharing the coins, which turned out to be made of chocolate, another important lesson about being fair began to sink into the pupils' minds. Throughout this lesson the very good learning was well supported by very good signing by the teacher.

15. In a Years 4 – 7 lesson, pupils' feelings of real loss were evoked when a teddy bear given to each pupil by the teacher was subsequently taken away and momentarily placed into a large bin liner. This experience followed the story of the 'Lost Sheep' from the New Testament and also the reading of 'Where's My Teddy' to the whole class. The quality of teaching in this lesson was excellent and the teacher very skilfully managed a pupil with challenging behaviour. As a result the pupil, with emotional and behavioural difficulties, experienced a sense of forgiveness and in turn made an apology for the way in which he had been behaving.
16. Through a sensory approach, fit for purpose, pupils in Years 8 – 11 experience the Seder Meal by preparing food and tasting it for themselves. This makes a very valuable contribution to their development of important life skills such as chopping food under hygienic conditions and washing up after they have finished preparing the food. The activity also contributed successfully to their personal development as they gained in confidence and independence through the activity, whilst being supported effectively by teaching assistants who kept watch to ensure their safety whilst chopping food. Those with severe learning difficulties made good eye contact with the haroset they produced and expressed their enjoyment of what they were doing with gorgeous smiles. Higher attaining pupils made small but steady gains in the importance of the symbolism in what they were doing and a few had some understanding of the festival of Pesach.
17. Effective use is made of the sensory room to enable pupils with PMLD to experience a sense of darkness and how it contrasts with the experience of light. However, the lack of specific planned outcomes from the activity for individual pupils resulted in a pupil with severe visual impairment having the same type of experience as a fully sighted pupil. Also a pupil with cortical blindness had an identical experience rather than experiencing one-to-one support using fibre optics to stimulate a movement/head response. These are weaknesses in the teaching of these pupils. However, the total sensory experience, including aromatherapy and the use of scented candles, created a very good spiritual atmosphere.
18. Pupils and students enjoy their religious education lessons. They have fun through exciting learning brought about by the experience of exploring through touch and smell a range of interesting religious artefacts. The subject not only contributes successfully to pupils' spiritual development but also to their awareness of cultural diversity.

19. Because of an excellent scheme of work, very good short-term planning for almost all pupils and demanding teaching, religious education is made very relevant for pupils with complex special educational needs. Through enriching experiences they develop relevant life skills, developing well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The subject is brought alive and enjoyed by pupils and teachers alike as evidenced by the photographs of the very interesting and exciting 'Islam week' when visitors to the school contributed very significantly to the pupils' learning.

**The leadership of the headteacher and the effective management provided by the headteacher and the senior management team.**

20. The newly appointed headteacher provides very good leadership. She has successfully brought the school through a very troubled time. Her sincerity combined with robustness has regained the confidence and trust of the staff and parents alike. She has a clear vision which focuses on developing the school as a centre of excellence for the provision for pupils with very complex special educational needs. Her desire to promote inclusion opportunities is somewhat thwarted by a lack of a clear strategy to meet the needs of pupils with SEN in Wiltshire and also by the fact that many mainstream schools in the county are not yet ready for inclusion.
21. She has created a very good senior management team with clearly delegated responsibilities. They fulfil their responsibilities very effectively. Working in partnership as an effective team they have already managed significant change which has had a very significant impact on the quality of educational provision for pupils with very complex special educational needs. Together with the governing body they recognise the need for a longer-term strategy which focuses on increased inclusion opportunities for their pupils and there is a shared commitment to developing Larkrise as a centre of excellence within Wiltshire which provides expertise to mainstream schools. There is a commitment to spend the large surplus to improve the quality of educational provision for current pupils. Under the leadership of this very effective management team, pupil numbers have begun to rise and following a very difficult period the confidence of the community has been successfully restored in the school.

**The development and the effective use of the accommodation.**

22. The governing body, headteacher and assistant deputy headteachers are to be commended for the creative development and improvement to the accommodation since September 2001. There have been significant improvements to the toilets ensuring the maximum dignity and privacy possible for pupils and students, particularly for those dependant on assistance with their toileting. The limited space available has been used very well to develop an outstanding, age-appropriate post-16 common room and also an excellent meeting room for parents.
23. The school has not been successful in developing specialist accommodation for science and design and technology because the local education authority's bid to the DfES for the building work that would be necessary was turned down. The provision for science and design and technology is good. However, the provision for design and technology is hindered by the lack of specialist accommodation. The governing body has not been complacent in pressing its case for improved accommodation for science and design and technology but because space is at a premium such specialist accommodation would necessitate funding additional building work.



## **Partnership with parents and carers is very good.**

24. The school seeks to work in genuine partnership with pupils' parents and carers. Very good written information is provided for parents to keep them fully informed of school activities and events.
25. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed about school activities. They receive good notice of opportunities to visit the school for events such as assemblies and coffee mornings. The home/school diary is used effectively to maintain an ongoing dialogue between parents and their children's teachers and support assistants. This two-way communication is enhanced by the consistency offered by the escorts, many of whom work in school, who know the pupils extremely well and pass important snippets of information between parents and the school. The school has recently surveyed its parents by questionnaire and has been very quick to follow-up a number of suggestions. The best way to provide parents with more regular updates about their children's progress is currently being decided upon.
26. Parents are fully involved in annual reviews and are actively encouraged to come into school at any time to see their children's teachers or the headteacher if they have any concerns. Parents attending the meeting prior to the inspection expressed their appreciation of the school's willingness to listen and act upon any issues raised. Teachers are willing to share their expertise with parents to help them cope with their children at home. A parents' room has just been completed to ensure meetings can take place in a suitable and comfortable environment.
27. Parents have very positive views about the education and care provided for their children. They are especially complimentary about the high priority the school places on the care and welfare of each individual by all members of staff. Parents appreciate the time and effort staff make to present and display their children's work.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**To continue the positive developments in provision for pupils with the most complex learning difficulties to provide a coherent and clearly recorded curriculum throughout the school.**

28. The previous inspection report identified 'the provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) as an area requiring attention and improvement'. Since that time there has been significant improvement in many of the key areas identified. A more appropriate curriculum is now in place. There is less passivity from these pupils and a stronger emphasis on understanding. A qualified teacher has been appointed and there has been relevant training for teaching assistants. This has all been very effective and moved the provision on. However, work still needs to be carried out in a number of areas.
29. During the inspection, teaching within the PMLD class ranged from satisfactory to good. There were occasions when attempting to relate individually to pupils meant that a number were cut off from adult attention. There were also times when the lack of individual learning objectives made it difficult for staff to be clear about what they were trying to achieve. However, good teaching was also seen where good use was made of a range of imaginative and tactile resources and adults worked as a team. In a good personal, social and health education lesson there was a clear objective – to assist

pupils in preparing for a 'royal garden party'. To prepare the food, teaching assistants used a range of techniques and made firm and clear contact with individual pupils. This was important as a number of pupils experience quite severe visual impairment which added to difficulties in both relating and understanding. Every pupil was well involved in the food preparation and health and safety procedures were a strong aspect of the lesson. Attention had been given to how each pupil could experience cutting, spreading and slicing. Both class teachers and teaching assistants used language well to explain what was happening and why. It was clear that staff knew what they were trying to achieve, but lack of clarity in individual learning objectives and the absence of detailed recording of outcomes made it difficult to be sure that progress had occurred.

30. Teaching assistants within the PMLD classroom provide sensitive and informed support. Thus, when two pupils visited the school's hydrotherapy pool to follow up programmes designed by the physiotherapist, they were clear about what to do, proceeded slowly to avoid confusing the pupils and made very efficient use of both the time and very good facilities. During another lesson three pupils visited a local grocery shop to buy jelly for the 'royal garden party'. Once again, more detailed recording would have maximised the contribution of these good activities to individual progress. Each was supported by a teaching assistant. The skills used by the assistants to support this visit, in particular the use of both language and touch to emphasise and explain the route being taken, was of a high quality and made the most of the local environment.
31. The class teacher has worked hard and imaginatively to enhance the classroom, by developing a good indoor play area and a very good sensory area. More training is planned to develop the use of these resources and this should increase both the precision and the range of ways developed to provide sensory stimuli for individual pupils.
32. Sensibly, the class teacher plans jointly with other lower school staff. This means that pupils within class P1 receive the same curriculum as other pupils in the school. It also means that links can be made more easily with other classes and experiences and teachers shared. Support for the occasional pupil with complex difficulties in senior school is good and this bodes well for a team approach as and when a senior PMLD teacher is appointed.
33. It is currently difficult to identify clearly how each pupil is progressing. More work needs to be carried out on methods by which the class teacher and teaching assistants record pupils' responses and progress. The school is working on this and a number of appropriate initiatives have been identified by the school. These include visits to other centres of expertise, the use of a digital camera to provide meaningful records of achievement and a more precise use of targets and objectives to inform lesson planning and the recording of progress.

**To build on the existing inclusion initiatives to provide a range of such opportunities, especially for post-16 students.**

34. Larkrise has a very positive approach to equality of opportunity. This is reflected in its emphasis on communication, its involvement of every pupil in all activities and in its openness to accept and work with all pupils on their own terms. Currently, there are a few initiatives that allow Larkrise pupils to mix with young people in other settings and experience day-to-day social contacts. However, lack of external approaches, the ending of previous initiatives and the concentration on within-school issues have meant that such contacts have not been developed as much as they might.
35. During the inspection the team was impressed with the development that has taken place in the once-a-week 'Link Club'. This is an initiative where a small number of Larkrise pupils join with pupils from the neighbouring primary school in a lunchtime club. It was clear from the happy atmosphere, the good interaction between both sets of pupils and the commitment of the staff involved that this is a great success. Pupils from both schools played boules, chatted and laughed in a relaxed and positive way. All involved gained a lot from the experience. At other times activities such as pottery, painting, handling animals, printing, playing games and receiving visitors have been undertaken by this joint group.
36. Similarly, there are a small number of occasions when individual pupils have attended mainstream schools. These are rare and are not planned in such a way that pupils can make good use of mainstream lessons and contacts that relate to their strengths and social maturity. Currently, staff are looking to place two lower school pupils in a mainstream context and, quite rightly, are moving slowly to ensure a successful outcome.
37. For senior school and post-16 students the situation is similar, but more urgent. Staff have made very good contacts with careers and work placement staff to enrich the accredited courses being undertaken. This means that there will be much more inclusion within the community. However, links with sector colleges are weak and Larkrise students do not get the chance to experience the atmosphere of a college setting in a social or educational sense. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of relevant courses for the school's students on college sites. Discussions with staff during the inspection week indicated that the school is now about to take the initiative and develop appropriate post-16 college experiences that will allow students to rightly feel equal partners with young people of a similar age.
38. All of the indications from the current inspection are that the approach adopted by the school in other initiatives, such as the Link Club and the development of ASDAN courses, will provide a very good basis for effective inclusion in the future. It is clear that staff have both the expertise and the motivation to plan, implement and monitor significant developments that contribute to pupil and student maturity.
39. This is an area of work where the school is well placed to lead the way and increase the valuable contacts already being made with local schools and communities. There are many good examples elsewhere in the country which have developed from the sort of belief and application already shown by Larkrise staff.

**There could now be a longer-term strategic plan linked closely to finance to use the very significant underspend that has accrued in the last year.**

40. As a result of very prudent financial management the governing body has skilfully and successfully turned a very significant budget deficit left by the previous headteacher into a very healthy surplus. However, the carry forward of 26.9 per cent into the proposed budget for the new financial year is unacceptably excessive.
41. The proposed budget for the new financial year indicates a carry forward of about five per cent into the next financial year. There is a rigorous and robust plan to monitor the budget this financial year. The monitoring is to be carried out in partnership between the local education authority and the governing body, ably assisted by a very effective administrative officer. The one-year school development plan is appropriately prioritised with funding targeted for further significant improvements to the building. There is a strategic plan to create another PMLD classroom and to fund an additional PMLD teacher. However, as recognised by the governing body, the time is now right to consider longer-term planning to ensure that all funding is spent on improving the quality of educational provision for pupils and students currently on the school roll.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- 1) Improve further the quality of provision for pupils with PMLD by:
  - a) planning individual learning outcomes for pupils in the short-term lesson plans;
  - b) assessing pupils' progress against these planned outcomes and using the information gained from the assessments to inform subsequent planning to raise standards; and
  - c) training the PMLD teacher and teaching assistants who work with pupils with PMLD in the most effective use of resources when working with these pupils, particularly the use of switches to encourage these pupils to begin to make independent and informed choices.

*(Paragraphs 7, 17, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 33)*
- 2) Improve the range and number of inclusion opportunities by:
  - a) increasing the number of inclusion links with mainstream schools; and
  - b) developing college links for post-16 students.

*(Paragraphs 34, 36 and 37).*
- 3) Improve long-term planning by:
  - a) developing a long-term strategic plan; and
  - b) ensuring that priorities identified on the longer-term plan are carefully costed.

*(Paragraphs 40 and 41).*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	12	6	3	0	0	0
Percentage	4	56	27	13	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than four percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	56
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.14

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment

Because of the special educational needs of the pupils they do not take the National Curriculum tests. Year 11 pupils do not take GCSEs. ASDAN accreditation is used to celebrate the achievements of Year 11 and post-16 students.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	45
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.8
Average class size	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: YN – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	900

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	681,970
Total expenditure	595,686
Expenditure per pupil	10,831
Balance brought forward from previous year	97,372
Balance carried forward to next year	183,656

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Parents who returned the parent questionnaires wrote very favourably about the quality of education provided for their children. A few expressed a concern about the information they received about the progress their children make. The headteacher knew about this concern and there is an action plan to address it.