

INSPECTION REPORT

LARWOOD SCHOOL

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 131503

Headteacher: Mr A Whitaker

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger

Dates of inspection: 15th- 17th March 2004

Inspection number: 258935

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 special
Age range of pupils:	5-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	59
School address:	Webb Rise Stevenage Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG1 5QU
Telephone number:	01438 236333
Fax number:	01438 236363
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sandra Barr
Date of previous inspection:	9/3/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Larwood is a day and residential primary school for boys and girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 59 pupils on roll, five of whom are girls. Twenty-five pupils use the residence during the week. Four pupils are in Years 1 and 2, the rest in Years 3 to 6. Nearly all pupils are white and all speak English as their main language. All pupils have statements of special educational need, identifying the degree and complexity of their difficulties. Almost a fifth of the pupils are in public care. The residence has been inspected twice in recent years by Care Standards, each time receiving a very positive outcome. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and the school's socio-economic circumstances are about average. Pupils' behaviour has often interfered with their learning in other schools with the result that their attainment on entry is often low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Lead inspector	Science, geography, history, physical education
32676	Nick Power	Lay inspector	
16198	Carol Etherington	Team inspector	English, personal, social and health education and citizenship, modern foreign language, religious education
22178	Kate Robinson	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, art, design and technology, music, special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Pupils are well taught and achieve well academically. Very good leadership and governance and good management have created an atmosphere in which pupils thrive, making very good progress in their personal development. Parents greatly appreciate this and pupils are very happy to have the privilege of attending. Costs are very reasonable and the school is giving **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Strong leadership and governance, coupled with good management have contributed to the creation of a very good ethos.
- Pupils make very good progress in improving their attitudes and their behaviour; they grow as individuals and rekindle their interest in learning.
- As a result of good teaching, achievement in nearly all subjects of the curriculum is good.
- Pupils are safe, happy and listened to; as a result, they relax and concentrate on learning and improving their behaviour.
- There are many, very good, opportunities for pupils to carry on learning and developing outside the classroom.
- The school does not do enough to share its considerable expertise with other schools.

There has been **good improvement** since the last inspection. It was a new school then and has fulfilled the expectations placed upon it. Most of the weaknesses identified by that inspection related to the newness of the school and all have been successfully addressed. Despite not having being inspected for almost six years the school has successfully pursued its own agenda for continuous, gradual improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Pupils achieve well. They get off to a good start in Years 1 and 2 where about a half of all teaching is very good. As a result, pupils make good progress, often from a position where they have little prior learning. As they move through the school, pupils sustain their progress, with the result that by the time they leave they are achieving well in nearly all subjects. This progress, however, is not seamless because there is a slight dip in Year 5, where teaching is weaker overall and achievement suffers as a result. Nevertheless, by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they have achieved well in English, mathematics and science and also in religious education and personal, social and health education. In information and communication technology (ICT) achievement is satisfactory. The subject has already, rightly, been identified as a priority for development and there have been recent improvements. Nevertheless, many teachers are not routinely helping to raise pupils' confidence in using computers. Other subjects of the National Curriculum are far from ignored and pupils are achieving well in all of them. A good proportion of the targets the school sets for individuals and the school as a whole, are met.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education develop very well. Pupils like coming to school and do so in the expectation that it will help them to learn and improve their behaviour. For many this is a revelation. They respond extremely well to the expectations and routines of the school. Inspectors found them to be friendly, polite, understanding

and helpful. This demonstrates the great progress that many are making in their personal development. Lessons are rarely interrupted by bad behaviour so most pupils learn free of distraction. Mealtimes are a delight, with behaviour as good as the food; these events make a hugely important contribution to pupils' social development. As a matter of course, pupils are helped to develop their awareness of what they are doing right, or wrong, and this is strongly reinforced in end-of-week celebration assemblies, much lauded by pupils, parents, governors and staff. Pupils are helped to feel good about themselves and how to help others. Their understanding of other cultures is well promoted.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Pupils receive a good education. They are well taught in a good range of subjects. Staff form particularly good, trusting relationships with pupils, based upon listening very well to them and responding to their individual needs. Most of the teaching is good and over a quarter is very good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils are strongly encouraged to try hard and teachers have very high expectations of good behaviour in lessons. They also expect pupils to work hard. Work is conscientiously marked, with close attention being paid to celebrating the things pupils are doing right and helping them to understand how they could improve. The curriculum is good. It ensures that all pupils are being taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education and personal, social and health education. Beyond this, pupils also benefit hugely from an extensive range of activities provided at lunchtimes and after school in residential and extended-day activities. Staff are unstinting in their willingness to help children learn and develop at every opportunity. The school is an inviting environment, it welcomes visitors in and presents a very good impression through its cleanliness, good repair and exciting displays of pupils' work. The care, guidance and support of pupils are very good. They are underpinned by the very good relationships between staff and pupils and the attention given to ensuring that pupils are very well looked after. Parents are kept especially well informed about how their children are getting on, not only in class but also in the residence. Not enough is being done to share staff expertise with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Strong leadership and governance and good management are all in evidence. This is a 'tight ship'. It is well ordered, guided by good policy and carefully monitored. Governors are full partners in the management of the school, recognising its many strengths whilst acknowledging its very few weaknesses and working to eliminate them. The headteacher has been successful in his drive to improve standards and has been instrumental in bringing about considerable improvement and consolidation since the previous inspection. Many other staff have played a very effective part in doing so. There is very little in the school that goes unmonitored or evaluated, always with the intent to provide a better deal for pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils are keen to come to school. This is reflected in their good attendance and the comments of parents and carers. None of the pupils talked to expressed anything other than positive views of the school and their responses to questions, put to them before the inspection, were very complimentary. The same is true of parents' views. A few individuals expressed discontent with specific points but all were supportive of the overall quality of education their children were receiving. This is a school meeting the wishes of parents and children.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Share its extensive expertise with other schools to help staff in those schools cope more effectively with the sort of pupils sent to Larwood.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3, 4 and 6. It is satisfactory in Year 5. Overall, standards in all the core subjects remain slightly lower than those found in mainstream schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The youngest pupils settle quickly into the routines of the school, achieve well and are well prepared for moving into bigger class groups at the beginning of Year 3.
- Achievement in Year 5 is slightly lower than elsewhere in the school because teaching is weaker in one of the three classes for this age group.
- Achievement in all the main subjects of the curriculum is good overall, except in ICT, where it is satisfactory.

Commentary

1. Pupils often arrive in Year 1 with virtually no prior learning and with extremely limited personal and social skills. To help address this, in Years 1 and 2, pupils are taught as a small class group where they receive extra support and attention. Expectations are high and pupils are worked hard, with the result that they achieve well in lessons and make significant gains in their personal development. This helps them to transfer successfully to classes higher up the school where there can be twice as many pupils present. The school's own monitoring of targets shows that standards in Years 1 and 2 are rising, with particular success in improving pupils' reading. Here, pupils' achievement is very good.

2. The achievement of other pupils is good overall and nearly all meet over three quarters of the individual targets they are set for learning and personal development. The exception is for a small class of Year 5 pupils. In this class, teaching is weaker and achievement slows. Nevertheless, this class represents only a quarter of the whole year group and achievement overall remains satisfactory because the school has taken good steps to remedy the situation by reducing the class size and introducing extra support for the recently appointed teacher.

3. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science and religious education. It is also good in most of the other subjects inspected in depth. There is little evidence to suggest that any group of pupils, other than the Year 5 class already mentioned, achieves either more or less than any other. Good improvement has been seen in nearly all subjects since the previous inspection. In ICT, however, achievement is satisfactory. The main reason why achievement is slightly lower than in other subjects is that, until recently, teachers have not been routinely using computers as an aid to learning and presentation in other lessons. This situation has been picked up on by the management and forms an important part of the school improvement plan. Extra training has been given to staff and more funding allocated to the subject. As a result, standards of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are showing significant, recent gains. An important area in which pupils achieve very well is in their personal development. Achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons is good but to this is added the bonus of staff paying great attention to promoting personal and social skills in all lessons and activities throughout the day. Here, also, the residence makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement by supporting them with their schoolwork and personal development. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils are achieving Level 3 or above in national tests and teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science. This is lower than the national expectation for all schools, which is Level 4, but still represents good overall achievement when pupils' special educational needs are taken

into consideration. Pupils themselves feel that they are making good progress and so do their parents.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

4. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour are very good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Their attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make huge gains in their ability to behave appropriately.
- Strong relationships in all areas of the school underpin the improvements in pupils’ attitudes and behaviour.
- The school promotes pupils’ personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, very well. Their cultural development is good.

Commentary

5. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively and pupils’ challenging behaviour is consistently well managed. Rules are simple and clear and there is positive reinforcement of good behaviour through the points system operated across the school. This encourages pupils to behave appropriately and motivates them to work towards achieving rewards for good behaviour. Achievements are celebrated in assemblies. Senior staff provide valuable support to teachers and are very effective in dealing with serious lapses in behaviour, through counselling and ‘time out’ sessions, with pupils being returned to lessons as quickly as possible. Exclusions have been falling each year since the last inspection. When exclusion is used it is almost always for very short periods so as not to interfere unduly with pupils’ learning. All pupils are set challenging targets to improve their behaviour and their social skills and a large proportion of these are met. There is no evidence of racism in the school and pupils and parents say there is very little bullying and that their children look forward to coming to school. The effectiveness of the school in improving pupils’ behaviour is evident in the fact that instructors at a local outdoor activity centre lobby their boss to take Larwood groups in preference to those from other schools.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	52	61	0
White – any other White background	0	2	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	1

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

6. Very good behaviour in the majority of lessons enables pupils to learn well and to realise that they can achieve success in lessons. Their raised self-esteem and confidence leads them to develop increasingly mature attitudes not only to learning, but also to the way in which they take their place in the community, whether this is during their stay in the residential unit, with their families at home or when they transfer to secondary education. Adults act as very good role models for pupils. Relationships between staff are strong and promote effective teamwork. Relationships between staff and pupils are also very good and this ensures that pupils are motivated to learn, to behave well and to develop positive relationships with each other.

7. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. They are encouraged to reflect on and celebrate their own and others' achievements and to develop their own values, beliefs and principles, and also to respect those of others. Their moral development is very good. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong and the ability to see the effects of their actions on others and to consider others' feelings. As well as the very good improvements in pupils' social skills and behaviour, they learn about how society operates. The school council makes a strong contribution to this, showing how a democracy works and gives people a say through their elected representatives. Pupils' cultural development is good. There are good cultural and multi-cultural elements in literacy, art, music, history, French and religious education. Good attention is paid to promoting racial harmony in special assemblies. More use could be made of local community representatives from different ethnic backgrounds in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	2.9
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

8. Pupils receive a good education. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. There is a good curriculum, pupils are well cared for and supported, close contact is kept with parents.

Teaching and learning

9. Pupils are well taught. They learn well and assessment of their progress is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are particularly good at preventing bad behaviour from slowing learning.
- Pupils are very strongly encouraged to work as hard as they can; very good marking of pupils' work helps them to understand how they can improve.
- Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individuals.

Commentary

10. Nearly all staff demonstrate considerable skill in managing the behaviour of pupils. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. High quality teamwork exists in most classrooms, with teachers deploying support staff carefully to help pupils to learn and to behave. Teachers realise the importance of preventing errant behaviour rather than dealing with incidents after they have happened. They are very good at spotting pupils who may be struggling and stepping in by changing activities subtly when pupils show signs of becoming distracted. In Years 1 and 2, the teacher is particularly effective in managing the behaviour of pupils. This is achieved through thorough preparation of activities well matched to pupils individual ability and concentration spans. Pupils are also worked very hard and the pace of lessons rarely flags. These young pupils are treated very sympathetically but their demands for attention are carefully considered and often, judiciously, ignored. In most other classes, similar techniques work equally well but less effective practice is occasionally encountered, especially in Year 5, when there is occasionally too much hesitation during lessons and pupils use the opportunity to become distracted and disruptive. This happened in a Year 5 PSHCE lesson and resulted in only a half of the planned learning objectives being met.

11. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard. This is backed up with masses of encouragement to pupils and the celebration of success when it comes. The prompt and accurate marking of their work and its vivid display around the school further encourages pupils. Good improvement has occurred since the previous inspection when marking and assessment were identified as common areas of weakness. Great prominence is given to ensuring that pupils work as neatly as possible and, as a result, pupils build up a good collection of work of which they are very proud.

12. Nearly all lessons are planned in detail, with good attention being paid to pupils' individual needs. Most lessons start with a very good introduction that incorporates a quick check of what pupils have remembered from previous lessons and explains to pupils what is expected of them in the current lesson. The main tasks are very well related to needs, closely aligned to reading ability and matched carefully to longer term planning to ensure that pupils are learning systematically and making use of what they already know. Because of this, pupils are encouraged to try their hardest, knowing that the teachers' demands are reasonable and also that their previous achievements have been useful in helping them to learn more. At the end of lessons, teachers nearly always involve pupils in checking what they have learned and how they have behaved.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9 (27%)	20(61%)	3(9%)	1(3%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

13. The curriculum is good. It is very well enriched by activities outside the classroom. Accommodation and resources are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attention is paid to all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils have many, very good opportunities to learn and develop out of the classroom as well as in it.
- There is a good programme to promote pupils personal, health and social education.

Commentary

14. Curricular opportunities have been enhanced since the last inspection, when several aspects were judged to be unsatisfactory. Planning and monitoring have improved; this includes mathematics where there is now a more coherent programme of work that continues across the whole school. The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 successfully develops pupils' basic skills ensuring a good start to the later stages of education. The curriculum gives pupils a secure foundation for further learning and a good breadth of educational experiences. All National Curriculum subjects are taught as is religious education and PSHCE. Literacy and numeracy are planned using the guidance of the joint primary strategies so that there is a progressive plan to learning. The school has successfully implemented a good balance of the other National Curriculum subjects.

15. There is a particularly wide range of activities on and off site for pupils, for instance pupils have the opportunity to participate in activities as diverse as diving and skiing. All pupils say that they enjoy these activities, which have a positive effect on pupils' enthusiasm for school and on their sporting prowess. Visits effectively support learning in a range of subjects. Following a design and technology visit to a local packaging factory, for example, pupils in Year 5 have decorated their own

boxes; whilst in Year 6 pupils' illustrations and writing have been stimulated by a trip to the nearby RAF museum. Parents appreciate the good range of activities that hold the interest of their children. Carefully planned 'booster' classes for the core subjects and a wide range of sporting activities capture pupils' interest and make a significant contribution to their personal development. Lunchtime clubs provide many well-planned opportunities in activities such as ICT, drama and sporting activities. Drama and musical performances, for example, in Christmas productions, further enrich pupils' experiences.

16. A good programme of PSHCE provides pupils with a well-planned course, which includes provision for drugs awareness, sex education and knowledge of healthy living. Across the school, there is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills. Specific PSHCE lessons are on the timetable. The registration periods, and the extensive variety of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school, and the pupils' own personal and social targets in their individual education plans all contribute well to the overall programme. The school provides well for pupils who have additional needs beyond those of the majority of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

17. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance. Care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Pupils' views are sought and acted upon very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils know that their views are taken seriously; they like the staff and trust them
- Residential provision is very good.
- New pupils are helped to settle in very quickly.
- There are minor omissions in risk assessments performed on the physical environment.

Commentary

18. The relationships that exist between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils know that they can trust and talk to any adult in the school or residence, and that appropriate advice and support will be given. This means that fears or concerns that pupils have are dealt with promptly and effectively. The example set by all staff in terms of respect and care for others is a significant aid to achieving the same qualities in pupils. The school and residence have an atmosphere of happiness and care. The school council is a very good feature of the school's work and pupils feel that their views are taken seriously. The school doctor visits weekly, mainly to check on the health of resident pupils. He reports that pupils are open, and confident, in sharing their views and concerns and that this is largely due to the good relationships cultivated in the school. He adds that he has never met a child at Larwood who says he cannot confide in at least one member of staff.

19. The ethos in the boarding houses is very similar to that in the main school. However, it is sufficiently different to enable pupils to experience the difference between school and domestic life. The atmosphere is a little more relaxed and this allows pupils the space to continue to develop very well personally. All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. However, there are no formal induction procedures for staff and this means that the effectiveness of new staff is very dependent on the quality of the personal support given.

20. The procedures to help pupils settle in are very thorough and work very well. New pupils soon settle to life in school and it has had considerable success in regaining the interest of pupils who have found education difficult in previous schools. The settled atmosphere helps many pupils to reduce their need for medication to help them manage their behaviour.

21. The school's Child Protection arrangements are thorough, as are the pupils' behaviour management plans. These plans include risk assessments for individual pupils. However, the school does not systematically and consistently review the physical environment of the school to ensure that all potential hazards are identified and controlled.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

22. The school has very good links with parents. Links with the community are good. There are insufficient links with mainstream schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication with parents is very effective and thorough.
- Good links with the community open up many extra opportunities for pupils.
- The school is not sufficiently sharing its expertise with, nor seeing what it can learn from other schools.

Commentary

23. The school's relationships with parents are very good. Parents are very satisfied with the experience the school provides for their children. The school realises the importance of a productive dialogue with parents and works very well with most parents. Parents are kept well informed about life in school and their children's personal and academic development through regular newsletters, magazines and weekly, sometimes daily, personal contact with school staff.

24. Pupils are involved in a good range of activities in the community and they welcome the opportunity to participate. The association that the school has with the local leisure centres is a particularly productive link and valued by all parties. It allows pupils to experience many different sports such as rock climbing, diving and skiing. A strong feature of the school is that senior staff work very well with other associated professionals to seek positive outcomes for pupils. Communication with these professionals is rigorous and the school's leaders are very effective in ensuring that they see their work in a broader context where they are one piece of a jigsaw rather than the hub of a wheel. Many professionals from other associated agencies took the opportunity to talk to inspectors. They are unanimous in their praise of the school, pointing out how its work complements their own.

25. There are weaknesses in the school's links with other schools. Where links do exist they are used productively, for example through the Eco Schools project and the school also keeps in close touch with other schools for similar pupils. However, it does not yet offer its considerable skills and experience in behaviour management and pupils' personal development to other mainstream schools. It does not make enough use of the skills and facilities that other schools can offer or seek to improve its provision by learning from these schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

26. Leadership and governance are very good. Management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has worked very effectively with other senior staff to raise standards
- The leadership and management of subjects are good. Coordinators are keenly aware of their subjects' strengths and weaknesses
- Governors play a full and effective role in the management of the school.

Commentary

27. The headteacher has a very clear focus on raising standards throughout the school. Leadership duties are carefully shared amongst senior staff, especially with the deputy headteacher, head of care and assistant headteachers all of whom contribute significantly to the very good leadership of the school. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, in the first year of the school's existence, when many leadership and management systems had had

insufficient time to become embedded. Lessons are frequently observed by senior staff and by external advisors. Teachers are given honest feedback and invited to comment. All teachers have been observed in the past year but monitoring focuses very well on areas that are causing concern. In these situations, teachers feel supported rather than threatened. This monitoring has, for instance identified problems in a Year 5 class and prompt measures have been taken to help the teacher and the pupils in that class. Very good attention has been paid to creating an ethos of high achievement and good behaviour in a school that welcomes pupils and their parents and is greatly appreciated by both.

28. The coordination of subjects is conscientious and effective. Through carefully keeping track of provision, coordinators are very well placed to take steps to build upon strengths and address weaknesses quickly. In conjunction with senior managers, including the headteacher, very good attention is paid to identifying where training would benefit the quality of provision and then ensuring that this training is provided. All staff are involved in performance management procedures and effective reviews of performance for each person have been undertaken for the past three years. These reviews take very good account of the impact that individuals are having on promoting pupils' progress and pursuing targets in the school improvement plan. There is good self-evaluation but at times it results in an over-abundance of statistics which show what pupils have achieved but without sufficient reference to what has been done to secure this achievement. In this respect, self-evaluation is more strongly focussed upon product than process. Nevertheless, the procedures work and the school is able to demonstrate clearly that standards are rising.

29. Governors are hugely supportive. The chairperson visits weekly, meeting the headteacher and pupils, often spending time with them at mealtimes in the residence. Other governors also visit regularly to look at subjects which they have a particular interest in, to accompany pupils on trips out of school and in one instance to run the gardening club. Governors are fully aware where weaknesses exist and have been very supportive of the headteacher in his efforts to raise standards. Several find the amount of paperwork they are given burdensome, but useful in that it is extremely thorough. Governors have also contributed to the setting up of a parents' support group, thus contributing well to the school's links with parents. Good training opportunities have been extended to governors.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1047842
Total expenditure	1003160
Expenditure per pupil	17000

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	30184
Balance carried forward to the next	74847

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

English

30. The school's provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff work together well to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils aged five to seven get off to a cracking start in developing their basic literacy skills.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but there are inconsistencies from class to class.
- Teachers place good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills, and in particular their writing, in most other subjects.

Commentary

31. Pupils achieve well. There is effective teamwork between staff resulting in good deployment of non-teaching staff to support pupils' learning. Learning support assistants are well briefed and contribute much to ensuring that pupils receive the additional help they need with learning basic reading and writing skills through working with individuals or small groups. This support enables teachers to plan activities that are closely matched to pupils' abilities and that stretch them and challenge them to achieve well. As a result, pupils of all capabilities and types of special educational need achieve well, even where they have missed much education in the past because of their behavioural problems. Pupils' achievement in all aspects of English enables them to have successful access to other curriculum subjects.

32. The youngest pupils referred to Larwood get a particularly good start to this learning because of very good systematic teaching that focuses closely on basic literacy skills. The teacher uses a wide range of strategies to help pupils to sequence their day and to remember important things like letter sounds and alphabetical order. She has introduced a symbolic timetable to help pupils to know what lessons they will be doing each day before they can read the names of subjects. Songs and rhymes help pupils to learn their alphabet. Amusing actions ensure that they link letters with the sounds they make. For example, the class enjoys making a circular motion with their hands to indicate water going down a plughole to remember the **g**urgle and **g**lug of letter 'g'. Soon after starting school, children are able to write their own name and to form letters correctly, and to read many of the most frequently used words. They are given many opportunities to describe their feelings and reactions and explain their views, with all staff encouraging them to use proper sentences. Careful listening is encouraged so that pupils follow instructions and listen to each other when taking turns to speak.

33. All teaching and learning observed in the inspection week was at least good, with several lessons with pupils of different ages being very good. The analysis of pupils' work over time and scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that achievement is good overall but that there are inconsistencies between classes. For example, the recent whole-school focus on differentiating activities so that they are better linked to pupils' abilities and build systematically on their prior learning has been more effective in some classes than in others. Some teachers make better use of ICT than others, to support pupils' learning of basic skills. A few teachers focus heavily on early reading and writing skills but do less interesting work on developing pupils' response to literature, whilst others do the reverse. Some teachers plan more for pupils to have opportunities to do some work independently or to work collaboratively in pairs or small groups but others include more work with adults. There are variations in how teachers assess pupils and record their progress and in how

assessment data are used to inform planning of lessons. In particular, some pupils' learning targets are better focussed and more easily measured, whilst others are too general to enable progress to be tracked. Some weaker teaching in a Year 5 class has resulted in less progress being made in English by a small group of pupils, but this had already been identified by the subject leader's monitoring and steps have been taken to address the situation. The result of these different approaches is that pupils have good achievement over their time at the school, but that in classes where all elements of the English curriculum are given an equal priority pupils are starting to make very good progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

34. There is a very strong focus on developing pupils' literacy and language skills in other areas of the curriculum. In particular, pupils have many opportunities to write extended pieces of work in subjects such as science, geography and history. They have opportunities to develop discussion skills in ICT, religious education and PSHCE. They read and follow instructions in mathematics and recipes and design briefs in design technology. One area where there is no consistent approach is the teaching of handwriting, but effective monitoring by the subject leader for English and literacy has already identified this as an area for development in the subject action plan. These are pointers to good and improving leadership of the subject.

FRENCH

35. As only one French lesson was observed, no overall judgement of provision is made.

36. The school has chosen to teach French to its oldest pupils, even though the subject is optional for primary schools. Both Year 6 classes have the opportunity to study the language. It was only possible to see one of the weekly lessons during the inspection because of timetabling arrangements. However, analysis of pupils' written work shows that most pupils are achieving well. They gain a secure grasp of a range of the basic vocabulary needed when starting to learn a new language, including simple greetings such as '*Salut*' and '*Bonjour*', numbers, colours, classroom equipment, food and drink items and clothing. They learn to ask and answer questions and follow the teacher's instructions when given in French. The lesson observed had good quality teaching and learning, with effective support from the classroom assistant, who moved quietly from pupil to pupil, encouraging them to answer when they were nervous of making a mistake with pronunciation. The teacher gave lots of praise and support, and made the lesson fun by incorporating games, quizzes and competitions. For example, in a game of '*Lotto*', pupils were so excited to see if they were going to win the game that they didn't realise that they were really practising saying their numbers from nought to 20! As well as gaining enjoyment, pupils get a lot of self-esteem from their success in learning French, and this makes a valuable contribution to their personal development. It adds a useful European dimension to their cultural development, and enhances the curriculum that the school provides for pupils. In addition, because French is one of the modern foreign languages taught at several local secondary schools, pupils get a flying start to the subject. This helps them with the transition to secondary education, which many pupils can find daunting, by giving them extra confidence.

MATHEMATICS

37. Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and prepared so learning is continuous and pupils of all abilities achieve well
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are very positive
- The marking and annotation of pupils' work is very good and has a significant impact on their understanding of how they can improve

- Information and communication technology is currently underused.

Commentary

38. Achievement is good. Throughout the school, teachers plan lessons effectively and this has a good impact on pupils' learning. This is a good improvement since the last inspection where the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was found to be unsatisfactory. Good use is made of the approaches suggested in the National Numeracy Strategy and pupils enjoy lessons as a result.

39. Teachers know their pupils well and effectively use this knowledge in lesson planning and assessing and recording the progress pupils make. Teamwork between support staff and teachers is good and their partnership leads to effective teaching and learning. This is particularly successful when teachers share their planning with teaching assistants, and identify where their support will be most useful. In a Year 4 class, for instance, good planning and appropriate reinforcement activities enabled one pupil, supported by the teaching assistant, to make good progress in grouping objects in tens in order to make counting large numbers easier.

40. In the best lessons teachers ask questions appropriate to pupils' level of ability, which enables all to join in and feel pleased with their contribution. In Years 1 and 2, for instance, the teacher's careful questioning together with clear explanations and well-prepared materials, enabled pupils to build successfully on their understanding of money. The strong emphasis on basic skills for these pupils is giving them a very good basis for future learning. Teachers and assistants use praise well, which helps pupils feel proud of their achievements. The marking of pupils' work is a particular strength. Work scrutiny showed that almost all teachers are meticulous in showing pupils how to improve. Relationships in lessons are very good and pupils learn in a very happy atmosphere. As a result, they work very hard and are keen to succeed, helping them to achieve well. ICT resources are limited, however, and few instances of ICT being used to support learning were seen during the course of the inspection, or in the samples of pupils work provided.

41. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Effective leadership and management have helped to improve standards since the previous inspection. The subject co-ordinator is very keen to raise standards further and is beginning to analyse the results of national assessment tests. Assessment procedures are good and used to track the progress of all pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

42. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. Data handling skills are reinforced through pupils' work in ICT, but the school recognises the need to extend the use of computers within mathematics lessons.

SCIENCE

43. Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good, leading to pupils learning and achieving well.
- A strong focus on experimental work and investigation exists and this motivates and interests pupils
- Pupils record their learning systematically and in true scientific fashion.

Commentary

44. Science is taught confidently and pupils achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, expectations are made crystal clear at the start of the lesson, rules are laid down and pupils are reminded of what

they must or must not do. This pre-empts any possible or likely problems and settles pupils well. Classroom support is particularly well used to help pupils to learn and behave and pupils are involved from the start, discussing, doing and recording as they go along, for instance as they explore the concept of darkness. What was especially effective in this very good lesson was that the teacher aroused pupils' curiosity, making them want to learn more as they gradually lifted the lid of a box to let in more light to help them discover the identity of a concealed object. With equally good teaching, a Year 3 group learned about the importance of 'fair' testing. Again, pupils were fascinated because the chosen activity interested them. As they released model cars to run down a slope pupils were encouraged to record their findings and helped by carefully prepared worksheets which took into account individual pupil's reading and writing ability, being given carefully deployed support where necessary to help them learn and behave. All pupils' work is diligently marked and helpful and encouraging comments are frequently added to help pupils understand where they have gone wrong and how they could improve their work. Pupils' work is carefully assessed by simple tests given at the end of each topic studied.

45. A great strength of science teaching in general is the recognition that if pupils are presented with interesting activities in which they are involved they will work hard and rarely misbehave. Every lesson observed involved a practical activity and the work in pupils' books suggests that this is usually the case. In each instance mentioned above, pupils were fascinated and excited by the activities and this was also the case in other lessons, whether pupils were investigating the upward force on objects in water or the insulative properties of a house. In the first instance, the Year 6 class had a memorable experience as the teacher, bravely, got each of them to push inflated balloons into a tank of water to feel the upward pressure; the pupils got wet, so did the staff and the classroom, but this was a small price to pay for the enjoyment, excitement, laughter and learning of the pupils. This approach, evident throughout the school, is testament to the good leadership of the subject.

46. From Year 1, pupils are encouraged to think scientifically and to record their observations methodically. They are helped to do this by the presentation of carefully adapted worksheets which help them to follow procedures and record findings as they are made. These worksheets show good variation for individuals and allow pupils to work with as much independence as possible. As pupils progress through the school there is increasing expectation on them to record work in greater detail and this gives them a good opportunity to write factually with increasing accuracy and to work with growing independence.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

47. Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements in teaching have enhanced learning and achievement.
- Additional resources and training have improved staff confidence in teaching the subject.
- Insufficient use is made of computers to support work in other subjects.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection in addressing the key issues in the report. The sampling of pupils' work in Years 1 to 6 and lesson observations show that the school is making satisfactory use of its existing technology. Younger pupils had used word processing, clip art and simple paint programs. Older pupils can alter font size, use email and have used databases to collect information about pupils in their class.

49. Since the last inspection most staff have taken part in national training, which has increased their knowledge and how they teach the subject. Staff are beginning to make use of ICT to enhance teaching, but these instances are currently rare. For instance, during a whole school assembly,

interactive technology was used very effectively to demonstrate the work a Year 4 class had done on Japan. The appointment of a technician to ensure computers and software are in good working order, is aiding staff confidence. These factors contribute well to improved achievement.

50. Conversations with pupils and examples of their work show that good use is made of the Internet to gather information, and new technology is now beginning to be used well for recording and presenting text. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and clearly enjoy their lessons and extra curricular opportunities such as lunch time clubs.

51. The school development plan accurately identifies the priorities; for example, the purchase of interactive whiteboards. These would aid teaching considerably by improving teacher demonstrations and teaching and learning in general.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

52. Though some use is made of new technology for research and in the presentation of work, pupils have fewer opportunities to improve their skills in other lessons. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support work in subjects, for example, presenting data in mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

53. Insufficient lessons were observed in history and geography to make secure overall judgements of provision in history and geography.

History

54. Pupils have completed a lot of very good work in history. In Years 1 and 2 they have identified different kinds of homes, noticing what they are made out of and how construction techniques have changed over the years. They have made comparisons with their own favourite toys and those that their parents and grandparents would have played with. They are learning how times change in a way that is interesting and of relevance to themselves. In the one lesson observed it was heartening to see such young pupils working hard and concentrating intently right to the end of the last lesson of the day as they made comparisons of old and new homes. In this lesson, the teacher demonstrated great skill in effective behaviour management as she took great care to sideline the behaviour of a particularly attention seeking pupil without ever ignoring that pupil's minor achievements. In Years 3-6, pupils are systematically building up a wide understanding of the passage of time. They study, in detail, specific periods of history such as the Victorian era where they compare buildings, transport and education with modern day equivalents. A beautiful display in a Year 3 classroom illustrates the Fire of London and makes good reference to Samuel Pepys' diary, thus helping pupils to recognise the importance of this form of writing. Digital cameras are used to very good effect to record their visits, for instance to a mock-up of a Victorian classroom. In Year 6, pupils' work points to teachers having particularly high expectations of presentation. Each successive piece of work can be seen to be building upon previous learning with the result that pupils are building up a fine body of work, which is conscientiously and helpfully marked and which pupils can be proud of.

Geography

55. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn how symbols can represent features in the landscape by recognising and drawing road-signs. They build on this by drawing simple maps of an imaginary island, marking the main man-created features such as the post office, a village and a farm. They identify different forms of transport used on the island, such as boats, lorries and tractors and also the types of jobs that provide people on the island with employment. In years 3 to 6, pupils extend their understanding of geography well. Their learning is made interesting, for instance by a visit to Ashwell Springs, the source of a local river, and through the making of models to show the course and development of rivers in general and to demonstrate the principles of erosion and sedimentation.

Pupils have drawn accurate maps of the immediate locality and learned about the major cities, rivers and mountains of the United Kingdom. In Year 6, pupils' work shows good, sustained progress. It is very well presented, often with longer pieces of good writing. All work is carefully marked, often with added comments to help pupils improve their work.

Religious education

56. The school's provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well taught and make good progress in learning about their own and others' faiths; this good achievement makes a strong contribution to their personal development.
- There is a good balance between the study of Christianity and other major world religions and the curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of worship and talks by representatives of other faiths.
- The subject makes a good contribution to developing pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills but too little writing is done.

Commentary

57. Pupils achieve well in religious education. Good teaching enables pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of both Christianity and a range of other world faiths. As well as this, they also benefit from thinking about the effects that having a faith has on different peoples' lives, which helps them to develop spiritual awareness; and on their traditions and way of life, which promotes pupils' cultural development.

58. There is a good emphasis on learning about the life of Jesus and his teachings. Through listening to, and discussing, stories from the Bible, pupils learn about what was important to Jesus and how a belief in God can guide people's actions. They also learn about other world faiths, including Judaism and Hinduism. Older pupils visit places of worship such as churches and temples to compare the buildings, artefacts and customs. They also have valuable opportunities to hear speakers from other faiths. For example, in a very good session with Year 6 pupils, a Buddhist from the local community came in to talk to the class about Buddhist monks. He described how Buddhism had spread from country to country, and about the different beliefs held by various sects. Pupils listened respectfully and then asked many sensible questions which the visitor was impressed by as it showed how much they had recalled from previous lessons as well as how courteous they were to visitors.

59. It is clear from lessons observed, teachers' planning and pupils' work that good use is made of pupils' literacy skills in many lessons to support their learning and that teachers also promote these skills through the teaching of religious education. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed through effective discussion sessions, as in the lesson with the Buddhist visitor. The sharing of books, as done in literacy lessons, is used effectively in religious education lessons. For example, in a good lesson with the youngest pupils, the teacher read a story about Jesus calming the storm, asking questions about the main events to help pupils remember what had happened. She used their response to the text to help them understand why Jesus acted as he did and to predict what might happen next. However, less emphasis is placed on pupils writing about what they have learned in religious education and much recording is limited to the completion of worksheets. This is disappointing when compared to the extended writing done in other subjects such as history and science, and is an area where religious education could be further developed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

60. Insufficient lessons were observed to make secure overall judgements of provision in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education.

Art and design

61. Pupils' work is carefully displayed in classrooms and corridors, and reflects the breadth of the curriculum, celebrates achievement and enhances the school environment. Examples of collage using a variety of materials, painting, sketches, simple printing, paintings produced with the aid of computer programs and references to the work of well-known artists all indicated a varied approach to art. A range of design projects is displayed around the school showing attention to detail and care in execution.

62. Opportunities for pupils to experience and experiment with colour shape, form, space, texture and pattern, and to explore different processes and materials, occur across the curriculum and in subjects and within topics. Whilst investigating different ways of changing the appearance of materials in Year 3, for example, pupils use a vocabulary such as *crumpled, folded and rolled* to describe what they have done. They begin to evaluate their work and respond to the work of famous artists. For instance, in one striking display in Year 6, pupils' mask designs were accompanied by thoughtful evaluations.

Music

63. In the one lesson seen a group of Year 4 pupils worked cooperatively in pairs on the keyboards practising melodies based on scale. Teaching was good and pupils clearly enjoyed the activities. Learning resources in music are good and include specialist accommodation. Pupils' opportunities to learn are extended further by good opportunities for them to take part in school productions and concerts which are well attended by appreciative parents and enjoyed hugely by pupils.

Physical education

64. Two lessons were observed. In one the teaching was very good and in another it was good. In addition a very good physical education club was observed. A strong feature of all physical activities is that all pupils and teachers are well prepared for them. They all wear correct kit and warm up carefully. This is a subject that most pupils enjoy and strive hard to achieve well in. Teaching is enthusiastic and authoritative, encouraging pupils of all shapes and sizes to participate and try their hardest. This comes from teachers who have an excellent understanding of the subject and use it to prepare energetic, well managed, activities that extend pupils and add to their physical prowess. A very good lesson for Year 5 pupils made a considerable contribution to their understanding of the rules of volleyball, the development of appropriate skills and the extension of pupils' vocabulary. At the end of the lesson there was an excellent summing up by the teacher, checking that pupils remembered words such as 'volley' and 'dig' and that they understood the importance of positioning at the 'front' or 'back' of the court. The school also runs a very successful lunchtime gymnastics club in which pupils prepare for performances at end of term celebrations for pupils and parents. The session observed was joyous. A very good cross section of pupils of all ages and abilities participated with huge enthusiasm with excellent support being given to the youngest, smallest and least able pupils. The teacher running the club gave excellent demonstrations to pupils as they improved their vaulting and coordination skills. Pupils responded with huge enthusiasm, generated by the combination of learning and fun. Photographs show that pupils have participated well in cricket coaching and that they have learned the necessary skills to throw the javelin and cooperate to achieve success in relay races. In a special 'Circus Skills' event, with visiting specialists, pupils have also learned skills, such as plate-spinning, juggling and balancing, all of which have enriched their physical skills including coordination. An important contributor to pupils' interest comes from the use of well chosen music to inspire and accompany many exercises. Rather than staid and predictable tunes, teachers use music that pupils actually listen to in their own time and that means something to them; this often adds to pupils enthusiasm to perform well and work hard.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

65. The school's provision for these subjects is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good**, leading to pupils achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement results from good quality lessons and this makes a valuable contribution to the improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Teachers make effective use of the 'circle time' approach to tackle relevant issues and this promotes pupils' moral and social development.
- The curriculum includes good quality drugs, sex and relationships education, and makes effective use of adults from within the school and the local community.
- Oral work is strong but there is less written work and recording done than in many other subjects.

Commentary

66. Most lessons seen were of good quality. Teachers plan well and choose activities and approaches that help pupils to gain an understanding of some very difficult issues. For example, in a good lesson with the youngest children, the teacher used a discussion on rules that her class has agreed to when they are talking in lessons and their own class rules to move them on to consider why society has rules in the form of laws and to think about what happens when people break them. The children were helped to think about the effects that some of their own actions might have on others, for example their family and friends. They also learned about why they should try to be good citizens. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed with a group of older pupils, was due to the teacher's lack of experience in behaviour management rather than the subject content of the lesson, which was good.

67. Most teachers use discussion sessions well to teach aspects of personal and social education. These 'circle times' allow pupils to consider issues in a more informal setting than when at their desks. Because there are agreed rules for these sessions, pupils learn to listen carefully to the views of others, even when they may be different to their own, and to take turns in contributing. This helps in the development of their speaking and listening skills, and they also start to understand that they should value the views and beliefs of others, which promotes their moral development. Socially, they benefit too through learning that there are appropriate ways to behave in group situations. A good example of this was seen in an effective session with Year 5 pupils. The teacher used a practical demonstration to show what can happen when things are 'bottled up' in a confined space, and talked about how she manages her own anger when things frustrate her. This led pupils on to suggest acceptable ways in which they could express their own feelings without resorting to violence or temper outbursts.

68. Good use is made of adults other than teachers and support staff to help in certain aspects of the curriculum. The school nurse and residential staff contribute to sex and relationships education, especially when some elements might be particularly sensitive for individual pupils or when it is important to cover some topics separately for the small number of girls in the school so that they can discuss issues with their peers. A specialist consultant provides regular training for staff so that their knowledge of drugs education is kept up-to-date. Pupils also benefit from visits outside the school; for example they are made aware of the work of the emergency services in annual 'Crucial Crew' days.

69. Although oral discussion work is an important element of PSHCE, there is also the need for pupils to record and write about what they have learned. The analysis of pupils' work in this area showed that there is considerably less written work completed than in most other subjects, and this is an area for development to improve the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).