

**THE LARCHES SCHOOL**  
**CONINGSBY ROAD**  
**LEOMINSTER**  
**HEREFORDSHIRE HR6 8LL**

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**Reporting Inspector: Mr J E Hosegood HMI**

**Dates of Inspection: 28-29 March 2000**

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**Information about the school**

Type of school:	For pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties
Type of control:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years (Years 7-11)
Gender of pupils:	Co-educational
School address:	Coningsby Road, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8LL
Telephone number:	01568 610279
Headteacher:	Mr Andrew McDouall
Proprietors:	Mr Adrian Vine; Mr Nick Nenadich; Mr Tom Starkey
DfEE number:	884/6010

*The inspection team comprised:*

*Mr J E Hosegood HMI (Reporting Inspector)*

*Mrs C M Steadman HMI*

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### **MAIN FINDINGS**

The Larches School provides part-time education for pupils placed by social services departments in residential accommodation at Clifford House. The quality of this part-time education is generally satisfactory and the school is now well placed to increase significantly the number of hours of education available to pupils and to attend to the identified deficiencies in a more structured and planned way.

At the time of final registration in 1996 the number of pupils attending the school was less than half of those who attend now. The present accommodation is too small for the existing numbers. The school is overcrowded.

Progress is generally satisfactory, although pupils attend only part-time and not all subjects are taught. Progress is satisfactory or better in just under three-quarters of all lessons. In science and mathematics progress is good and in English it is satisfactory. It is the toleration of poor behaviour and lack of purpose that accounts for the unsatisfactory progress noted in a quarter of lessons.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in three-quarters of lessons. The teaching of core and some foundation subjects is good. The weak teaching is associated with inadequate subject guidance, staff teaching subjects that are not their specialism and poor behaviour by pupils.

Curriculum planning is weak. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum but this is limited because of the pupils' part-time attendance and the fact that certain subjects, such as design and technology (D&T), a modern foreign language (MFL), religious education (RE) and music, are not taught. There is no vocational education. Work experience is provided for only one pupil.

Assessment is poor. The school is slow to provide baseline assessment in core subjects and key stage National Curriculum assessment does not take place. However, the school does enter pupils for public examinations and courses leading to external accreditation.

The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is much better than their spiritual development, which is negligible.

There are sufficient teachers, appropriately qualified and experienced, and they are deployed effectively. There is no staff development policy and staff facilities are poor. The teachers do not have regular specialist external curriculum advice.

The duty management system makes an important contribution to the way that residential care staff support pupils' learning and individual pupils in classrooms. However, there are weaknesses in the system. There are too many duty managers each week, a constant variation in the residential care workers present in the school and a limited induction programme. The care staff are over-concerned with preventing or controlling poor behaviour and are not sufficiently experienced or trained to support pupils' learning skilfully in classrooms.

The pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory, but on the few occasions when there are outbursts of obscene and unpleasant language used against both teachers and other

pupils, this is inappropriately condoned. This poor practice is at odds with the school's good behaviour and anti-bullying policies.

The school benefits from Clifford House's corporate policies on child protection, equal opportunities and the vetting of staff but many decisions, that are usually the responsibility of a headteacher, are made centrally. There is no school development plan, the budget is not delegated and the headteacher has no responsibility for the activities and programmes that take place during the time when pupils do not attend school.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The proprietors should:

- ensure that all pupils either attend a full-time educational programme, or are in transition to such a programme over a fixed period of time;
- reduce the overcrowding;
- improve curriculum planning;
- develop an assessment, recording and reporting policy and practice;
- review the duty management system to ensure that there are fewer staff involved and introduce an induction programme;
- implement a professional staff development policy and improve in-service training for teachers and all staff who work in the school;
- improve staff facilities;
- establish a consistent approach to tackling verbal abuse and bad behaviour;
- produce a school development plan that is costed, identifies responsibilities, timescales and criteria for success;
- entrust the headteacher with increased responsibility for the delivery of each pupil's full educational programme;
- keep an admissions book and an attendance register and renew the present arrangements for recording incidents in school.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

The Larches was established in 1995 to provide education for those young people 'looked after' by Clifford House who do not attend local mainstream or special schools. The school was finally registered in 1996. The Clifford House Partnership is the proprietor of the Larches. It was established in 1989 to offer residential placements for young people who are 'looked after' by their local authority and who exhibit behavioural difficulties as a result of physical or emotional traumas.

Pupils live in a variety of residential accommodation as agreed between Clifford House and their placing social services departments. The different accommodation has different intensities of adult pupil ratios. There are small group homes, enhanced support units, family placements, intensive units and acute intensive units. In addition there is an assessment unit. All of this accommodation is within a 25 mile radius of the school and the home-school journey is never more than 40 minutes each way. The school is open for 44 weeks of the year. Currently there are 32 pupils on roll, (22 boys

and ten girls). Eighteen attend for the morning session and the remainder in the afternoon. Each half-day session lasts two hours and 35 minutes. Fourteen pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and four are awaiting the provision of a Statement.

In the school's Statement of Purpose, it says that the Larches seeks to offer:

- a flexible programme of study within the overall framework of the National Curriculum based on the assessed needs of the pupil;
- an emphasis on the core skills of literacy, numeracy and personal and social education (PSE);
- an environment that delivers daily opportunities for positive feedback designed to develop self-esteem, achievement and mutual respect.
- The Larches aim is to provide for:
  - an understanding by pupils of the impact their behaviour can have on their learning achievements and the achievements of others;
  - the development of lively and engaging personalities;
  - the effective use of number and language;
  - the development of self-respect and the respect, tolerance and understanding towards others;
  - and the identified objectives are to:
    - improve a pupil's self-worth and acceptance of others by recognising and rewarding achievement;
    - actively encourage a sense of the value of education and knowledge of ability and background;
    - set, by example, high standards of behaviour, which are externally reinforced through well-defined structures and boundaries.

All pupils at the Larches are referred to Clifford House by social services departments in England and Wales, but one pupil has been placed by the Southern Health Board in Eire.

As from 1 April 2000, the fees for attendance at the Larches (not Clifford House) are £350 per week for a part-time education over the 44-week year, ie £15,400 per annum.

### **Key indicators**

#### **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Y7-11 (11-16 years)	1.4	1.8

## **Exclusions**

There were no exclusions of pupils during the previous academic year (1998/99).

## **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	0
Satisfactory or better	80
Less than satisfactory	20

## **National Curriculum assessments**

No pupils were entered for National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 3.

## **Public examinations**

See [Appendix 3](#).

## **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

### **Attainment and progress**

The majority of the pupils are able to attain standards in line with national expectations but their previous patterns of poor attendance, exclusions, and changes of residential and family circumstances mean that in many areas of the curriculum their attainments are restricted. In addition, there are a few pupils who have particular difficulties with all aspects of literacy. Therefore, judgements are made in relation to the progress of pupils over time.

Pupils' progress was satisfactory in half, good in less than a quarter and unsatisfactory in another quarter of lessons. In no lesson was it very good and in those lessons when teaching was weak and pupil behaviour poor, the progress was minimal or non-existent. Progress has been made by pupils in their development of a more positive approach to school and in their seeing the benefits of education. These are significant achievements.

In English, pupils make satisfactory progress and most are determined to learn despite large gaps in their skills. They make satisfactory progress in reading and writing at Key Stage 3 and are able to read aloud with meaning, expression and pleasure and to write coherent sentences, using simple punctuation and a growing awareness of the purposes of language. This is further developed at Key Stage 4 with pupils able to complete personal research projects that involve reading for information, surveying opinion and writing a report and a conclusion from the information collected.

Speaking and listening is less well developed in both key stages where pupils have a poorer understanding of the part they play in the process of communication. Teachers are aware of this weakness and are beginning to address the issue although the absence of a reading policy is an obstacle.

Progress in mathematics is good. Pupils could calculate angles in a straight line, angles in a triangle and they were able to use a protractor to measure and draw angles to the nearest degree. They could also do the quite demanding and often frustrating work of enlarging shapes and triangles and lines associated with their names. They were interested in the work and remained on task throughout the lessons. Pupils' files provide a portfolio of completed work that shows progression and attention to detail and this is well presented.

Progress in science is good. Pupils are becoming aware of the world around them and understand the life cycle of living things through the reproduction of animals, plants and human beings, and they are beginning to extend their use of scientific vocabulary. Pupils worked well and concentrated hard and were able to build on what they had learnt from previous lessons and to relate this information to personal experiences. Work was presented through a series of practical and written activities, which sustained pupil motivation and interest. Classroom support was well deployed and contributed to the successful outcome.

Progress is good in geography. In history, progress varied from satisfactory to poor and this was dependent upon the skills of the teacher to stimulate pupils to respond in-depth. Too often pupils were not challenged to give comparative answers. Progress was satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education (PE) which are taught as three-weekly modules. Progress in PSE and in one of the tutor periods was poor.

In general, greater progress is restricted by the limited school day and the fact that some of the homework is insufficiently demanding or imaginative. Pupils are at a particular disadvantage because ICT is only timetabled for a double period once in three weeks.

Pupils pursue courses which are externally accredited at Key Stage 4, with considerable success. Some pupils have been entered for GCSE mathematics and science but there is greater use of the Certificate of Achievement and AEB achievement tests and basic skills tests. The opportunity is not available for pupils to take end of Key Stage 3 tests.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

All pupils who attend the Larches are resident with Clifford House and have a history of failure at school and disrupted education. When they arrive for lessons their attitude is positive. They appear pleased to be at school and almost all remain in lessons wishing to get on with their work. Some pupils express the view that they would like to have a longer day in school or attend courses at other educational establishments. Pupils who attended in the morning had a more positive attitude than those who came for afternoon lessons.

Break-times are well supervised and pupils either play basketball with staff at the front of the school or chat amicably with staff inside the building. The school allow those pupils, where residential care practice permit, to smoke off-site under staff supervision during breaks. This is not an acceptable practice in school (see Health and Safety Issues).

There is no evidence of pupils damaging equipment or furniture and they are generally respectful of adults and premises. However, there are a few pupils whose behaviour was poor and, in particular, they were verbally abusive of other pupils and certain members of staff. This behaviour is not seen in all lessons but, where it takes place, staff either accept or ignore it and occasionally make threats about possible sanctions that are not imposed. Afterwards either mild or even complimentary comments are made on the pupil's own educational planner. The obscene and abusive language used are tolerated despite the fact that this is in conflict with the statements of acceptable behaviour displayed in each classroom and the school's agreed and documented policy on good behaviour and coping with bullying. There is inconsistency of approach by staff and uncertainty of when and where sanctions will be applied and by whom.

The school has introduced effort grades and achievement grades to promote educational attainment. The good news slip and the certificate of merit are valued by the pupils. All pupils have a weekly educational planner which is brought into school for each session in the pupil's tray and taken home in the same way. Teachers comment at the end of each lesson and refer to the two agreed personal targets for the week. Each Friday there is a comment on performance in meeting those agreed targets over the week. The system is sound but too often the comments are vague, insufficiently critical and there is not enough space to comment in detail in a way that will help the pupil to focus on the exact nature of what is either good or poor.

Tutor periods and the PSE lesson seen were poor and added nothing to the pupils' personal development. The purpose and content of both the tutor periods and PSE lessons needs urgent review.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the placing authorities often require Clifford House to maintain a particular adult to child ratio at all times, there is a need for the school to explain to those authorities that this can be unhelpful in lessons. Sometimes there are too many adults at any one time in the school building and in some lessons the number of adults present restricts the opportunity for pupils to work on their own for a concentrated period of time.

### **Attendance**

Pupils' attendance is good. The specific reasons for non-attendance are known to the school and they are linked usually to review meetings in their placing authorities, absconsions from their residential arrangements, court appearances or sickness.

Each day all pupils are brought to the school and collected by their residential care staff. The latter bring the pupils' homework and daily planners. Some staff remain at the school to support certain pupils in the classroom whilst others are available to be used by the duty manager in case of emergencies or extremely disruptive behaviour.



Whilst a record is maintained of all attendances the format should be changed to that of an admissions register that complies with regulations.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

The quality of teaching varies from good to unsatisfactory, with three-quarters of lessons satisfactory or better. In a quarter of lessons the teaching is good. There is a clear expectation that pupils come to school to learn and this is emphasised by the purposeful approach of all the teachers and lessons began and ended on time.

Teaching is most effective where teachers teach within their specialist areas, have a sound knowledge of their subjects and a clear understanding of the learning difficulties of the pupils they teach. The school is moving to an increasing proportion of the timetable being taught by suitably qualified, specialist teachers and this is generally successful.

Many of the pupils enter the school during a school term; often following extended periods of their being out of school. This requires detailed and differentiated lesson planning to ensure a smooth transition. Lessons are well planned and details recorded on an appropriate pro-forma. This is a valuable recent development which gives a clear structure to lessons and often relates the activities to National Curriculum levels, although it does not refer to the differentiation of materials for pupils nor is the evaluation a reflective process to inform the planning for the next lesson. Teachers need guidance on how to evaluate lessons.

Short-term planning is well developed and focuses upon pupils working towards the accredited courses provided by the school. However, the medium and long-term planning is less well developed which has a negative impact upon the daily planning of lessons. Schemes of work are being developed. The modular half-termly programmes of study also being developed will help to bring all of this together.

Teachers generally manage the classroom activities well and ensure a good pace of work within the lesson, effectively using a range of appropriate resources and good worksheets. Pupils benefit from a range of directed short activities that sustain interest and motivation but teachers could plan for the gradual introduction of less structured tasks for pupils in order that they can demonstrate their ability to work independently.

Homework is set on a daily basis according to a published timetable for English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and accredited coursework. This is completed in the residential homes and is supervised by the residential social workers. The collection procedure is effective but this is not always supported by appropriate completion of the work set. There is a need for a review of the purposes and practicalities of completing homework that supports and extends the school curriculum.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

There are profile statements outlining the aims and objectives for all subjects taught, but there is no complete curriculum statement describing the educational provision and the relationship of activities in school to the residential programmes that take place when pupils are not attending the half-day education sessions.

The curriculum provided is only part-time and it is offered in half-day sessions with four 35 minutes lessons over 44 weeks each year. Pupils either attend all morning or all afternoon sessions. This seriously affects the school's ability to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and, it also does not allow some pupils to take advantage of morning tuition.

The curriculum adequately covers the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT, although the latter has yet to be fully developed and to permeate other curriculum areas because it is only taught as part of a three-week module. Design and technology, RE, music and MFL are not taught.

Personal social education, including sex and drugs education, is not well planned and does not meet the requirements for schools to teach drugs and sex education. This needs to complement the drugs and sex education that takes place in the residential situation. Links with the Hereford Careers Service have been established with pupils in Year 11 receiving careers interviews. This external input is not supported by a school-based careers education programme, delivered as part of the PSE programme, nor is there any vocational education and only one pupil currently has work experience.

The school provides modular access to PE and art and craft for all pupils but this is limited by time, staff expertise and resources.

The day-to-day assessment and marking of pupils' work is effective and relates closely to a clearly understood assessment policy. Pupils receive effort and achievement grades for each piece of work, with useful written and verbal comments. Teachers record pupil achievements but at present this assessment does not relate to curriculum aims and objectives or inform planning. Teachers work and plan collaboratively to meet the individual and complex needs of the pupils, but insufficient account is taken of what pupils have already achieved.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are currently being devised for all pupils, but there is no baseline assessment to enable teachers to plan appropriately and set meaningful academic targets. Where pupils have a Statement of Educational Need, the statutory annual review does not always take place. Some annual reviews of statements are completed during the statutory six-monthly residential care reviews, and take the form of an education report, but generally they do not include a review of educational provision. This practice will need to be changed to ensure that all educational provision for pupils with a statement is reviewed, and in conjunction with the pupil's LEA is amended as necessary, on an annual basis. Placing authorities should be informed of the school's agreed practice.

Whilst the recording of pupils' achievements is routine practice, the assessment policy needs to be extended to become a policy for the assessment, reporting and recording

of pupils' progress directly linked to the curriculum and improved individual education planning.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The school works hard to create a positive environment and it is aware of the need to redress the negative experiences that the pupils have known in their lives prior to coming to the Larches.

A special awards assembly is held at the end of every half-term to recognise pupil achievement and to promote academic, moral and social development; there are no other collective meetings in the school. The development of spiritual awareness and self-knowledge is not well promoted in the school and the lack of RE means that pupils are not given the opportunity to share experiences and become aware of other faiths and traditions.

Although pupils have some difficulty in developing relationships and understanding the effect their actions have upon others, staff promote moral values through the weekly targets set in tutor sessions which seek to change unacceptable behaviours and through the award of good news slips. This encourages pupils to behave in more acceptable ways towards themselves and others.

Opportunities for pupils to grow in social and cultural understanding are developing slowly, through subjects such as English, science, history and geography. Further development of the curriculum to provide experiences in music, PSE and careers education is required to demonstrate and encourage pupils to have a more informed understanding of the world in which they live.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

The school regards the support of pupils and the safeguarding of their welfare as one of their most important tasks and works closely with the residential homes to provide continuous support. The care teams complete detailed induction procedures for pupils which, subsequently, are used to design formal care plans. This information is shared with the school and communicated to all relevant staff and used as part of the initial educational planning for pupils.

Staff from the school attend the six-monthly reviews for children in public care, and they present a written educational report reviewing progress. Tutors share in the process by reporting upon the personal development of pupils and their interaction in tutor periods. The monitoring of pupil progress in achieving personal targets is reviewed by the headteacher on a weekly basis through planning sheets, which record pupil's attitudes and behaviours. This process is supported by a reward, which aims to focus pupils upon ways of modifying their behaviour. This system currently places a greater emphasis upon behavioural rather than academic progress.

The headteacher is the nominated person for child protection issues and reports directly to the child protection officer for the Clifford House partnership who is also one of the directors. Child protection procedures are well understood by staff, who receive copies of the child protection policy during their induction. Child protection

training is part of that induction. Confidential records are securely kept and appropriately shared with relevant staff for child protection issues including physical restraint, which is sometimes necessary for a small proportion of these pupils. All residential staff and certain members of the teaching staff have been trained in physical restraint. The policy is that all will be trained in the adopted practices which are used across all of Clifford House. Careful analysis of these is regularly carried out to evaluate their appropriateness and effectiveness.

A policy has been devised to combat bullying and to promote equal opportunities; this enables staff to contribute to the creation of a harmonious atmosphere and respond to harassment or overt bullying. Verbal bullying is the underlying cause of the majority of behavioural issues in the school and this is not yet adequately addressed.

The medical needs of pupils are met in the residential homes and there are appropriate first-aid facilities in school although there is no medical inspection room.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

All pupils are 'looked after' and the responsibility for contacts with families, placing authorities and social workers is the responsibility of senior staff in the residential accommodation. The school has no direct contact with parents. However, the number of responses to the parents' questionnaire for this inspection was high and the picture that emerges is very positive.

Similarly, most of the contacts with the community arise from the organised activities for the pupils in their homes across the county. Young people at Clifford House are encouraged to participate in a variety of social, sporting and cultural activities during the day-time when they are not in school and during evenings and weekends. This is part of their residential care programme.

The school makes use of the local community facilities at the youth club and leisure centre but not at the swimming pool. Opportunities could be extended if more time during a longer school day was provided for PE and games, there was a wider use of work experience and a programme of vocational education established.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

The school's aims are set out in the Statement of Purpose. The statement that the young people at Clifford House should be given the same opportunities as those in mainstream education and the very best of educational provision is not being achieved because pupils cannot attend school for more than two hours 20 minutes each day and when they are in school they have a restricted curriculum. However, the school is open for 44 weeks each year.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the pupils have had significant histories of disrupted education or long periods of non-attendance, as well as often having deeply held negative views of schooling, the present arrangement that actually prevents pupils from attending school for more than the half-day session is unsatisfactory.

Clifford House, through the work of the staff at the Larches and the residential staff in the pupils' homes, has worked very hard to promote a positive view of education, to achieve good attendance and pupils have positive attitudes towards school. The school should have a plan to introduce a full-time educational programme for all pupils. This will mean reviewing the curriculum for pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and allowing the headteacher to have overall responsibility for all day time educational activities both on and off-site. More responsibility should be given to the headteacher to plan, co-ordinate and deliver the full curriculum. The number of pupils attending the school at any one time in the present accommodation will also need to be reduced.

The present school development plan is a list of intentions and wishes but it is not suitable for strategic planning. Priorities are not identified, there are no costings or timescales and it does not detail who will be responsible for what, or the criteria for success.

The school is isolated professionally from current educational and curriculum developments. The teachers do not make use of local teachers' centres and they receive a limited amount of documentation from national bodies. The school has purchased limited inspectorial advice twice during the last three years but this should be supplemented by on-going curriculum support and access to local centres of specialist advice.

The school does not have an admissions book and the recording of attendance does not comply with regulations. Incidents that have not occurred at the Larches are recorded in the school's incident book and it is not always clear who has signed and counter-signed the report of incidents. The school should have an admissions book, keep an attendance register and review the present arrangement for recording incidents in school.

## **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

### **Staffing**

There are sufficient teachers, all of whom are qualified, and together they hold a range of teaching experiences in mainstream and special education. Two teachers are recent appointments in preparation for the opening of a second school. Teachers have job descriptions but these are not sufficiently specific to be used for appraisal and review. Until recently the headteacher had a very heavy teaching commitment. Recent appointments have enabled him to have some time outside the classroom. The staff team provide specialist teaching in most areas of the curriculum. In the school they are supported by learning support assistants and a team of residential care workers whose deployment is negotiated between the duty manager and the headteacher.

The way the duty manager, always either a team leader or a senior care worker, operates has been amended over recent months as a result of external advice and internal discussion. There is a guidance document for the duty manager and the residential social workers. These support arrangements have been developed to ensure good attendance, encourage pupil participation in lessons, the smoother running of the school, speedy attention to disruptive behaviour and improving links between the work in school and pupils' life in the residential settings. Clifford House is anxious to

ensure that there are sufficient adults at all times for safety reasons and that the numbers are always in line with the agreed care plans.

The present arrangement allows for as many as 10 different duty managers each week and a very large number of residential staff, many of whom have only recently been appointed to Clifford House. Their knowledge and experience in supporting pupils' learning across a range of subjects is limited and their deployment is not always effective. This arrangement needs reviewing to bring the duty management system more closely allied to the way lessons are planned and taught. The present emphasis is very much on preventing bad behaviour and reducing disruption but staff need to be more attentive to assisting the pupils to acquire knowledge and develop subject-based skills.

The directors have said that they are keen to support the teachers' professional development as they do with the residential care staff but there is no documented staff development policy for teachers and learning support assistants or of the use of residential care staff in classroom situations.

### **Accommodation**

The school is housed in an adapted dormer bungalow. It is an attractive building and conveniently located in the centre of the town. The grounds and garden are well maintained. Clifford House has obtained permission to erect a demountable two-classroom unit at the front of the site after Easter and have plans for other building developments in the future. Care will be needed to ensure that these developments do not lead to further overcrowding and congestion on this limited site. Clifford House has leased a house nearby that will provide administrative accommodation in the future.

The classrooms vary in size and have been identified for particular subjects. Two of these rooms are only suitable for groups of no more than three pupils, whilst the two largest rooms can accommodate slightly larger groups.

The school is overcrowded and staff facilities are very poor. Adaptations to the entrance area to allow easier movement of pupils and staff and the partitioning of one of the classrooms have been mentioned as possible improvements. Any such alterations need to be part of an overall development plan.

There is a small room for art, a science and ICT room, but no appropriate facilities for food technology or D&T and no library. The art room has no water.

The building is clean, well maintained and respected by pupils. The recent displays of pupils' work adds to the attractiveness of the school.

### **Learning resources**

Learning resources are adequate for the limited number of subjects taught but as a wider curriculum is introduced and the school implements a reading policy for all pupils then new resources will be needed. This will present a difficulty with the limited amount of storage available. Although there is no library, a small selection of

books is available for pupils to borrow. A wider range of books, magazines and newspapers is needed to support literacy.

The school is reasonably equipped with computers and a range of software, but their current use is limited. In part this is due to the ICT and science rooms being combined. This restricts access and there is no small room available where a computer could be used.

The school makes good use of the neighbourhood youth club and leisure centre resources.

### **The efficiency of the school**

The headteacher is only responsible for a small capitation budget. In addition to this capitation the school can make separate requests to the directors of Clifford House for additional resources and individual staff training.

All financial and administration matters are handled by the Clifford House organisation, whose offices are a short distance from the school, with the Larches operating as part of the network of educational and residential provision within the group. The partnership is discussing ways of identifying and possibly delegating the costs of the school in preparation for the opening of a second school soon to be established in North Worcestershire.

### **Health and safety issues**

Seven issues were mentioned to the headteacher and proprietors:

- the school permits pupils to smoke in a designated area of the grounds during break-times. The school should introduce a non-smoking policy for all pupils and guarantee that the health education component of the PSE programme includes information and advice on the dangers of smoking;
- female staff and girl pupils share the same toilet which is inappropriate;
- the use of shared fabric towels for hand drying is unhygienic;
- the use of the male staff toilet for washing and storing art materials is also inappropriate. Hot and cold water should be provided in the room used for art;
- loose old electric heaters should be replaced and any additional heating necessary made secure to walls;
- the small room used for photocopying does not have any form of ventilation;
- the presence of a large number of adults and pupils in such a small building at any one time leads to acute overcrowding which is a potential safety matter.

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## **INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

Observation of:

- 18 lessons (including one off-site at the leisure centre and youth club);
- 2 tutor periods.

Scrutiny of:

- The Larches' and Clifford House's documentation;
- pupils' files;
- statements of special educational needs;
- classroom files;
- individual education plans;
- care plans;
- the attendance register, incident and accident books.

Discussions with:

- two of the three proprietors and directors;
- the headteacher and two senior members of staff;
- less formal discussions with teachers and two of the duty managers.

In addition a questionnaire was sent to all parents (details in the [parental survey](#) at the end of the report).

## Appendix 1

### Pupil and teacher numbers

Number of pupils on roll (all part-time)*	10 Girls; 22 Boys; Total 32
Number of pupils with a statement	14
Full-time qualified teachers	7
Part-time qualified teachers	1
Part-time unqualified teachers	0

### Other staff

Learning support assistants (LSA)	2**
Residential social workers (RSW)	***



\*Attendance at the Larches means attending a half-day session for five days per week.

\*\*one LSA is employed for 35 hours and the other for 7 hours per week.

\*\*\*Clifford House RSWs accompany pupils in school and the numbers vary each day. They are not part of the staffing of the school.

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## Appendix 2

### Pupil numbers according to National Curriculum years

	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 7	2	0	2
Year 8	6	1	7
Year 9	5	1	6
Year 10	6	4	10
Year 11	3	4	7
Total	22	10	32

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## Appendix 3 [BACK](#)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4

Examination results 1999

*GCSE*

Two pupils entered for:

Science: 1D, 1F

Mathematics: 1D, 1F

*Certificate of Achievement*

Five pupils entered for:

English: 1 merit, 2 pass

Number: 4 distinctions, 1 merit

Science: 5 distinctions

History: 1 merit, 2 pass

In addition, pupils are entered for:

AEB basic tests and numeracy and literacy achievement tests.

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## **Appendix 4**

### **Pupil funding\***

Berkshire	3
Birmingham	4
Bridgend (Wales)	1
Coventry	3
Derby	1
Derbyshire	2
Gloucestershire	1
Knowsley	1
Norfolk	2
Oxfordshire	3
Sandwell	1
Shropshire	1
Solihull	4
Staffordshire	2
Warwickshire	1
Worcestershire	1

Southern Health Board, Eire	1
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\*all placements are by social services departments, but funding may be by the local education department.

**Income\***

	Last financial year (£)	Forecast this financial year (£)
Basic budget	398,000	409,000
Grants	-	-
Income from facilities and services	-	-
Donations/private funds	-	-
Other income	-	-
Total income	459,108	522,600
Income per pupil	17,420**	17,784

\*This is the income for the Larches and not Clifford House.

\*\*Based on an average of 27 pupils across the year.

**PARENTAL SURVEY [BACK](#)**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	32
Number of questionnaires returned:	20*

**RESPONSES:**

	Agree	Disagree
I am happy with the school my child attends.	19	1

I think this school meets my child's special education needs.	19	
I believe that the school helps me to understand what my child is taught.	17	
I think that the school keeps me well informed about my child's progress.	18	
I am happy with the standards of behaviour at this school.	17	
I believe that this school helps my child have positive attitudes to school work.	17	1
I believe that this school helps my child to mix well with other children.	17	
I believe that this school promotes the personal and social development of my child.	16	1
I think that this school prepares my child for the next stage of education and training.	17	1
I feel supported by the school.	16	1
I feel that my child is safe at this school.	18	
I believe my child likes this school.	18	

\*There were three incomplete questionnaires returned.

### **Summary of responses**

The overwhelming majority of the responses from parents, and in 4 cases by social workers, were positive. Complimentary references were made to receiving regular and comprehensive reports and appropriate class sizes. One parent did not feel that a detailed response was appropriate as their child had only been at the school for eight weeks, but was happy with his progress so far.

### **Issues that concerned parents**

The few concerns mentioned by parents were about the extent of the opportunities for pupils to mix with other children and the shortness of the school day.