INSPECTION REPORT

LAKESIDE SCHOOL

Welwyn Garden City

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117680

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Chamberlain

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton 15173

Dates of inspection: 26th – 27th September 2000

Inspection number: 223599

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2000 This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special School category: Community special Age range of pupils: 2 to 19 Gender of pupils: Mixed School address: Lemsford Lane Welwyn Garden City Herts Postcode: AL8 6YN Telephone number: 01707 327410 Fax number: 01707 393352 Appropriate authority: The governing body Name of chair of governors: Mr. Michael Hall

Date of previous inspection:

16th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			
Rosemary Eaton (15173)	Registered inspector		
Roberta Mothersdale (13462)	Lay inspector		
Margaret Smith (27429)	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

Baker-Phillips Inspection Services

The Croft Brierley Way Oldcroft Lydney Glos GL15 4NE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar Inspection Quality Division The Office for Standards in Education Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school How good the school is What the school does well What could be improved How the school has improved since its last inspection Standards Pupils' attitudes and values Teaching and learning Other aspects of the school How well the school is led and managed Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
Teachers take advantage of every opportunity to encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their lives beyond school.	
The curriculum for physical education is excellent and makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development. The provision for cultural development is rich and stimulating.	
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	13
The provision for cultural development is rich and stimulating. There is no medical room or suitable space for physiotherapy.	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	15
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	16

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lakeside is a school for pupils aged two to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, 60 pupils attend the school, including six in the nursery and reception years and ten post-16 students in the Extended Education provision. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. All have statements of special educational need, and 13 have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Five pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils live in the east of Hertfordshire. Over one third are entitled to free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Lakeside is an exceptionally good school. Overall, pupils make very good progress. In learning to communicate and in their personal development, progress is excellent. The quality of teaching is very good, and the school is extremely well led and managed. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers take advantage of every opportunity to encourage pupils to be as independent as possible.
- Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their lives beyond school.
- The curriculum for physical education is excellent and makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The provision for cultural development is rich and stimulating.

What could be improved

- The school is still developing ways of using the information that it collects about pupils' progress.
- There is no medical room or suitable space for physiotherapy.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since then, it has made very good progress.

Pupils now make much better progress in English, mathematics and in their personal development. The progress of students over 16 has improved particularly well, and the majority of their work is now externally accredited. The very good rates of attendance have been sustained. The quality of teaching is much improved.

The school has tackled all the key issues from the previous inspection, and has made at least good improvement in all areas, other than in its accommodation. All the available space is used very effectively and very good efforts have been made to develop it – for example, the new swimming pool is an excellent facility. However, deficiencies, such as the lack of a medical room, remain.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:		by age 19
speaking and listening		A*
reading		Α
writing		Α
mathematics		В
personal, social and health education		Α
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*		А

Key	
excellent	A *
very good	Α
good	В
satisfactory	С
unsatisfactory	D
poor	Е

^{*} IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The school sets individual targets for all pupils. These are related to the number of annual review targets that they meet and for the amount of progress they make in the steps leading to, or within, National Curriculum levels. The targets are sometimes too challenging, and the school is refining them so that they remain high but are more realistic.

Pupils make excellent progress and achieve extremely well in speaking and listening or communicating in other ways. This is because all members of staff constantly encourage pupils to practise these skills. The effects of the National Literacy Strategy can be clearly seen in pupils' achievement, and the Numeracy Strategy is starting to have a similar impact. Progress and achievement are very good in reading and writing, and good in mathematics. Post-16 students are very successful in accredited courses and in their work at colleges. Pupils make very good progress in physical education and personal, social and health education, owing to the very high quality provision made in these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment		
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy being at school and are keen to take part in lessons and activities.		
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well – when working, during breaks and lunchtimes, and when taking part in activities out of school.		
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are encouraged to be independent. They are prepared very well for their lives beyond school. All staff provide excellent role models for pupils, as do students in Extended Education.		
Attendance	Very good.		

Pupils are ready to commit themselves to being members of teams and to take part in running the school – for example, through the School Council. Their very good behaviour and attitudes enable them to take full advantage of college courses and residential visits. Pupils co-operate very well with each other and with staff.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

During the inspection, teaching was very good or better in 79 per cent of lessons. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons.

English and mathematics and the skills of communication, including literacy, and numeracy are taught very well. Signing and symbols are used very effectively to enable all pupils to contribute to lessons and be as independent as possible. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils are to achieve. They know the pupils very well and plan very carefully to meet their needs, so that all can make very good progress. Lessons are often exciting, so pupils are interested and try very hard. Support staff make very important contributions to pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment		
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is highly relevant to pupils' needs, because it has strong emphasis on helping them to communicate and become more independent.		
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes very good provision for all pupils who are in the early stages of learning to communicate.		
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are helped to become well-rounded individuals, because all aspects of their development are promoted very effectively.		
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All staff are very well informed about pupils' needs and the school's procedures. Pupils are looked after very well.		

The post-16 curriculum is excellent. All students take part in college courses and much of their work is externally accredited.

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented very effectively.

The curriculum for physical education is excellent.

The procedures for promoting pupils' health and safety are very good. Risk assessments are carried out for all pupils and they all have individual care plans.

Child protection procedures are very good. The presence of a full-time nurse adds to their effectiveness.

There is a very strong working partnership between health professionals, including therapists, and the education staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment	
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. Led energetically by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the senior management team is committed to raising standards and providing the best possible quality of education.	
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed and supportive. They set high standards for the school to achieve.	
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The quality of teaching is monitored systematically. The school is refining its methods of checking how well pupils are getting on and how it compares its performance with that of other schools.	
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school improvement plan is carefully costed and resources are used very prudently, to raise standards and improve the quality of education.	

The entire staff team shares the commitment to high standards. All staff work very hard and enthusiastically to carry out their responsibilities.

All the available accommodation is used very effectively but the lack of medical and therapy rooms affects the quality of care provided.

The school is very keen to provide best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Parents support all aspects of the school's work. They are especially pleased that: Their children like school. The teaching is good. They feel comfortable approaching the school if they have concerns. The school has high expectations for children to achieve. The school is well led and managed.	There were no suggestions for improvement, although some parents are unsure about how much homework they should expect their children to receive.

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive opinions of the school. The school has in hand plans to inform parents about its expectations regarding homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teachers take advantage of every opportunity to encourage pupils to be as independent as possible.

- 1. The school's emphasis on pupils being independent is very impressive and extends beyond lessons, into every aspect of its daily life.
- 2. From their earliest time in school, pupils are expected to make choices and decisions. In lessons, this starts in the earliest years for example, choosing toys in the nursery. In one lesson, in the infants' class, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were encouraged to choose the colour of paint they used. Then, equally important, staff allowed them plenty of time to make their responses by smiling, for instance.
- 3. At lunchtime, the options are varied, according to pupils' stage of development. For example, some may make a decision about only one course of their meal, and those not able to wait in a queue are offered a choice at their table. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a wide range of lunchtime clubs such as keep fit, drama, choir and football. Once they have made a commitment, they are expected to attend every week not to drop in and out. In this way, they are helped to learn to take responsibility for the decisions they make. Pupils elect members of the School Council, who have instigated a number of school developments such as the weekly tuck shop and the football team.
- 4. Teachers ensure that, when appropriate, pupils are able to make informed choices about their lives. For example, during a personal, social and health education lesson, younger secondary aged pupils were learning a simple method of categorising foods, according to whether they are healthy, unhealthy or 'middling'. They responded very well to the teacher's lively approach, which involved the liberal use of signing one way in which teachers routinely enable all pupils to be fully involved in lessons and communicate their ideas and intentions. Pupils made very good progress in their knowledge of healthy eating and in their awareness that there are consequences to the choices they make about food. When visiting the tuck shop, they could then choose to put their knowledge into practice raisins or Smarties? prompted by the shop assistant's reminder that 'Raisins are good for you.'
- 5. The formal personal, social and health education curriculum is made all the more effective because the development of independence is so central to the school's ethos. Nothing is left to chance. For example, in a lesson about beliefs and values, students in Extended Education were guided into making a group decision about which religion they are to study, as part of their accredited course. Initially, students located the school's reference books and established the need for a selection of options in order to make a choice. They went on to work individually, then in pairs, and lastly as a larger group, stating the reasons for their point of view and agreeing and accepting a final decision mostly with very good grace. When necessary, the teacher gave explicit support for example, to a student taking part in a discussion, 'You have to tell him...' but never lost sight of students' right to their own thoughts and opinions. Mutual respect and teachers' determination that pupils will achieve their full potential, are major factors in pupils' excellent personal development.

Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their lives beyond school.

- 6. Most pupils leave school when they are 19, after some years in the Extended Education provision. The curriculum for students over 16 is excellent. They are prepared for their lives beyond school by being equipped with the skills and knowledge they need in order to further their education but also by learning to mix with others and to play as full a part as possible in society. This latter begins when they are much younger, as they learn to be aware of other children and to appreciate their needs. They are encouraged to play with others, to share and to wait their turn. Teachers identify what each pupil needs to learn in order to communicate effectively for example, to turn towards the person they are speaking to and they work with them to develop these skills. By praising good behaviour and developing programmes to modify challenging behaviour, teachers help pupils to behave appropriately in lessons, at playtimes, and when out of school. This means that they are able to take advantage of the excellent opportunities to extend the range of their experiences visits, sporting and cultural events, and links with schools and colleges. They develop self-confidence and an awareness of their own strengths and limitations.
- 7. The highly relevant and wide-ranging post-16 curriculum enables students to gradually arrive at realistic decisions about their future. This is achieved in very close collaboration with families, the specialist careers adviser, and the many further education and training providers with whom the school has such good relationships. In keeping with the school's policy of enabling them to make informed choices, students have opportunities to take part in a variety of college courses such as pottery, dance, agriculture and horticulture. Here, in addition to learning useful skills, more able students have chances to become increasingly independent for example, by managing their money at break and lunchtimes. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties become more accustomed to changes in their routine and to mixing with others.
- 8. The school is working hard to extend the opportunities for students to take part in work experience placements. The current arrangements are very flexible, depending on students' needs. For example, some work with members of the school staff such as the caretaker for a short period each day or for a block of time. More able students have external placements for example, with the RSPCA, in a shop, or at a newspaper. Some need to be supported throughout; others have the support gradually withdrawn, even to the extent of travelling independently to the workplace.
- 9. Much of the students' work is externally accredited, through awards schemes and unit accreditation. This means that they build up very impressive portfolios, which provide a clear picture of the breadth of students' achievements, and show their relevance to students' lives for example, courses in sport and leisure, road safety and preparing drinks and snacks. The students themselves feel that they are well prepared for leaving school. They look to the future with confidence and enthusiasm. One who left recently wrote in his Record of Achievement: 'I will be sad to leave school but I know I have to move on.'

The curriculum for physical education is excellent and makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

10. A visitor to the school is soon aware of many pupils' abiding passion for football. However, the range and quality of experiences in physical education is exceptional and has a significant impact on pupils' physical and personal development. As they progress through the school, they have opportunities to take part in activities such as trampolining, go-karting, athletics, basketball and horse riding and to gain awards in aspects such as games, swimming and gymnastics. Many of these activities involve the use of community resources, and thus help to develop pupils' ability to conduct themselves appropriately in different settings and to mix with people that they don't know well.

- 11. The football team is thriving, and has led directly to the establishment of a league of local schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Pupils and students train each week, coached extremely well by a support assistant. In addition to developing their physical skills, being a member of a team and attending training sessions have enormous effects on pupils' self-esteem, self-discipline and independence, as well as their ability to collaborate with others. Additionally, younger pupils have a recently formed cricket club, which has begun to play against other schools.
- 12. The school has an excellent swimming and hydrotherapy pool. An instructor works with younger pupils and those with profound and multiple or more complex learning difficulties. Often supported by physiotherapists, pupils are very well taught, working on exercises and programmes that improve their mobility and posture. In addition, their self-esteem grows, through the success and enjoyment the lessons engender. Older and more able pupils use public facilities and have competed against other special schools as part of a mainstream swimming gala. Because pupils develop so well physically, and acquire the necessary personal skills, many are able to extend themselves by taking part in outdoor and adventurous pursuits for example, as part of a residential visit to Snowdonia. During the inspection, pupils and students were preparing for this by practising 'power-walking'. They were looking forward to their visit with relish, confidently anticipating walking up hills and canoeing, and working and socialising with pupils from another school.

The provision for cultural development is rich and stimulating.

- 13. The school enthusiastically seeks out opportunities to extend pupils' cultural development. Dance and theatre groups visit including one that works in in the swimming pool and all pupils take part in a Christmas production of music and drama. Links with other schools are used to very good effect, to enable pupils not only to use music and dance facilities but also to work alongside mainstream pupils for example, in a dance and drama performance. As part of one of their college courses, students in Extended Education learn dance, culminating last year in the performance of a Backstreet Boys' number, at an open evening. Collaborating with others, to reach the standard necessary to perform in public, raises pupils' self-esteem and gives them confidence when dealing with others. Pupils regularly take part in educational visits for example, to a museum to give younger secondary aged pupils an appreciation of life in Tudor times. Additionally, cultural visits take place to see the musical 'Saturday Night Fever' and to the Millennium Dome, for instance. Dressing for the event, travelling on a train, buying refreshments all give pupils practice in behaving appropriately in public places and so support their personal development.
- 14. The school environment, both indoors and outside, is stimulating and helps to develop pupils' aesthetic awareness. Pupils' work is displayed to very good advantage, and labels include symbols, to increase their usefulness. For example, during the inspection, work 'in the style of' artists such as Matisse, Van Gogh and Monet, was featured in the hall. The grounds are extremely well designed, to provide experiences for all the senses. Wind-chimes and water features, scented plants, mosaics and painted tiles, and carved wooden sculptures are all around.
- 15. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented very effectively, and has helped to extend the range of literature studied by pupils. Teachers are very skilled at adapting

classic texts to meet the needs of the pupils - for example, younger secondary aged pupils have studied 'The Hobbit', 'Oliver Twist', and 'The Water Babies'. During the inspection, the older secondary aged pupils were working on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. The class is made up of pupils with a very wide range of abilities and the teacher provided very well chosen activities to meet their varied needs. After a lively start, involving some pupils dancing spontaneously with staff, in response to Elizabethan-style music, the next part of the action was revealed and then the class split into smaller groups. The most able pupils, for example, chose illustrations of characters and matched them to descriptions - 'Peaseblossom, a fairy, helps Titania'. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were helped to experience the preparation of a feast of honey and fruit, practising their skills of focusing on or tracking objects, and demonstrating responses to questions. All pupils made very good progress towards their individual literacy targets and many became increasingly appreciative of the play. The school has a very good range of resources, including 'big books', so teachers can choose literature that is appropriate in every way for the pupils – including for their ages. Younger pupils develop a love of books and stories, through, for example, 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea', and can build on this during visits to the attractive and well-stocked library.

16. Music is also a strength of the school. The music teacher is a music therapist, and some pupils are able to benefit from specialist therapy sessions. All pupils have high quality music teaching, which develops their knowledge and appreciation of music and their ability to sing and play instruments. Again, music lessons contribute strongly to pupils' personal development. The teacher places great emphasis on raising their self-esteem, through questions such as 'What were you good at?' Because they so much enjoy learning, pupils work hard and pay great attention to the contributions made by others – more able pupils concentrate attentively as they anticipate the responses of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school is still developing ways of using the information it collects about pupils' progress.

17. The school is developing its procedures for measuring how much progress pupils are making. Last year, targets for the whole school were set, related to those agreed at pupils' annual reviews and also to their movement through a nationally recognised assessment system. These involved aspects of literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Some interesting information was gathered as a result – for example, that pupils made generally better progress in literacy than in numeracy – and the school has begun to build up profiles of each pupil, showing the progress they are making. However, the school needs to refine the way it sets whole-school targets, and to investigate the most useful ways of analysing the information it collects – for example, in order to compare how well different groups are making progress and to modify the curriculum if necessary. Additionally, the school is working with other similar schools, and will wish to compare its own results with theirs, to make sure that it maintains its high standards.

There is no medical room or suitable space for physiotherapy.

18. At the time of the previous inspection, a key issue was the lack of a medical room. Since then, the school has unsuccessfully submitted an annual bid to the local education authority, for funds to extend the building in order to provide therapy and

medical facilities. The office shared by the nurse and physiotherapists is small, with no space either for mobility assessments or medical treatment. Pupils in wheelchairs cannot reach it. There is no couch or quiet area for pupils who are sick. Medication and medical resources are stored in a room used for changing pupils. Medical examinations take place in a room used for senior pupils' leisure pursuits, restricting their access. The school does its best to meet pupils' medical and therapy needs but the accommodation prevents it from being as successful as it would wish.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) a. Continue the work of developing more effective and efficient ways of getting information about pupils' progress. (Para. 17)
- b. Make maximum use of the information from assessments in order to check the rates of progress made by different groups of pupils. This will enable the school to share good practice amongst teachers, make any necessary adjustments to the curriculum, and direct resources to areas most in need of improvement. (Para. 17)
- (20 Work with the local education authority to provide suitable accommodation in which to meet pupils' medical and therapy needs. (Para. 18)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16	63	16	5	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	60
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	22

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	57
Any other minority ethnic group	

	Fixed period	Permane nt
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR - Y14

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	569

Financial information

Financial year	1999- 2000

	£
Total income	785016
Total expenditure	784362
Expenditure per pupil	12859
Balance brought forward from previous year	100169
Balance carried forward to next year	100823

A large proportion of this balance relates to costs arising from the new swimming pool.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	60
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongl y agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagre e	Strongl y disagre e	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	12	0	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	78	17	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	29	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	32	3	3	24
The teaching is good.	83	17	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	81	14	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	86	12	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	93	7	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	35	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	18	2	0	13