



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Residential Special School (not registered as
a Children's Home)

Larwood School

Webb Rise

Stevenage

Hertfordshire

SG1 5QU

27th & 28th January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Larwood School

Address

Webb Rise, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 5QU

Tel No:

01438 236333

Fax No:

01438 236363

Email Address:**Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school**

Larwood School Governing Body

Name of Head

Alan Whitaker

NCSC Classification

Residential Special School

Type of schoolResidential Special
School**Date of last boarding welfare inspection:**

5 th & 14 th March 2003

Date of Inspection Visit		27 th & 28 th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of NCSC Inspector	1	Pat House	089620
Name of NCSC Inspector	2	Lan Jackson	
Name of NCSC Inspector	3		
Name of NCSC Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):		Not applicable	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.		None present	
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		None present	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr. Alan Whitaker	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Residential Special Schools are subject to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) to determine whether the welfare of children (i.e. those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended. Residential Special Schools are not registered as children's homes unless they accommodate, or arrange accommodation for, one or more children for more than 295 days a year.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Larwood School

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

Larwood is a Special Primary School, whose pupil numbers have now increased to 64 since the last inspection. Children admitted to the school, all have emotional and behavioural difficulties, and there are twenty-five boarding places. Boarding is on a weekly basis, from Monday to Friday, and there is the provision of an “extended day” for other children. The children who board come from the whole of the Hertfordshire area, 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.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

The NCSC received completed questionnaires from 15 parents of boarders at the school. Every one of these gave positive feedback, and their comments demonstrate how well the school does in providing its boarders with the best chance they could have to make a success of their lives, after difficult beginnings. Comments include :-
(The child) “has completely turned himself around. He is enjoying every minute of his stay and gaining confidence all the time”,
(The staff provide) “just the right amount of supervision and guidance”,
“Before Larwood we despaired”,
(There are) “clear guidelines about behaviour, lots of help and encouragement, and the children are encouraged to excel in the things they are good at and improve their self – esteem”.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

There are some written policies which need expanding or reviewing, and these are in hand for completion. There is also the on-going need to upgrade and develop the dormitory arrangements in the school, as noted in the last inspection report. However this needs to be addressed by the Local Authority.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

Larwood school continues to be a pleasure to visit, with dedicated staff in all areas of the school, delightful children, whose behaviour when in the community has proved to be a credit to the school and themselves, and an extremely active and involved group of Governors. The whole school works as a unit and provides an invaluable resource for the community.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how recommended action and any advisory recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION			
Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.			
No	Standard*	Recommended Action	
1	RS3	A written policy on privacy and confidentiality should be provided for the school.	School has an action plan for March 2004 completion.
2	RS8	The school's policy on unauthorised absences should contain all the elements listed in Standard 8.3	School has an action plan for March 2004 completion.
3	RS22	The school should identify a named person, independent of the school, for each child, whom the child may contact about personal problems or concerns.	31/10/04
4	RS24	It is recommended that the sleeping accommodation is reviewed with the Local Authority in order to comply with Standards 24.5.6.8. and with the school's admissions policy.	31/07/04
5	RS27	The school's recruitment policy should ensure that all staff checks include the elements listed in Standard 27.2.	28/01/04 henceforth
6	RS33	A written Governor's report should be produced half-termly, following an unannounced visit to the school, and that the school's policy be amended to indicate that most Governors' visits are unannounced.	30/04/04

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
1	RS14	It is advised that the school policy on the administration of medication, be amended to include customised guidance for the use of non-prescribed medication, and that staff involved with all medication administration, receive accredited training.
2	RS28	It is advised that the budget for staffing be reviewed to ensure that there are two permanent positions on the staff with waking night duties.

Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. RS10 refers to standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS AND FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods were used in the production of this report

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Accommodation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations

• Social Services	YES
• Fire Service	NO
• Environmental Health	NO
• DfES	YES
• School Doctor	YES
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	YES

Tracking individual welfare arrangements	YES
Survey / individual discussions with boarders	YES
Group discussions with boarders	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Staff Survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Visit to Sanatorium / Sick Bay	YES
Parent Survey	YES
Placing authority survey	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Individual interview with pupil(s)	YES
Answer-phone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	27/1/04
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	36
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	2

Pre-inspection information and the Head's Self evaluation Form, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Age Range of Boarding Pupils **From** **To**

NUMBER OF BOARDERS AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

BOYS

GIRLS

TOTAL

Number of separate Boarding Houses

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.9)

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided. The Statement can be made up of other documents, e.g., Letter of Approved Arrangements and school prospectus, which are required to include specific information.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school's Statement of Purpose is in brochure form, with some additional sheets of paper, and includes all the elements required by this Standard. It is reviewed annually in February, when it is signed and dated by a member of the governing body. The Head Teacher said that the school is currently working with the Local Authority, Children Schools and Families Department, in revising the admissions criteria for residential placements to the school. Any new policy will be included in the revised Guide, together with an amendment to the numbers of children in the school, which have increased from 59 to 64. Staff spoken to confirmed they had copies of the Statement and the Head Teacher said that copies are given to all new parents during the admission process. The school is currently drawing up a "Children's Guide", although copies of the current brochure are already made available to the children in the school. The school rigorously adheres to the entrance criteria, as set out in the Statement of Purpose, and the Head Teacher gave examples of the school recently having to refuse several requests for admission, which were not appropriate.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.
- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.9)

Children's opinions, and those of their families or significant others, are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Feedback is given following consultations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>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. If a child speaks at these meetings the comments are written into the individual’s weekly log, and evidence was seen of this. Each child has an annual review, which they are involved in, unless this is not appropriate. During this review, parents’ views are also sought, and comments are recorded. Teachers also share the content of reports with their pupils. Children who spoke to the inspectors, made many references to the Student Council, and this was clearly a meaningful part of the school’s procedures. The Student Council has representatives from all school classes and from the boarders, and this group considers issues affecting the whole school. Children told the inspectors they were aware they could talk to the School Liaison Officer at any time, and they said there were lots of the staff they would feel comfortable talking to. There were details on the House notice boards of what to do if anyone wanted to talk to someone. There are regular, monthly parent support groups held, to which all parents and carers are invited, as well as informal communication with parents, which is documented. Staff said that homework arrangements had recently been reviewed as a direct result of feedback from the support group. 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. The children also told the inspectors there was a “message box” in which suggestions and comments could be left and that there were questionnaires which ask for their views. The inspectors were told of the many outcomes from suggestions made by the children, including new activities, choices of decoration and furniture, re-cycling procedures, the cottage garden and seating arrangements.</p>		

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.11)

The school and staff respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality so far as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

In response to the last inspection report, staff are drafting a policy on privacy and confidentiality, which includes guidelines on searching. The date for implementation, on the school's action plan, is March 2004. There had been the need to implement a search recently, and this was detailed in the Incident Log Book. The school has a "Handling" policy, covering procedures for intimate care, although none of the children need such assistance at present. Children need to ask to use the telephone, but those spoken to said staff always supported them to make phone calls, and they showed the inspectors the free "Helpline" telephone numbers, kept near the phone. 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.

(See Recommended Actions 1).

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.8)

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school, and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school has developed a new complaints policy, and this is now operational, and included in the school brochure. The policy now meets all the requirements of this Standard, including details of the NCSC, and is signed by the Chair of Governors, with a review date displayed. There is also a new appendix to the policy which is "child-friendly", and which is being circulated to all the pupils in the school. The children spoken to confirmed they frequently raise issues with the staff, and said these were taken seriously. There is also a "Grumbles" book, which is signed by the children, and where "outcomes" are recorded.

Number of complaints about care at the school recorded over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

Number of complaints received by NCSC about the school over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

CHILD PROTECTION

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- Children are protected from bullying by others.
- All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the school are notified by the Head of the school to the appropriate authorities.
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded positively to on return.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.12)

There are systems in place in the school which aim to prevent abuse of children and suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to. These are known and understood by all staff (including junior, ancillary, volunteer and agency staff).

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The school has its own, customised policies for Child Protection, which are 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 were 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 and those spoken to said they have to complete questionnaires, which are then checked, to ensure their knowledge of the issues. Recording procedures for all possible child protection issues are thorough, and appropriate communication with parents or carers was well documented. Larwood continues to have strong links with other agencies, through the school's Child Protection Officer, and during the two inspection days it was clear that the whole staff group work extremely well and as a unit, in dealing with the daily issues connected with Child Protection. There is, amongst the staff, an emphasis on preventive work, and when the records of some of the children were tracked, during the inspection, it was clear that every possible avenue was pursued by staff to promote the children's well being. It was disappointing, therefore, when such efforts were not seen to be supported by the statutory agencies, as some records showed. The records of one child were tracked, as he had demonstrated behaviour, and expressed distress, during the inspection. The school had made every effort over a considerable period, to obtain formal support for this child, but records showed that the statutory agencies had not responded adequately to these requests. This situation was clearly distressing for staff, who had followed the Local Authority guidelines both in spirit and to the letter.

Number of recorded child protection enquiries initiated by the social services department during the past 12 months:

0

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.5) The school has, and follows, an anti-bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar and which is effective in practice. Where possible children in the school contribute to the development of the policy.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The school's Non-Bullying Policy, is included in the staff handbook. All the children in the school, boarders and non-boarders, have been involved in this policy making, especially through the School Council. The children helped identify places and times when bullying might be most likely to occur, and risk assessments were drawn up from this information. Any incidents of bullying are logged, although these are relatively small in number. The Head teacher said that the policy of close supervision of the children was effective in preventing bullying, together with the school ethos of open discussion at assemblies, class situations and the School Council. Linked to this is the on-going aim of building self-esteem in the students, through rewarding positive behaviour and giving more independence to responsible pupils. Children spoken to did not feel that bullying was a problem in the school, and those who completed questionnaires also did not highlight this as an issue. However only six pupils wanted to fill in the questionnaires, so percentage figures for bullying are not appropriate.		
Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied	X	%

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7) 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.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
There are systems in the school for notifying all the relevant authorities when issues about the protection of children are in question, which meet the requirements of this Standard. Similarly there are procedures for reporting any serious concerns about the children to all appropriate agencies, including the NCSC. Staff confirmed that parents and families are notified immediately about incidents concerning their child, and this could be verbal or in writing or both. Records of incidents, accidents and concerns were examined and were well documented.		
NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING NOTIFIED TO NCSC DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:		
• conduct by member of staff indicating unsuitability to work with children		0
• serious harm to a child		0
• serious illness or accident of a child		0
• serious incident requiring police to be called		0

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.9)		
The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
The school has written guidance about unauthorised absence from school, which is being amended in line with the requirements of this Standard, as recommended at the last inspection. The implementation date for this, as stated on the school's Action Plan, is March 2004. However, the current guidelines do ensure that all absences are followed up on the first day, and that everything is documented. The school's policy requires that the Local Authority CSF Department, and The Education Welfare Officer would be involved if appropriate. In the last twelve months there has been one boarder and one non-boarder, involved in unauthorised absences from the school. (See Recommended Actions 2).		
Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:		2

CARE AND CONTROL

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

Relationships between staff and children are based on mutual respect and understanding and clear professional and personal boundaries which are effective for both the individuals and the group.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The children spoken to, and those who completed the questionnaires, appeared to understand the boundaries and rules in the school, and said they understood these were in place to benefit them. During some of the meals the inspectors shared with the children, routines were explained by the children, and explanations were given as to why they were in place. Relations between staff and children generally, appeared very good on the two inspection days, and pupils spoke positively about the staff and valued the support given to them. All staff at the school receive training in physical restraint, and this was seen in operation during the inspection.

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.26)

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour, and where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive disciplinary measures which are approved by the Head of Care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school has written policies on control, discipline and physical intervention, including a Behaviour Management Policy, and these were seen during the inspection. The school's "Time Out" policy has been approved by the Local Authority legal department, as have the procedures for using physical restraint. Staff said that all such policies had been considered carefully in staff groups. Children said they did not like the Time Out room, but acknowledged it was used to give them time to cool off, and felt its use was fair. The "Time Out" procedure is discussed with the child at the admissions interview, and records are kept of sanctions used, and monthly reports are given to parents and governors. The sanctions book was seen during the inspection, and all recordings now have written comments added from the child concerned, which staff felt, assisted the sanction being seen as a constructive tool, and not just a punishment. The school maintains an "Incidents and Concerns" book, as well as an "Out of School Injuries" book, and these are monitored daily. The chair of governors also checks these books on completion.

QUALITY OF CARE

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.
- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within school and in the local community.
- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.
- Children 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.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

Admission and leaving processes are planned and agreed with the child – and as appropriate, with parents and carers and placing authorities – as far as possible and handled with sensitivity and care by those concerned.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The school has a thorough admissions policy, which was seen during the inspection, and which meets the requirements of this Standard. The Head Teacher said that all new children are shown round the school, and pupils who spoke to the inspector said they had been given all necessary information when they came to the school, and had someone allocated to help them settle in. Detailed information is obtained by the school for all new pupils, and this was seen on records. The school only admits those children who meet the admissions criteria, and whose needs can be met, as already stated in Standard 1. The school does not accept emergency admissions. All children have a care plan, and Statement of Special Educational Needs, and 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.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.7)

Care staff and the school's residential provision and activities actively contribute to individual children's educational progress, and care staff actively support children's education, ensuring regular attendance, punctuality and a minimum of interruption during the school day.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspectors spoke to two of the teaching staff during the inspection, and they confirmed that the care staff worked closely with them, supporting the children's educational needs, especially with homework, and that staff in both areas kept one another informed of relevant issues. Both teaching and care staff are involved in the children's various reviews, and all those spoken to said that the whole school works as a team, for the benefit of the children. Children have access to school books, and can use these for homework. The school curriculum includes Personal, Social, Health Education and The Healthy Schools Initiative, and care staff were aware of these aims, and said they were inherent in all the boarding children's planning.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.9)

Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Most of the questionnaires completed by the children, said the activities arranged by the school were really appreciated. Children who spoke to the inspectors were really enthusiastic about the range of things they could do outside lessons, and said they were encouraged to try different activities and new experiences. The school provides dance, art and craft sessions, and some physical exercise every week. There are also trips out to the park, to the local museum, to the library and to the shopping centre. The children were also quite proud to say they go to the artificial ski slope and have been to riding lessons. The children have been taken to football matches, and some have now joined local scout, brownie and guide packs in Stevenage. Some of the older children now attend a local youth club, and this new venture has been very successful, and important for the children to integrate with the local community. The staff involved in setting up these ventures were clearly very proud of the standard of behaviour, which Larwood children were maintaining in these community events.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.25)

The school actively promotes the health care of each child and meets any intimate care needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Every boarder in the school has detailed records of their physical and emotional need, and regular, meaningful, updates and reviews were seen on files. One child told the inspectors that any bed wetting incidents were “not a problem”, and clearly such situations are handled without causing embarrassment. The school is committed to following the “Healthy Schools Initiative”, which covers all aspects of school life. During lunch, several children told the inspectors about things they could not eat, because of allergies or special diets. The children were knowledgeable about the reasons for different diets, and were happy to share and discuss this information amongst their friends, in a matter of fact way. The inspectors were also told about special assemblies and meals, celebrating other cultures and faiths which take place at Larwood. The school has a policy on obtaining agreements between the parent, school and G.P. regarding health treatment for each child. These signed agreements were seen on the children’s medical records. Authorisation was in place on files covering visits to and by the school nurse, speech therapist, community paediatrician, and dentist. The school has a named Consultant Community Paediatrician who works closely with the school and who holds monthly clinics for the children. In response to a standard letter sent to him from the NCSC, this Paediatrician wrote that there is a “deeply dedicated ethos”, throughout the staff, that the depth of knowledge was impressive with an “attendance to the complex individual needs of the pupils”. The systems for the administration of medication was checked and was accurate and could be audited to ensure correct dosages were given and retained. The school has a policy on the administration of medication, and some written guidance for the administration of non-prescribed medication. Although this broadly meets the Standard, it was agreed that the school would include guidance on non- prescription medication in its own policy. It is also recommended that staff who are asked to administer medication, receive accredited training. (See Advisory Recommendations)

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.15)

Children are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food, having regard to their needs and wishes, and have the opportunity to learn to prepare their own meals. Where appropriate special dietary needs due to health, religious persuasion, racial origin or cultural background are met, including the choice of a vegetarian meal for children who wish it.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspectors joined the children for meals during the inspection and the children spoken to all said they enjoyed the food in the school, and that they had a variety of meals, with fresh fruit offered each day, and drinks before bedtime. There is water available to the children all day. Lunch is eaten by most of the older children in the dining room, and is seen as a social occasion when everyone sits down together. However, since the last inspection, the school has opened up an additional small dining room where the new, youngest children can eat, sometimes with assistance, and in a more quiet atmosphere. This room also has one end for the use of older children who have earned more independence through the reward system, and who clearly appreciated this privilege. The chef said special cultural meals can be provided and there are vegetarian meals prepared. The menus also now include more fresh vegetables and pasta. The children who showed the inspectors round the school, were keen to show the new "food technology" room which has low level fittings and where even small children can participate in preparing and cooking food. The Chef has City and Guilds qualifications and all the kitchen staff have had food hygiene training. There is a twelve weekly menu cycle for food provided, and menus are being kept for a year, as is required for this Standard.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.7)

Children are provided for adequately on an individual basis and encouraged to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing and personal requisites. Children who require assistance to choose what they wear and/or how they spend their money are provided with the assistance they need, in a way which maximises their choice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Families are encouraged to send in small amounts of money with the boarding children, so that the pupils can learn basic financial skills, and all the opportunities to use money are planned. All money is kept by the staff and the use is recorded. The children spoken to confirmed this system. The children also wear their own school uniform and after school clothes, and showed the inspectors their storage areas. There is a clothing list provided within the school brochure for new entrants, but any specialist kit is provided by the school. The school keeps a spare stock of good quality uniform for emergencies, and children were aware of this and clearly felt it was a good idea, and not demeaning.

CARE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PLAN

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.
- 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.
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.
- Children receive individual support when they need it.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

There is a written placement plan specifying how the school will care for each boarding pupil in accordance with his or her assessed needs, the school cares for that child in accordance with that plan, monitors progress in relation to that plan, and updates that plan as necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Every boarder in the school has a written care plan, and this is drawn up within the first half term after entry. The plan is discussed between the child and the keyworker, and staff said that they actively encourage involvement by the children. All children have termly targets, and where a child is doing very well, or is not achieving set goals, an additional review would be held. Evidence of these was seen on files. Staff said that positive outcomes from special reviews have included a child being moved to mainstream school more quickly than anticipated. The children's Statement of Needs is reviewed annually, or more frequently if appropriate, and the Individual Education Plan and Care Plan Targets are reviewed at least half-termly. Looked after children have regular Status reviews. The staff have developed an individual "Care Plan Book", for every child. This is very detailed and covers basic care and personal development, and charts progress during the year, and is completed by each child, thus involving them in their progress.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.5)

Each child has a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress which can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Some of the children's records were checked during the inspection, and contained all the elements required by this Standard. Records are all locked in the office, and are signed and dated. Staff said that any requests for access to the records would be supported, subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The Head Teacher is aware that such records must be kept for 21 years, or passed to the next school. Receipts will now be obtained when records are passed out of the school.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.3)

The school maintains clear and accurate records on the staff and child groups of the school, and major events affecting the school and children resident there.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Records were sampled during the inspection and those for staff and children contained all the elements required by this Standard. Recruitment procedures were thorough, and the Head Teacher is aware of the need to keep details of anyone living or working on the school's premises. The accident book was checked and was well recorded, as was the visitors' book, and staff duty rotas. A file was seen containing details of activities and events held in the school, and this was detailed and comprehensive. The Head teacher was aware of the need to keep records for 5 years, and menus for 1 year.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.6)

Subject to their wishes, children are positively encouraged and enabled by the school to maintain contact with their parents and other family members (unless there are welfare concerns) while living at school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The children spoken to confirmed that their parents were contacted frequently, about incidents in the school, and said they could contact their families when they wanted, through the staff. Staff said that visitors could have private access to the children when appropriate, and that any restrictions on access is well documented. One parent was visiting his son during the inspection, and an empty room was being used for this.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.2)

Where a pupil is in care and will be leaving care on leaving the school, the school agrees with the young person's responsible authority what contribution it should make to implement any Pathway or other plan for the pupil before the pupil leaves school. These arrangements are in line with that young person's needs, and the school implements its contribution where feasible from at least a year before the pupil is expected to leave care or move to independent living. The school works with any Personal Advisor for the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

One of the aims of the school is to assist the children to return to mainstream education whenever this is appropriate. The Headteacher said that an individual plan is agreed for any pupil leaving the care of the school. There are currently three children at the school in year 5, who are beginning the process of re-integration, into mainstream school, prior to secondary transfer. Children in year 6 begin planning for such moves in February each year. 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. This is especially important for the girls, as there are no secondary boarding school places for girls in the County.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.13)

All children are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, and children identified as having particular support needs, or particular problems, receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The children spoken to 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 gave examples where a child refused to join in activities, and was not forced to do this, but had to sit and watch. Quite soon the child joined in out of choice. Staff said that such problems would be handled in an individual way, and said that if they ever felt a child was becoming withdrawn, this was 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 to 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 to said they had people they were comfortable speaking to about any issues. However, this Standard requires that the school identifies a named person, independent of the school, for each child, whom they can communicate with, who is vetted and who is made known to each child. The Head Teacher said he would now pursue this requirement. (See Recommended Action 3).

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children live in well designed, pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.
- Children live in accommodation that is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.
- Children are able to carry out their ablutions in privacy and with dignity.
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. It serves the needs of the children and provides the sort of environment most helpful to each child's development, and is sufficient for the number of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The school and Local Authority are working to produce the school's "Disability Access Plan", which is addressing the issues around providing access for physically disabled children to the school. Currently, the needs of children with such a disability cannot be met by the school, but this is made clear in the school's Statement of Purpose. There have been visits to the school by the Environmental Health Officer, and the Fire Officer, and there are no outstanding requirements. There are no boarders who currently have the need of an occupational therapist, but staff confirmed they would make such a referral, should the need arise. There is no CCTV on the premises at present, but risk assessments for school access have been completed. 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.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.19)

The school provides adequate good quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

The decorations and furnishings around the school and boarding facilities are well maintained, and the school has a maintenance programme in place. The dormitories were bright and clean and the children have personalised their own cubicle areas although there is limited space to do this. The staff confirmed that the boarding accommodation is used exclusively for the boarders, although the hall and other school facilities are hired out. The accommodation for the boarders does not, however, meet the requirements for this Standard, in layout or space provision. As stated in the previous inspection report, there are three dormitories, each with eight partitioned sleeping bays, and with two single rooms attached. There is access from one dormitory to another through alarmed doors. Currently one dormitory sleeps the children of both sexes aged up to ten, and the older boys sleep in the other two units. Because there are at present few girls boarding at the school, all of whom are quite young, there have been few problems with this situation and none of them said they objected to these arrangements, and one does have a single room. However, the admissions criteria does not limit the numbers or ages of girls admitted to the school, and the mixed sleeping arrangements are not acceptable. Staff said the single room provision is used as a privilege or for particular needs, but this provision does not make up for the shortfall in sleeping arrangements. Similarly the curtained off cubicles do not provide adequate individual space for this Standard. There is additional space on the first floor of the dormitory block, which could be used for sleeping accommodation, although this would mean an increase in the staffing establishment of the school. (See Recommended Actions 4).

The children spoken to felt there were adequate areas to pursue hobbies or do school work, and said that generally temperatures in the school were comfortable. There is a central laundry provision, and staff said that children assist with this task as appropriate.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.7)

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets, all of good standard and suitable to meet the needs of the children. The school has appropriate changing and washing facilities for incontinent children where necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are six toilets in the boarding unit, which almost meets the requirement of this Standard, and the Head Teacher said that toilets throughout the wider building were available for the use of the boarders. Children spoken to felt there were sufficient toilets in the unit. There are two showers and one bath on each of the three boarding units, as well as some additional sinks, and this provision meets the required Standards. All bathroom and toilet doors are lockable, with additional access from the outside. These facilities need reviewing again in the context of the "Disability Access Plan" which may require the school to increase its provision.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.10)

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Maintenance and servicing records were checked during the inspection, and were up to date. Similarly, fire checks were in place, and children confirmed that there have been recent fire drills. All children take part in a "Walk Through" fire drill on the first night of term. There are risk assessments in place, which cover the general health and safety aspects of the school, and the school has a written Health and Safety Policy, which is reviewed by the Governing Body. In line with recommendations from the previous inspection, window restrictors have been fitted to all ground floor windows in the residential unit which open outwards, and there are plans to fit restrictors to the inner courtyard windows.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There are careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.9)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those employed on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with the children in the school includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (at Standard or Enhanced level as appropriate to their role in the school), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Following recommendations from the last inspection, a Recruitment Policy for the school has been drafted, but is not yet operational. However, the Head Teacher confirmed that there was input from all senior staff and the governors in all new appointments to the school. There are currently six permanent care staff working with the boarders, as well as one casual worker, and two night staff, and the Head of Care. CRB checks have been obtained, for all staff, in line with Local Authority guidance. Staff recruitment records were checked during the inspection, and there were some files which did not contain all the evidence needed by this Standard, including one with missing references. It was recommended that the new policy incorporates the use of recruitment check lists to monitor the recruitment progress. (See Recommended Actions 5).

Total number of care staff:

8

Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:

1

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.13)

The school is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 28.2. Records of staff actually working in the school demonstrate achievement of this staffing level.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Staff rotas were seen during the inspection. There are always at least two care staff members on duty in each residential unit in the day, and two waking and one sleeping staff member for the whole unit at night. The Head of care lives on site, and can be contacted in emergencies. Staff said that absences are covered by existing staff members, or by staff who have previously worked at the school. The children and staff spoken to felt staff numbers were adequate, except that more staff provision in the afternoon would enable more activities to be offered. However, the official staff complement is for only one member of staff to be on waking night duty, with the second person's post being temporary. There are currently two children with epilepsy who board at the school, and these numbers would seem to be average for 25 boarders. This, plus the nature of the behavioural problems of the children in Larwood would suggest that it would not be safe for night staff numbers to drop below a minimum of two. (See Advisory Recommendations 2).

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Evidence was seen of thorough induction training for all staff, and there is on-going Performance Management for staff. All staff have received in-house training in Child Protection, medication, health care, and First Aid. No agency staff are used at the school. A programme has now begun in NVQ training for all non-teaching, boarding staff. Three staff members began NVQ 3 training in January, and one of the senior team is studying for a Social Work Qualification. The Head of care has a management qualification, and is currently doing NVQ Assessor training. All restraint training for staff is almost finished, with the next course booked for 23rd February. The Head Teacher is aware that all new staff must now commence NVQ training within three months of starting work, and this will be written into training policies. The policy in the school is for all the care staff to take part in all in-service training provided for the teachers, and they took part in the recent "EBD Schools Conference".

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.13)

All staff, including domestic staff and the Head of the school, are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Following the last inspection, a supervision policy has been produced, which is being implemented and covers all staff in the school. There is a system of appraisals for all staff, and on-going performance management. The Head Teacher has an annual performance appraisal conducted by the school governors, and further supervision opportunities are being considered.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.
- Children enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.17)

The school is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Head of Care has extensive experience in the management of boarding provision, and is currently completing the NVQ assessor's course. Care staff are all being entered on NVQ training and generally training is given high priority in the school. Staff confirmed that they have time to complete paper work, and time for supervision, included in their paid working hours, although it is acknowledged that all staff work more hours than shows on paper. The school provides all relevant information to parents and guardians, as required by this Standard, and this was confirmed by the parents who completed the NCSC questionnaires. A Critical Incident Plan for the school is just being completed, and the school has arrangements with a nearby school, which covers any need to evacuate the premises. Procedures for dealing with crises were seen in action on the second day of the inspection, when children had to be sent home from school unexpectedly, due to a boiler malfunction, and heavy snow. This procedure was completed calmly and effectively.

Percentage of care staff with relevant NVQ or equivalent child care qualification:

X %

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

The National Care Standards Commission is informed within 24 hours if a receiver, liquidator or trustee in bankruptcy becomes responsible for the school. Such persons on becoming responsible for the school have ensured that the school continues to be managed on a day to day basis by a Head who meets recruitment and qualification requirements for a Head under these Standards. Such a temporary Head must make sure that the operation of the school meets the requirements of these standards in relation to the day to day running of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Head teacher monitors and signs the records in the school, and is currently looking at electronic systems to assist with this process. 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.

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.7)

The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body receive a written report on the conduct of the school from a person visiting the school on their behalf every half term.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There is a high level of support and monitoring by governors in the school, and the inspectors spoke to the Chair of Governors during the inspection. This governor makes visits to the school at least half-termly, and was clearly well known to the children, addressing them all by name. 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, and written comments and signatures were seen. The Governors' annual reports are sent to all parents and guardians. The Head Teacher has just started producing written reports for the Governors. Although the Head Teacher said that some of the Governors visits are not announced, the school has a written policy stating that all visits are by appointment. To meet this Standard fully, the majority of Governor visits need to be unannounced, and must be done every half term. Written reports of the visits then need to be produced for the Head teacher and the other Governors. (See Recommended Actions 6).

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)**

Not applicable.

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____

Lead Inspector Pat House	Signature
Second Inspector Lan Jackson	Signature
Locality Manager Cathryn Bramham	Signature
Date	

PART D**HEAD'S RESPONSE****D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 27th and 28th January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Head's response is available on request from Hertfordshire Area Office.

Action taken by the NCSC in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report.

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 26th March 2004 , which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Alan Whitaker of Larwood School confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name Alan Whitaker

Signature _____

Designation Head Teacher

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ ~~am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:~~

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.