

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Larwood School

Webb Rise Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 5QU

Lead Inspector
Pat House

Announced Inspection 28th November 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- · Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Larwood School Name of school

Address Webb Rise

> Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 5QU

Telephone number 01438 236333

Fax number 01438 236363

Email address admin.larwood@thegrid.org.uk

Provider Web address

Person or Authority responsible for the

school

Name of Governing body, Larwood School Governing Body

Name of Head Alan Whitaker

Name of Head of Care Ian Reid

Age range of residential

pupils

5-11 years

Date of last welfare

inspection

25/01/06

Brief Description of the School:

Larwood is a Special Primary School, with 25 boarding places. Children admitted to the school, all have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Boarding is mainly on a weekly basis, usually including Monday to Thursday nights, but the arrangements are flexible. There is the provision of an extended day for other children at the school. The children who board can come from any area of Hertfordshire, as this is the only Special Primary Boarding School in the County. The school is of modern construction and has well-kept grounds and sports pitches around the building. The school was purpose-built in 1996 and is sited in a residential area of Stevenage. The boarding area of the building is currently being restructured and will be finished later in the new year.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over one day with two inspectors. A tour was made of the present boarding accommodation and the new boarding areas, still under construction, were visited. Staff and pupils were spoken with and the mid-day meal was shared with the children. A selection of records was examined including the boarders' care plans and some staff recruitment files. Questionnaires were sent out to parents and were received back by the CSCI before the inspection. Currently there are 14 boarders, all of whom are boys.

What the school does well:

The school provides a stable and secure environment where children with a variety of difficulties are given the chance to change patterns of behaviour and are given opportunities to try a wide range of activities and learn more about themselves and how to interact with others. Individual needs are fully assessed and care and teaching staff work together, with the children, to make improvements. The school has a pro-active approach to child protection and procedures in this area are well developed at Larwood. The Community Paediatrician, who has a regular clinic at the school, has written to the CSCI that it is "energising and inspiring to work with such a caring team", and that Larwood is a "happy and nurturing place". Care staff continue to bring innovative ideas to the boarding units and the children have more opportunities to try new activities at the school than they could possibly have at home. At the same time, relations with relatives are promoted and the questionnaires returned to the CSCI from parents praise the care provided and the close links the school maintains with home. One parent wrote that the staff at the school "are all special people who work very well with the special children". The Head Teacher aims to give any child who wants, the experience of boarding and the flexibility of boarding arrangements, together with the opportunity of the "extended day" at school means that boarding is seen in a positive way by all children in the school.

What has improved since the last inspection?

New systems for the administration of medication are fully up and running and the school now has a dedicated medication trolley to ensure safety. An interactive course on Infection Control has been identified, on the internet, and care staff will be using this resource soon. Although they are not yet complete, the new facilities being constructed in the boarding units will provide spacious accommodation for boarders and staff, and will include a kitchen for each house. The school will also have a play/sports area covered with artificial grass

for all-weather use. Since the last inspection, care staff have arranged for the children to have coaching in football, rugby and hockey, and the school has provided a new football kit. Care staff have also been trained to provide cycling proficiency coaching for the children and the school now has six bicycles.

What they could do better:

When the new boarding areas are completed, staff are aware that new generic risk assessments for the school will need to be completed and others updated. The increase in boarding space and probable increase in numbers of children boarding also means that there should be at least two waking night care workers on duty every evening, instead of one.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted. (NMS 14)
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.(NMS 15)

The Commission considers Standard 14 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 14 and 15.

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Children at the school have all their health and care needs met through the individual attention they receive from staff and through the provision of a healthy diet.

EVIDENCE:

The school records details of every child at the school regarding their individual physical and emotional needs. All special health problems are identified and recorded and the staff work hard to provide support and guidance so that the children's needs can be met. Visiting professionals provide additional support where appropriate and some children have visits from a Music Therapist and a Play Therapist. The previous inspection report included the positive comments made to the CSCI by the Consultant Community Paediatrician, about the quality of care provided for children at the school. The written comments made this year by this doctor were equally good and state that the pastoral care provided at the school "is of an exceptionally and impressive high standard" with "meticulous record keeping", and all areas of the school are praised in the letter. There are regular visits made by a visiting school nurse who provides individual support as well as general information and assistance to the children. As recorded after the last inspection, the incidence of asthma attacks amongst the boarders is relatively low, and most of these children have reduced their use of inhalers since boarding at the school. The system for administering medication was checked and procedures were all thorough. Staff now use a medication trolley to transport medication in the school and have successfully worked with parents to eliminate the need for staff to handle

individual tablets. A CSCI Pharmacy Inspector visited the school in May this year and approved all the changes made to the system for handling medication in the school.

The mid-day meal was taken with the children and this was attractively presented, nutritious in content and clearly enjoyed by the pupils. Larwood achieved National Healthy School's status in July this year. Drinking water is available at all times and drinks and snacks are provided before bedtime in the boarding units. The one recommendation made after a recent Environmental Health inspection has been actioned.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.(NMS 3)
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.(NMS 4)
- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.(NMS 5)
- Children are protected from bullying by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(NMS 7)
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.(NMS 8)
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour.(NMS 10)
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.(NMS 26)
- There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT - we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 3,4,5,6,7,8,10,26 and 27.

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The school's policies help to protect the children from abuse and to ensure that good behaviour is promoted and rewarded so that each child is given every opportunity to develop their full potential. Children are further protected through boarding in a safe environment and from the thorough recruitment vetting for staff employed at the school.

EVIDENCE:

The school has a written policy on Privacy and Confidentiality, and a "Handling" policy, covering procedures for intimate care, although none of the children need such assistance at present. Boarders spoken with said they would tell staff immediately if they had any concerns or complaints. Children need to ask to use the telephone, but those spoken with said staff always supported them to make phone calls, and free "Helpline" telephone numbers are kept near the phone. Telephone calls are monitored by staff in the unit, and care staff are therefore aware if a child has no calls from home. Generally, parents have set evenings when they ring in, and there are two hand held telephones in the school, as well as the phone booth. Records are kept securely in the school offices, and staff confirmed that information about the children is shared on a "need to know" basis only. The school has its own, customised policies for Child Protection, which is in line with Local Authority policies, and which meet the requirements of this Standard. The school's policies include written guidance for allegations against staff. Copies of the latest Local Authority, Child Protection Committee procedures are held in the school. The school's staff induction programme includes Child Protection training, and staff confirmed they all attend regular updates. Copies of the school's policy on Child Protection are given to all staff. Recording procedures for all possible Child Protection issues are thorough, and appropriate communication with parents or carers are well documented. Larwood continues to have strong links with other agencies, through the school's Child Protection Officer, and there is, amongst the staff, an emphasis on preventive work. There have been no child protection enquiries about children at the school since the last inspection. The school has a written, Anti-Bullying Policy and any incidents of bullying are logged, although these are relatively small in number. Children spoken with did not feel that bullying was a problem in the school. There are sound systems in the school for notifying all the relevant authorities when issues about the protection of children are in question, Questionnaires returned by parents confirmed that staff kept them informed about any incidents concerning their child. The school has written guidance about unauthorised absence from school and guidelines ensure that all absences are followed up on the first day, and that everything is documented. The school has written policies on control, discipline and physical intervention, including a Behaviour Management Policy, and records are kept of sanctions used, and monthly reports are given to parents and governors.

There are risk assessments completed for any potentially hazardous areas of the school but these will be expanded and updated when the new building work is complete. Fire drills take place on a regular basis at the school and there had been a recent inspection by the Fire Safety Officer. Some requirements were made in the Fire Officer's report, including the need for better safety signs around the school and for the improvement to some recording and replacement to the emergency lighting. All requirements were being addressed and a further visit from the Fire safety Officer was planned. The recruitment files for new staff were examined and evidence of all appropriate checks was seen.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.(NMS 12)
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community. (NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 12,13 and 22.

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Procedures in all areas of boarding are of a high standard and support the boarders' educational progress. The children directly benefit from having individual support from a staff team who provide extensive opportunities for meaningful activities and personal development so that each child has the best possible chance to succeed during their time at school and beyond.

EVIDENCE:

Boarders have access to school equipment and books, and can use these for homework. The school curriculum includes comprehensive PSHE education. Both teaching and care staff are involved in the children's various reviews, and all those spoken with said that the whole school works as a team. There is a wide range of activities offered to boarders at the school and those spoken with highlighted how important these activities are to the children. Boarding care staff clearly have lots of innovative ideas and new activities have been continually introduced at the school and seen at each inspection visit. There are regular choices of events, which include craft, cooking, dance, sport, computers and snooker. The school also has a vehicle, which provides trips out and the boarders go to a local park where they can enjoy boating on the lake. The boarders also take part in local clubs where they mix with children from

other schools and those who wish to can join the local scout group. Coaching has been provided in hockey, football and rugby and care staff have been trained to provide cycling proficiency training. The school has purchased six bicycles and before they leave the school, all children now take their cycling proficiency test. Two classes from the school were out at a local Pantomime production during the inspection. For the second year running Larwood has won the school's section of the Stevenage in Bloom and Anglia in Bloom competitions. Staff said that recently, the time the children spend in Physical Education has doubled and the school will soon have a completed area with artificial grass for all-weather play. The children spoken with confirmed that staff give them a great deal of support and encouragement, and none said they felt isolated from their peers in any way. Staff said that any problems would be handled in an individual way, and said that if they ever felt a child was becoming withdrawn, this would be formally logged as a "concern", and would be noted on individual education and welfare plans, with targets set. Staff also said they check for signs of homesickness, but that currently this was not a problem.

All the staff spoken with felt that the younger children especially thrived on the routines in the school. There are currently no children where English is not their first language. There were many examples seen on files, of children being referred to other agencies for specialist support, and all pupils spoken with said they had people they were comfortable speaking to about any issues. An Independent Listener had been introduced at the school, but is no longer able to provide this support and the Head Teacher will try to fill this post when a suitable person is identified.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views. (NMS 2)
- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.(NMS 9)
- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.(NMS 11)
- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.(NMS 17)
- In accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT - we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 2,9,11,17 and 20.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Procedures in the school ensure that all care needs are fully assessed and recorded so that both children and staff are fully involved in the targets set. Relations between boarders and staff are good and encourage mutual respect and individual progress and contact between children and families is promoted at the school so that the children feel secure while living away from home.

EVIDENCE:

Boarders are represented on the school's Student Council, and this group considers issues affecting the whole school. There were details on the boarding notice boards of what to do if anyone wanted to talk to someone in confidence. There are regular parent support groups held, to which all parents and carers are invited, as well as informal communication with parents, which is documented. Children have "Contact Diaries" which go home with them, and contain written information for parents. Comments from home are then written in and the diary returns to school with the child. All children meet daily in groups, after lessons and prior to the activities period, for an informal meeting. Thursday evenings are "reward nights" and here special achievements are recognised through a "points scheme". Each child has an annual review, which they are involved in, unless this is not appropriate. During these reviews, parents' views are also sought, and comments are recorded. Teachers also share the content of reports with their pupils. Questionnaires completed by parents supported the school's disciplinary procedures. Relations between staff and children generally appeared very good as seen during the inspection. Pupils spoke positively about the staff and valued the support given to them. All staff at the school receives TCI training. The school has a thorough admissions policy and staff confirmed that all new children are shown round the school and are given all necessary information when they arrive. Detailed information is obtained by the school for all new pupils. The school only admits those children who meet the admissions criteria and whose needs can be met. The school does not accept emergency admissions. All children have a care plan and Statement of Special Educational Needs, both these are regularly reviewed and updated.

Staff said that planning for children who are leaving the school starts as early as possible, usually with the number of boarding days being gradually reduced, if a child is moving on to a non- boarding school. Every boarder in the school has a written care plan, and this is drawn up within the first half term after entry. Care plans were checked and were detailed and meaningful. Care staff have produced a new "introduction" to the plans, which are specific to each boarder's specific targets. The plan is discussed and agreed between the child and the key worker. In the questionnaires returned, Parents indicated they were kept informed of all appropriate incidents regarding their child. Staff said that visitors could have private access to the children when appropriate, and that any restrictions on access is well documented.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money. (NMS 16)
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.(NMS 21)
- Children live in well designed and pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- Children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.(NMS 24)
- Children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity.(NMS 25)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 16,21,23,24 and 25.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Procedures in the school for boarders enable the children to look after their own money and possessions and to prepare for more independent living. Facilities in the boarding unit are being upgraded and will provide appropriate and spacious accommodation and a pleasant environment for all boarders.

EVIDENCE:

New football kit has been provided for the school by "The Friends of Larwood" and boarders all wear their own school uniform and change into their own casual clothes after school. Families are encouraged to send in small amounts of money with the boarding children, so that the pupils can learn basic financial skills. All the opportunities to use money are planned, for example to attend the local youth club. All money is checked in and signed for by staff, and the children sign when they take money out. Spot checks have been made on the money held in the school office during previous inspections and all amounts balanced and receipts for money spent were in place. Children can have any valuables locked in a cupboard, but staff feel it is not appropriate for their pupils to have their own lockable space. One of the aims of the school is to

assist the children to return to mainstream education whenever this is appropriate. Individual plans are agreed for any pupil leaving the care of the school. Children in year 6 begin planning for such moves in February each year. This planning includes having increasing numbers of nights spent at home, for the boarders, and eventually the children would have a whole term as a non- boarder before leaving the school. There is no CCTV on the school site but staff confirmed that external doors are all locked and secured at night. Local links with other schools are maintained through inter-school sports and other activities.

The school has a maintenance programme in place and decorations and furnishings around the school and boarding facilities are generally well maintained. Currently new boarding facilities are under construction and will provide greater space for the children. These new areas were seen and will be ready in the New Year. There will be a range of bedrooms and dormitory areas, which will provide flexible accommodation, which could be adapted to meet differing, needs if, for example, more girls begin to board. There are also new kitchens being provided in each boarding unit. The staff confirmed that the boarding accommodation is, and will be, used exclusively for the boarders, although the hall and other school facilities are hired out. There is a central laundry provision for the school, and staff said that children assist with this task as appropriate. Staff confirmed that soiled laundry is washed separately, and the washing machine has a high temperature setting for infection control. Staff confirmed they have adequate supplies of disposable gloves. There will be sufficient toilets, baths and showers in the new boarding accommodation and, as now, plenty of additional sinks.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.(NMS 1)
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.(NMS 19)
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.(NMS 28)
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.(NMS 29)
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. (NMS 30)
- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.(NMS 31)
- Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.(NMS 32)
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.(NMS 33)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT - we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 1,18,19,28,29,30,31,32 and 33.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Appropriate records are kept at the school so that individual progress can be monitored against stated aims. The children in the school are looked after by competent care staff that are themselves supported and trained to ensure that high standards are maintained at the school for the benefit of the children.

EVIDENCE:

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which details all appropriate information and this includes the entrance criteria for the school. There is also a children's Guide to Boarding, which is given to all new boarders. There are detailed records kept for all boarders and these are kept securely in the school office.

There are always at least two care staff members on duty in each residential unit in the day, and the children and staff spoken to felt staff numbers were generally adequate. Currently there is one care worker on waking duty at night and one other staff member "on-call". However, when the new boarding unit is completed, there will be a bigger area to monitor and at least two waking night staff will need to be on duty every night. Several staff also live on site and can also be present in an emergency. Staff said that absences are covered by existing staff members, or by staff who have previously worked at the school. The school has a supervision policy and residential staff confirmed they receive monthly supervision. Domestic staff have regular meetings with their line manager, the Site Manager. There is a system of appraisals for all staff, and on-going performance management. The Head of Care has extensive experience in the management of boarding provision, and has completed the NVQ assessor's course. Staff training is given a high priority in the school. The Head of Care has identified a Web Site, which provides an interactive Infection Control course, and care staff will be taking part in this course in the near future. The school provides all relevant information to parents and quardians, as required by this Standard, and this was confirmed by the parents who completed the CSCI questionnaires. There is a Critical Incident Plan in place and the school has arrangements with a nearby school, which covers any need to evacuate the premises. The Head Teacher monitors and signs the records in the school, and there is a development plan for the school with budgets allocated appropriately. The Governors are involved with all these plans. The Local Authority is also responsible for monitoring records, and would be responsible for any notifications regarding receivers or liquidators. There is a high level of support and monitoring by Governors in the school, and the Chair of Governors makes visits to the school at least half-termly. The Chair of Governors is also involved with the School Council, and Governors make visits to classrooms throughout the school. A Governor monitors the records of sanctions and physical interventions each term. The Governors' annual reports are sent to all parents and quardians. The Head Teacher produces written reports for the Governors, and the Chair of Governors frequently visits the school unannounced.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
 2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
 3 Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
 1 Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY		
Standard No	Score	
14	4	
15	3	

STAYING SAFE		
Standard No	Score	
3	3	
4	3	
5	4	
6	3	
7	3	
8	3	
10	3	
26	3	
27	3	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING		
Standard No Score		
12	3	
13	4	
22	3	

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION		
Standard No	Score	
2	3	
9	3	
11	3	
17	3	
20	3	

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING		
Standard No	Score	
16	3	
21	3	
23	3	
24	3	
25	3	

MANAGEMENT		
Standard No	Score	
1	3	
18	3	
19	3	
28	3	
29	3	
30	3	
31	3	
32	3	
33	3	

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last No inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale
			for action
			(Serious
			welfare
			concerns
			only)

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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