

Larwood School

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

Inspection dates	07/10/2014 to 09/10/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils thrive in an environment where their individual vulnerabilities and strengths are recognised. Individual interests are used effectively to develop trusting relationships between residential pupils and staff.
- The safety of residential pupils is a priority at the school. Leaders and managers continue to develop safeguarding arrangements such as perimeter fences and door security. Residential pupils report feeling safe living at the school and know staff will challenge any bullying.
- Behaviour is very well managed by staff who consistently maintain boundaries, in a warm nurturing environment. Residential pupils make good progress and learn to manage situations they had previously found difficult.
- Restraint and consequences in the residential provision are very seldom used, with only one restraint in over a year.
- Care staff work effectively with other agencies to meet the needs of residential pupils. External professionals and parents are unanimously complimentary regarding the commitment of residential staff to improve outcomes for young people.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school is able to accommodate 12 residential pupils. At the time of the inspection 11 pupils received residential services between one and three nights a week.

Three hours' notice was given prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included: observation of boarding routines and practice; scrutiny of school policies and records; discussion with parents on site and by phone; meetings with staff and residential pupils. Discussions took place with staff responsible for leading; managing and organising residential care these included residential staff, support staff, the head of care, head teacher and chair of governors. External professionals supporting the service were also spoken with and include: social worker: school nurse and staff from local pharmacy and the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Inspection team

Gwen Buckley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Larwood School is a special primary school with 12 boarding places for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Residential pupils are currently accommodated in two boarding houses that are adjoined to the school premises.

Boarding nights are Monday to Thursday night with residential pupils staying between one and three nights. The children who board mainly come from the Hertfordshire area as this is the only special primary boarding school in the county.

The school is situated in a residential area of Stevenage. The last social care inspection was in May 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- embed best practice into the staff recruitment process by undertaking telephone verifications on all references
- continue with plans to employ a psychiatric nurse
- ensure the website is kept up to date with significant changes in the school.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Residential pupils thrive in a nurturing and supportive environment. They experience good quality relationships with staff and enjoy being with them. Pupils can approach residential staff who they know will listen to them and address any concerns they have. Consequently, pupils listen to staff and accept the support offered as they feel valued and respected as individuals.

A reward programme using points, helps residential pupils understand what is and is not acceptable behaviour. The clear routines and structure with safe, consistent boundaries supports residential pupils deal with their emotions. This results in improved behaviour and their ability to understand the consequences of their actions as well as helping them to make new friends. Those residential pupils who continually meet targets set are taken off the programme. This helps residential pupils understand that they can achieve and effectively manage their own feelings. Those young people on the 'off points' system are proud of this. As a result, of the system in place, achievement is recognised and the pupils are developing constructive, tolerant peer relationships and appropriate social skills at a pace that suits them.

Pupils like the residential experience, they feel safe and enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. They attend different activities in the community and participate in activities that are new to them. This helps to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff work successfully with parents and carers to meet the health needs of residential pupils. When pupils are ill, parents are contacted and pupils are cared for at home.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for the next stage in life and the transition from school. Residential time reduces as pupils prepare to leave the school. Residential pupils are keen to assist staff and they have targets set that help them develop their independence skills. Pupils help with daily chores such as setting and clearing the tables as well as preparing toast and drinks for each other. As a result, residential pupils, in line with their individual ability and ages, are well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their life.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision is good. Residential pupils benefit from being cared for by an experienced staff team who work within clear routines and boundaries and deliver consistent care. Residential pupils benefit from care that reflects their individual needs. Staff continually monitor the progress of residential pupils, talk to them about this and take action to ensure the service continues to meet their changing needs. This means residential pupils understand what is expected of them and they trust staff to guide and support them.

Diverse needs are catered for sensitively and all residential pupils feel respected. Special diets are catered for and residential pupils enjoy the meals provided and say 'the best thing about residential is the activities, food and seeing friends.' Issues related to diversity and difference are celebrated and seen as opportunities to learn from each other.

The pastoral care is a strength of the school with effective links between the academic and residential staff. The number of residential places available has decreased since the last inspection. The pastoral team is extending its services to the pupil's families. Open days and events are planned to explain the change in focus to family members and the support that will be available to them and their children. Parents, carers and external professionals consider the residential team are enthusiastic, imaginative and provide supportive care.

Individual needs are well catered for from pre admission planning to leaving the school. There are effective induction procedures and these help residential pupils to feel safe and settle into residential life quickly.

New resources include a new activity room. Staff encourage residential pupils to participate in a wide range of activities that are supervised by experienced staff. Residential pupils enjoy a good range of facilities outside of the school day.

Medication is well managed by staff who understand the health needs of pupils. A school nurse, local G.P. and pharmacist support them in their role. Health education is covered both in school and in residential time and covers age related topics such as peer pressure and safe use of the internet to protect pupils from exploitation.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The arrangements for keeping residential pupils safe are good. Staff ensure the residential pupils in their care are safe and protected from harm. They take action when needed by referring concerns to external professionals. Residential pupils say they have a range of staff they could talk with if they have are sad. They are confident staff will 'sort things.'

Any incidents of bullying are very well addressed resulting in a very low level of bullying occurring, which enables residential pupils to live without fear. Residential pupils know bullying is not allowed and understand the many forms this may take. Staff, residential pupils and their family members are helped to understand issues around cyber bullying to ensure they are all kept up to date with this ever changing environment. Newsletters sent to parents have links to different resources that they can access which helps keep pupils safe both at school and at home.

Staff successfully implement positive behaviour strategies, linked to the points reward system. Pupils develop well in areas such as personal development that has a positive impact on their education and achievements. As a result, of being residential care, pupil's behaviours have improved significantly. Restraint is very seldom used in residential time, with only one restraint being used in over a year. Residential pupils themselves acknowledge how much the residential staff help them to get on with others. They are proud of this and state they all have friends at school.

The members of staff who are designated lead officers for child protection have all received local authority approved training. They understand their responsibilities and take action to protect pupils if they have concerns. Staff recruitment procedures ensure all relevant documentation is provided before staff are employed. However, telephone verifications are not undertaken on all references received.

The school provides a safe and secure environment for pupils. Monitoring and alarm systems have been upgraded in the residential areas and improved communication systems help to keep residential pupils safe. Health and safety procedures are well organised and checks are undertaken as required. For example, water systems and fire safety equipment. Residential pupils participate in regular fire evacuation drills and feel confident, if a fire did occur, they could leave the building safely whether it was day or night.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Good

The leadership and management of the school is good. The head teacher is instrumental in keeping a focus on improving the quality of the school and residential provision. The school's

website does not reflect the significant changes made in the last year. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have all been implemented. The good quality care ensures all pupils receive care that is respectful and values them as individuals regardless of age, gender needs and backgrounds. The school meets all the national minimum standards.

The residential team have high aspirations for the pupils. Staff are eager to help and support residential pupils develop their potential. They work extremely well with external professionals, carers and family members to support the pupils. Everyday practice fulfils the aims and mission of the school set out in the school's prospectus.

All residential staff have appropriate qualifications or are working towards this. Staff are able to pursue additional learning and development opportunities which enhances their effectiveness in working with the residential pupils. For example, care staff are supported by the nurse to learn about different health needs and undertake a level five diploma in care management.

The monitoring of the care provision has improved. The visits by the Governors are followed with reports reflecting the findings. The headteacher regularly visits the residential houses to review practice. All residential staff have regular supervision and an annual appraisal, where targets are set that relate to developing the service provided. Consequently, managers are able to drive through improvements in the service and effectively support family members and see where they could improve further. Due to the more complex needs of the pupils admitted to the school there are plans in place to employ a psychiatric nurse. The residential provision plays a key role in ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils receive the extra support they need to develop skills for their future and the nurse will enhance the quality of the care and support provided.

The views of residential pupils and their family member are sought and a residential pupil attends the school council meetings. There is an independent person available to talk to the pupils and they know how to make a complaint should they wish to do so.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131503
Social care unique reference number	SC056394
DfE registration number	919/7034

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	11
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	6 to 11
Headteacher	Mr S Trimble
Date of previous boarding inspection	20/05/2013
Telephone number	01438 236333
Email address	head@larwood.herts.sch.uk

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