



Larwood Academy Trust

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Deputy Headteacher: Mr Pierre Van Der Merwe | BA, NPQH |

Brandles School

Headteacher: Mr David Pearce | BA (hons), PGCE, NPQH |

What We Know About Ourselves-Larwood School Self Evaluation Series 2020-21

Larwood School Context and Generic Profile-Please see separate document.

NB-This year we have introduced the use of **KISS** to assist our self-evaluation review process:

K-Keep it

I-Improve (by doing what and what would be the expected outcome)

Start-a different way of working or project to assist this area, outlining the reasons and outcomes

Stop it! With reasons for this.

Autism Provision at Larwood School

What has been working well and therefore we will Keep!

- A relentless drive for consistency across the school in terms of all practice benefits the needs of our ASC pupils: *The quality of practice in supporting autistic pupils is of a consistent high standard throughout the school. Autism Accreditation Report 21*
- Personal centered planning: We have a highly individualised and holistic approach to supporting all pupils within our setting. Pupils respond well to the structure, routine and consistent approach used by all staff. Students also benefit from a reward system that is easy to understand and achievable. For example, every lessons/session starts fresh with new points to be earned. Pupils know that points = prizes and look forward to the autonomy of choosing from a range of reward activities on a Friday afternoon. Lessons are also highly differentiated with at least 3 levels of differentiation and children can often choose their own level of difficulty, meaning they can challenge themselves where appropriate and have more support on other occasions. Our ASC pupils benefit from individualised approaches in terms of lessons as well as

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interventions that they may need. **IMPACT-Larwood** uses a wide range of programmes and activities which are fully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils, although many of these are timetabled this is adapted to need and pupils are able to access these programmes and activities when require during the school day. Space Hub is an excellent addition to Larwood School which provides pupils with the opportunity to have a more of a nurturing programme with smaller numbers and a more individualised approach to their education. (Please see Space Hub report).

- **Differences in social communication:** Our sensory profiles include a section on communication and clearly show the ways in which a pupil communicates and the challenges that they can face. It also shares ways in which the staff should communicate with the pupil when they are calm and when they are starting to show signs of anxiety. Behaviour support plans include communication in the baseline and a pupils normal daily functioning. In addition, it identifies the ways in which staff should interact with the pupils during this time. This is continued through other stages within the behaviour support plan. All staff, when meeting with an NAS accreditor shared the importance of getting communication right for every pupil and that the skills and strategies are personalised to meet their needs. Staff across the school were able to share specific examples of how they adapt communication and interactions to meet the needs of pupils so that they are able to be successful and achieve.

Animal Assisted Therapy enables pupils to develop skills of communication and emotional regulation, giving pupils the vehicle with which to share their fears. It is also through learning the skills of dog training and recognising changes within the dog, they are supported to recognise the changes within themselves.

A kindness award has been developed in Key stage 1, it encourages pupils to recognise and nominate kindness in their peers. These are recognised and rewarded by staff and prizes are awarded termly. This has now been shared across the wider school and is now consistently used the whole school. **IMPACT-Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:** Staff were consistently seen to adapt their language for the children they were communicating with, language was seen to be simplified and structured to meet the needs of the pupils. Within one observation it was seen how effective communication was able to support a pupil who had frozen during a PE session. The staff member used direct and appropriate communication which gave the pupil the confidence to complete the activity and feel a huge sense of confidence. Autistic pupils were seen to make themselves understood and had the confidence to express their opinions during a lesson. During sessions pupils were also

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seen to be able to ask for help when participating in independent study. This confidence was seen not only when working with teachers but also teaching assistants. Staff were seen to consistently work seamlessly with each other in the classroom. Pupils were seen to be given the opportunity to communicate as part of the peer group in addition to staff. During one observation pupils were seen to have to problem solve together and make a joint decision regarding what they were doing. This could potentially have been very difficult but guided by the staff team they had a successful discussion and were able to make a cohesive decision about how they were going to move forward in the activity. Autism Accreditation Report 21

- **Problem solving and self-reliance:** Pupil's personal profiles include a section on self-help which shares skills of independence which pupils have. It identifies how best to support pupils to be independent in being able to carry out activities. Plans identify how the strategies identified in support plans will be utilised to support pupils in becoming more self-reliant and autonomous in their lives. Pupils participate in weekly skills sessions with their peers from different classes across the school. We offer a life skills level 1 and level 2 course where pupils learn basic skills of independence which culminate in them planning and executing a meal with their peers in The Town Centre. When meeting with NAS accreditator all staff were able to identify the need for structure and routine and spoke about the different strategies which have been put in place to support pupils. Staff also spoke clearly about the adaptability of these strategies and the need for these to be portable so that pupils are able to utilise the strategies with which they are familiar outside of the school environment.

IMPACT-*Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities: During observations timetables were seen consistently in all classrooms, indicators were placed so that pupils knew where they were in any day. These were seen to be adapted to suit the abilities of pupils as you go through the school. In addition, this was consistently seen to be adapted to meet the needs of individual children within a class across the school. Autistic pupils were seen to be supported to do things to by themselves. Excellent use was made of additional visuals and resources across the school. Staff are not afraid to make use of a pupils table to provide any additional resources which were needed and could be written on tables to aid pupils to be successful in their activities. Staff were consistently seen to hold back on the support that they provided for pupils, enabling pupils to attempt to problem solve during their activities before providing support. Pupils are regularly given the opportunity to express opinions and showed confidence in being able to do so. Interventions are*

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available to help pupils develop some of their independence skills. During one specific observation a pupil was able to confidently make his own cup of tea and share with a peer how to do this. During another observation a pupil confidently was able to share with his peers how to carry out the activity which they were completing and his peers were then able to effectively carry out the activity for themselves independently. Autism Accreditation Report 21

- **Sensory Experiences:** The environment is safe, provides calm sensory stimulus and with the addition of safe spaces that pupils can identify and fobbed doors at key points. The outdoor area is a good mix of wide spaces for sport, climbing frames, slides and children can also use scooters and bikes at play time. On top of this we have a sensory room which is accessed by many pupils. We have recently purchased a bright and engaging sensory path which children have enjoyed using. Pupil's plans identify the sensory needs of pupils, it shows the difficulties that pupils experience and the strategies which are in place to support pupils when they are beginning to show signs of distress. Although some plans identify sensory activities which pupils find positive and that they enjoy this is not consistent across all plans which were seen. During interviews staff were able to identify the ways in which they supported the sensory needs of pupils with many examples shared of ways in which they supported specific pupils. Sensory boxes are available in each classroom adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. We have a range of tools available to them to meet the sensory needs of pupils. Brain gym activities are available both inside and outside and these encourage a wide range of movement types to meet pupils needs. LASAs talked clearly to the NAS accreditor about the adaptations that are made to whole school events which can enable pupil to be successful in activities and offered the same opportunities as all their peers. One example shared how pupils who had a special interest and love of singing were enabled to participate in the Christmas show with no pressure to perform, but encouragement to succeed in a way that was comfortable for them. Sensory boxes are available in each of the classrooms, these come with a basic selection of items which are built upon by the class teams to meet the needs and interests of the pupils within their class. **IMPACT-Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:** *Autistic pupils were seen to consistently access sensory experiences which they enjoyed, this looked different in each classroom where observations were carried out. Pupils were seen to experience a range of sensory experiences as discrete lessons or as part of other opportunities across the school. During one lesson pupils were encouraged to tolerate a range of*

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sensory experiences as part of a PE session providing them with the knowledge and understanding that they could get clean and dry after their lesson. Pupils are exposed to a range of sensory experiences and interventions; sensory support and understanding is embedded throughout the school. Staff take the time to help pupils to identify their own sensory needs and activities which could help them to tolerate sensory experiences. During one observation a child was able to express their need for a sensory break, during another where children did not have the skills, the teacher supported the pupil to identify the need for a movement break. Autism Accreditation Report 21

- Emotional well being Pupil's support plans show specific interests that pupils have, it also includes what pupils like in relation to play, activities which they enjoy but also those which they find challenging. This information is also included within behaviour support plans, these however also include when a pupil is most happy and what motivates them. Key factors that support our high levels of provision for well being include:
 - Behaviour support plans that identify approaches and activities to help maintain well-being of pupils including proactive and preventative strategies to avoid anxiety and distress and support emotional regulation. Staff all know the importance of reflection and communication for ensuring the sharing of good practice. This was of greater importance during lockdown when support staff supported unfamiliar pupils online. Due to the effective sharing of practice pupils remained confident in the support that was given and trusted that staff would understand and meet their needs even though staff were unfamiliar. A significant importance is placed on a child's emotional well-being and supporting pupils in ensuring that they are supported effectively.
 - Larwood have a contract with the Butterfly Room, therapists there provide mental health support and therapy for pupils. It enables Larwood to have access to a wide range of therapies that will be matched to meet the needs of pupils. The Butterfly Room work in collaboration with the school, families and pupils to provide appropriate support which supports their needs.
 - Hertfordshire Steps is used for physical intervention and de-escalation, and there are two Behaviour Support Assistants across the school who are available to support staff were required and provide de-escalation strategies. Behaviour support assistants will spend time in classes at the start of the school year getting to know new pupils and assessing their abilities and need

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for interventions. These will be used to edit behaviour support plans. Senior leadership team, family support and mental health worker and lead BSA will meet once a week to discuss high profile children within the school who are needed a significant amount of support or causing concern. (please see safeguarding report) Information will be taken by all relevant staff members, strategies and support are discussed and fed back to class teams through the behaviour support lead.

- New pupils will remain on the high profile list for the first 4-6 weeks until they have settled into the school. Debrief and reflections plays a key role in understanding pupils and ensuring that the strategies which are put in place are right for the child.
 - Sian Ford is our mental health lead, she is also part of the safeguarding team and has been integral in ensuring that pupil receive the support which is necessary accessing external professionals who can provide effective support. Where required crisis management plans are required these are shared with parents so that they have a clear expectation of what they need to do when their child goes into crisis at home. Sian Ford has also provided a range of training for the staff teams, empowering them to effectively support the pupils in their class.
 - Larwood has a comprehensive reward system where pupils earn points based on expectations in the classroom. The expectations of pupils are made clear and are displayed visually in all classrooms. Pupils are able to feel a sense of achievement and are encouraged to maintain expectations in order to achieve rewards. Although this is the main system of reward used within the school, this is adapted to meet pupils individual needs where this system is not appropriate or achieve the positive outcome for pupils. Buddy the school dog is a significant asset to the school and the emotional well-being of the pupils. The dog is often used as an intervention for pupils, used for de-escalation or as a therapy dog during the week when the animal assistance dog is not available.
- IMPACT**-Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:
Larwood School had a very calm feeling across the whole school. Children were seen to be engaged in lessons, where pupils were identified as starting to struggle interventions were swiftly implemented to support pupils with their regulation and/or de-escalation. There are a range of proactive strategies which are put in place for pupils across their school day as interventions,

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these are timetabled for the pupil at the optimum time during the day and are the proactive approach in addition to strategies which implemented in the classroom as part of regular practice throughout the day. Pupils were seen to have tools readily available for them to help regulate their emotions, these are in addition to the explicit lessons which were seen to be taught as part of the PSHE curriculum where these emotions can be further discussed. It was observed on regular occasions throughout the observation day where staff would give pupils respect in being able to make decisions and providing them with positive and meaningful feedback which helps to boost the confidence and self-esteem of the pupils. One occasion where this was seen was where a staff member took time out to discuss specific worries that a pupil was expressing, taking it at his pace and establishing the reason for his worry as well as assuring him that a solution would be found. Pupils were consistently seen to be engaged in activities throughout the school day, staff had given consideration for the abilities of the pupils. Pupils were encouraged to push their boundaries in learning through being set three levels of differentiation Page 11 within a lesson. Pupils were able to choose which level they participated in an activity and were consistently seen to stretch themselves by completing higher level activities. Pupils could consistently share what was expected of them and what they needed to do to achieve each level of the differentiation. Pupils shared the reward system that is in place and were excited to share what they had achieved and what they needed to do to achieve the next level. There are many different ways in which rewards can be earned within the school and in some instances, these are even further adapted for specific classes or specific individuals. Autism Accreditation Report 21

- **Pupil voice:** Pupil voice is gathered in a range of ways, including videos in space hub and the wider school, student surveys, student council meetings and Larwood mentoring. *The pupil voice is integral to everything that is carried out at Larwood. IMPACT-The school council has regular meetings and determine changes which occur throughout the school. The staff shared how decisions regarding Friday activities, Thursday skills lessons and changes within the school have all been part of school council decisions. Time is spent talking to pupils when they first start at school getting to know them, developing trust and relationships. Crisis management plans include the pupil's voice, sharing how they feel when they are in crisis and how they*

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wish to be supported or what they find difficult at this time Autism Accreditation report 21

- **Supporting Parents:** Parents at our school are well supported by the family support worker, SLT and the class teams. This includes offering advice about strategies that work at school that they can try at home as well as the general improvement in behaviours and self-regulation that begin to develop in our pupils. **IMPACT-The provision for mental health for families is exceptional. They provide families with security and understanding in addition to access to professionals, which may have previously proved difficult. Autism Accreditation Report 21**
- **Wider community –IMPACT-Larwood School have developed a substantial relationship with the local community. Pupils will participate in a range of activities to support the community from singing Christmas carols at an event for a local old people's home to collecting food for during families during COVID. Pupils at Larwood link with a local special school for SLD/PMLD pupils. They go into school and participate in shared activities where Larwood pupils support their peers in completing activities. Larwood are heavily involved in outreach within their DSPL area, however in addition to carrying out outreach within mainstream, they invite SENCOs and teachers in to observe practice within the school. There are plans for SENCOs in local schools to attend a professionals "speed dating" event where they get the opportunity to meet professionals outside of education, learn what they are able to offer and access their facilities. Autism Accreditation Report 21**
In addition, pupils are often praised for their work in the community for litter picking, excellent manners when out on school trips.
- Training and professional development staff receive in these approaches and in their understanding of autism There is a comprehensive programme of training available to all staff within the school. Induction training starts before a person starts at the school. This ensures that when a person enters into the school they have the basic understanding. This is developed further as staff spend time in each class across the school getting to know the pupils. This is further secured when staff work within their specific class teams, spending time getting to know each of the pupils within their class through reading paperwork and getting to know pupils. There are two dedicated sessions per half term that have an autism theme. This can be internal or external training. There are a number of staff members that have been working on Masters qualifications, they regularly feedback to staff teams on current research and facilitate reflection of practice across the school. Larwood school ensures that there is a mixture

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of both internal and external speakers during training with at least 1 session per term being delivered by an external speaker

What didn't go according to plan with reference to Improve/Start/Stop

- Being able to support Brandles with their autism practice and working towards becoming accredited themselves. A range of factors contributed towards this: difficulty in identifying the best person to lead, covid disruptions in the spring term and then preparing to change roles post summer.
- Now that Larwood has achieved a recognised standard of excellence in Autism Practice we need to begin a research project – the identified project is: Long Term Effects of Covid on Autistic Pupils.

Next Steps for 2021-22.

| Description | Desired impact | Indicators for success | Any cost? |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------|
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------|

| | | | |
|------------------|--|--|-----|
| Research project | Share findings on the impact of covid on ASC pupils – this can be shared with other professionals in supporting ASC children and their families. | Successful completion of the 1 st research project and findings being worth sharing with professionals outside of the trust | nil |
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