



# Larkrise School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 126553  
**Local Authority** Wiltshire  
**Inspection number** 293585  
**Inspection date** 6 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Sarah Mascall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Ashton Street
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Trowbridge
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-19		BA14 7EB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 761434
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	77	<b>Fax number</b>	01225 774585
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Robert Ham
		<b>Headteacher</b>	C Goodwin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a small special school that educates pupils with severe and complex needs. A number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and their attainment on starting school is exceptionally low compared to national expectations. There are a very small number of pupils of reception age who are taught with pupils in Years 1 and 2. There are also a small number of pupils in Years 12 and 13 who are taught with a few pupils from Year 11. Pupils travel in from a wide area and their socio-economic backgrounds are very mixed. The vast majority are from White British backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Larkrise is a satisfactory school which has a number of strengths. The new leadership team are committed to bringing about improvements and a good start has been made. A number of new procedures are beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning and, although standards are exceptionally low because of pupils' special needs, their achievement is satisfactory. Whilst progress for the majority of pupils in the Foundation Stage and Years 1–6 is good, it is satisfactory for those with more complex needs and for pupils in Years 7–13. Post-16 pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress because the curriculum is not sufficiently broad to enable pupils to undertake a wider range of accreditation. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' special needs. However, teaching does not always ensure that the wide range of pupils' needs in each class is met and that all pupils are sufficiently challenged by the tasks set. The school is greatly hampered by its lack of space internally and externally and this has an impact on the curriculum. Whilst this is satisfactory, despite its best efforts, the school cannot provide enough coverage of all practical subjects, particularly science and design and technology. In physical education (PE) very good use is made of the facilities within the community and other schools and colleges. These initiatives have enabled pupils to make excellent progress in PE. However, other subjects have not followed this example in order to overcome the inadequacies in the accommodation.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good and high priority is given to pupils' care and welfare. This is a real strength and enables pupils to make good progress in their personal development. Parents consider their children are very well cared for and comment on the 'happy buzz' about the school. Pupils clearly like school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent and pupils say they feel safe. The school has put in place new procedures for assessing the academic progress pupils make but as yet these are at a very early stage of development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been very effective in appointing well-qualified staff and ensuring that she is well supported by a newly established senior leadership team. There is a real sense of teamwork amongst staff and senior leaders are committed to ensuring that all staff are fully involved in the changes being made. Although self-evaluation is accurate, in some respects the school has been over-generous in its assessment of its overall effectiveness. This is partly because it is not yet making effective use of the information it has on pupils' achievements. There has been some consideration of the progress of groups of pupils but this is not yet being used effectively to drive improvements. The admissions policy is not proving effective as the school is taking far more pupils than it should for the space it has available.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of information concerning pupils' achievement to identify and address where pupils are not making enough progress.

- Improve teachers' planning to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Make better use of local community facilities and college placements to support the curriculum.
- Review and amend the admissions policy to clarify the number of pupils the school should cater for within the limitations of its accommodation.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Understandably, considering pupils' special needs, standards are exceptionally low. Pupils' achievements, though, are satisfactory and for the majority of pupils in the Foundation Stage and Years 1–6 they are good. For pupils with more complex needs and older pupils, including those in post-16, achievement is satisfactory. There are a number of factors responsible for this. The setting of targets for pupils and assessment procedures have not been effective in all areas of the school. A major factor, particularly for older pupils, is the limitations in the accommodation that prevent pupils from being able to develop their skills in practical subjects. This is evident, for example, in science where there are very limited opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. Pupils make excellent progress in physical education, particularly in swimming. Great importance is placed on pupils' personal development through their lessons in personal, social and health education and they make good progress in this subject. The newly established class for pupils with autism is already having a positive impact on their learning and enabling them to make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils comment on how much they like school and this is very evident from their cheerfulness when they arrive in the mornings. They are enthusiastic about the work they do and can list lots of subjects that they like. They show care and concern for each other and assemblies reflect the pleasure they get from celebrating each other's achievements. Pupils are very conscious of which foods are good for them and point out that they have brought in low-fat crisps. Their enthusiasm for staying healthy extends to their interest in sport and their involvement in the many sporting activities after school. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. The school council is very proud of its role and feels it has an important part to play in making changes within the school. Pupils are involved in fund raising, not only for others but also for themselves, such as for a trip to the theatre.

Through experiences such as selling the vegetables they grow they develop an effective understanding of the world of business. This together with the satisfactory development of literacy and numeracy skills ensures that pupils are prepared appropriately to meet many of the challenges that they will encounter as they grow older. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are real strengths in pupils'

moral and social awareness, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

A strength of teaching is the way in which staff are ready to develop skills and ensure that their knowledge and understanding of pupils' special needs are of a high standard. Because of this, teachers have built up good expertise which they share well with other colleagues to create strong teams. For example, highly qualified staff working with autistic pupils are ensuring that high priority is given to the use of communication aids such as symbols. There is very good teamwork amongst staff, and teaching assistants carry out their roles effectively and work well with individual pupils. Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is good and this is particularly evident in PE, where very good teaching enables pupils to develop an excellent range of skills. A recently improved planning process means that a more consistent approach to meeting the needs of pupils is being developed. This is fairly new and not all teachers have adapted it sufficiently well to ensure that tasks set are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Staff make very good use of information and communication technology to support learning throughout the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is planned effectively to enable pupils to study all the subjects they should. Whilst pupils gain accreditation in ASDAN the school is looking to develop more opportunities to have pupils' achievements recognised through a wider range of accreditation. However, there is very little space in the school for specialist teaching rooms which means that it cannot provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in most practical subjects. In PE, the creative use of off-site facilities shows what can be done but this example has not yet been followed in other subjects. The school is constantly looking at ways to adapt the rooms it has, using every available bit of space. For example, when a group goes to college each week, their room is used for practical activities by other classes. The school is aware that this is unsatisfactory but it has nowhere to expand within the existing site, and outside play areas are already very limited. Communication with parents about the work their children do is generally good through the use of the home-school books but there are inconsistencies in the use of these and the quality of information varies. The school ensures that there is a very good range of trips and clubs that extend pupils' experiences. These are much valued by the pupils and contribute to their enjoyment of school.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

There are excellent procedures in place to ensure that pupils' welfare and safety are well provided for. Health and safety and risk assessments are of very good quality and effective systems for the vetting of staff are in place. The school has excellent working partnerships with a range of outside agencies which support pupils' needs extremely well. A particular strength is the very close working relationship with speech and language therapists which has enabled staff and pupils to improve their communication skills. Parents are full of praise for the support they get and one parent wrote that staff 'have continually supported me and my daughter'. Many feel that their children have gained considerably in terms of their confidence and self-esteem through the very good support provided by staff.

Procedures to check how well pupils are making academic progress are satisfactory. The school is aware that assessments have varied in their accuracy and has put in place a new system to ensure better consistency. The school is also looking at ways to involve pupils more in their learning and to have more say in the targets they are set or, for example, the courses they would like to follow post-16.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher, together with her new senior leadership team, has recognised areas for improvement and is already bringing about changes to the way teachers plan their lessons and monitor pupils' progress. Senior staff have started to make use of the data on pupils' achievements, through actions such as establishing ability groups in literacy and numeracy for Years 7–11. There is not yet, though, sufficient analysis of the progress of all the different groups within the school. The process of gaining this information is not robust enough to ensure that strengths and weaknesses are identified and incorporated into school development planning to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Because of this, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is not accurate.

There is a good sense of teamwork within the school and all staff are involved in making decisions. This is evident in the establishment of working parties to review subject policies. Much has been achieved in a short period of time and there is a clear commitment to improve the school. As a result, the school has the capacity to improve. Governors are supportive of the school and have been very active in looking for ways to reduce the impact of the longstanding problems related to the accommodation. They are also aware that the admissions policy needs reviewing so that they can ensure that the present overcrowding in the school can be resolved.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for all your help when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school.

We feel your school gives you a satisfactory education. Teaching is satisfactory and because of this you make satisfactory progress in your learning. These are the things we particularly liked:

- You told us how much you liked school and we think it is very good at making sure you are kept safe and are well cared for.
- You make good progress in your personal development and have very good social skills.
- You make excellent progress in your learning in PE.
- You also make good progress in personal, social and health education lessons.
- The headteacher and her senior teachers have made a good start in helping your teachers make sure you learn as much as possible.
- Your teachers have a good understanding of your special needs and know lots about the subjects they teach.

These are the things we have asked your school to do to make sure you all do as well as you can:

- Improve the way progress is checked for each of you, so that more help can be given when you are not doing as well as you might.
- Make teachers' planning better so that the work is hard enough for everyone.
- Make better use of the local community and colleges to help you learn.
- Look at whether there are too many pupils for the size of the school.

We hope you continue to make sure your lunch boxes contain lots of healthy foods.