

Larwood School

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What we know about ourselves - Leadership and Management

This document needs to be read/ used alongside:

- The school development plan (2012-15) and its review
 - The current (new-2015-18) development plan
 - Progress reports reflecting on pupil progress and attainment
 - Other self review documents
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- Leadership and management is now outstanding. The current and old development plans have enabled the school and its community to strive for excellence in the field of education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. The core foci of progress, well being and sustainability remain as key drivers.
 - The current leadership team (Headteacher newly appointed in September 2012, two experienced Deputy Heads and Head of Care) have established a rigorous and effective program to drive through improvements with pupils. Comprehensive evaluation now underpins all work
 - The governing body are very experienced and support and challenge the work of the school via meetings, visits, and governing body days. They have a strategic plan to support this work. Visits take place announced and unannounced and are with the day and residential school.
 - Monitoring is effective and informs practice. A differentiated approach is used based on performance and supports the performance management systems established in 2012.
 - Performance management makes clear reference to the schools key drivers. All staff who can make a direct impact upon progress and wellbeing have targets relating t these areas.
 - The governing body have outstanding knowledge in terms of a best value approach to use of the schools budget and this ensures that planning is meticulous, checked and evaluated over time.
 - The governing body also support the leadership team in establishing clear succession plans to ensure that a continuation of good quality provision is maintained. There is a succession plan in place which has been approved by the governing body and covers all roles within the school, including the governing body.



- Our ethos of achieve, believe, expect and enjoy is well established and permeates our everyday practice. Excellent staff/pupil relationships are a cornerstone of our work that helps to make our school experience a success for our pupils and their families.
- Once settled pupils make good and quite often rapid progress. The vast majority of our pupils have experienced exclusion, long periods of absence, when present long periods of isolation and frustration. Self esteem and confidence are typically rock bottom when they arrive with us and we need to repair and rebuild. A reward and encouragement philosophy embeds the day to day management of pupils with clear boundaries and consequences when inappropriate choices are made. Moderation has involved other special schools, mainstream schools and all other mainstream schools in Stevenage. Reference is made to progression guidance in reviews and all pupils are set challenging targets based on their baseline testing and time that we have to work with them
- We recognise that we want to become even better and more skilled at working with autistic pupils. Therefore, specific local authority training has been sources and delivered, alongside the appointment of a member of staff to lead further review and apply for the Autism accreditation mark.
- Curriculum review and implementation has been successful, with the new curriculum in place and ongoing advancements being secured in relation to assessment. The use of the 'Assertive Mentoring' scheme has enabled teacher assessments to be at their most accurate, which in turn has led to carefully directed improvements in the use of interventions
- Excellent well being for pupils, in the form of behaviour management, carefully arranged setting conditions, use of knowledge and training relating to SEBD/ASD/ADHD etc as well as good levels of exercise, and healthy snack/food all in place. This is supported by curriculum enhancement using food technology, PSHE and other areas (Science/PE etc).
- A carefully planned program of transition is in place for Year 6 pupils and those who may move back to mainstream. This has been complemented by parents and our local SEN team. A designated member of staff is now making excellent progress in this area.
- Our curriculum is heavily bias to literacy and numeracy, with mornings being devoted to these areas. Other subjects are taught in thematic way and combined where possible.
- The environment has constantly been reviewed and improved to enhance the experience for pupils. Therefore, the main hall has been revamped and modernised, the outside areas have been improved with fencing and extra facilities, and the boarding area is the first area to receive double glazed windows.

School Progression and development.

The old school development plan had been evaluated and used to inform our new plan which runs from 2015-18. Our key drivers remain the same:

PROGRESS

WELL BEING AND

SUSTAINABILITY



As new assessment procedures have changed we now have our own definition of what we believe our school is as an outstanding school. This has been shared with staff and the governing body and is available to all via our school website. It reads as follows:

For the vast majority of the time, our pupils experience good/outstanding teaching and assessment procedures. Considering their background (2/3 other schools/numerous exclusions/family related issues) pupils behave well and respect the school community. They know what they have to do to improve and with help, they can do it! Staff don't go the extra mile, they go the extra two or three or 'whatever it takes' miles to promote learning and good behaviour. Where issues arise, all avenues are explored to enable change and progress. A professional and reflective undercurrent is always present to enhance, improve and to make the school experience for all involved better. Larwood School consistently engage those where others have failed and they give hope, confidence and aspiration for pupils to succeed in the complex world that they enter beyond primary school.

Our monitoring and evaluation processes are far more comprehensive than previously and have been expanded to ensure that all areas are covered to enable best practice and critical reflection to be part of the lifeblood of the school. This includes:

- Weekly meetings reviewing well being for pupils and how (where needed) we make the next day or week better for that pupil
- Weekly SLT strategic meetings
- Daily operational meetings including weekly staff briefing and daily electronic briefing
- Half-termly teaching and learning reviews
- Weekly CPD opportunities via twilight programs, external courses run by Hertfordshire and others. We also have four staff who are now partaking in Masters Degree modules and one completing teacher training.
- Governor training days and evaluations
- Rigorous performance management system with whole school targets that are class based accountable
- Moderation processes that audit work internally and is cross checked externally at different times
- A continuing drive to compare and contrast our performance, with others using a variety of sources of information. However, this remains difficult to achieve!

The Governing Body

During the last 18 months the governing body have adapted to the needs of the school community, local and national directives and agendas. They are a highly efficient and ambitious group, with quality experience of the issues that face schools, parents and pupils within SEN. Some of the more recent alterations made have included the following:

- A review of its own organisation and composition, with clear discussion and action relating to who does what, how it is shared with others and what actions should then follow
- A variety of training opportunities have been organised which are relevant. For example, training for a number of governors and staff took place reviewing the



exclusion process and the role of the disciplinary committee members. Other training has been sourced by the Headteacher for all of the governing body on safeguarding as the local authority could not keep up with demand for those governors working within Hertfordshire.

- Specific information relating to planned interventions. For example, our psychiatric nurse will take a governing training session in 2015-16.
- Links have been established with class teachers but the body itself reviewed this and noted that they need to be stronger during 2015-16.
- Weekly meetings when needed between the Chair and the Headteacher
- A driven approach to become a foundation School in 2015 and an academy in 2016
- Excellent work in the area of support for the school budget and finance.

Staffing and curriculum

This area continues to be a huge challenge! Due to the perceived ramping of pressure on staff from a range of external sources, it has been very difficult to recruit and retain high quality staff with a passionate drive to work with pupils in the SEMH sector. The Headteacher has sourced and secured a full staff with low turnover on 2015. Any turnover is usually associated with family circumstances (relocation) or promotion. It has become essential to try and arrange for our staff to have the best possible well being available due to the day to day issues that they may experience. This is complimented by quality training to support their development.

In 2012, there was a turnover of just over 50% of the staff. During the next three years, a number of staff have left and new staff have been introduced in new roles.

This has included:

- ❖ Additional learning and support staff to help with increased numbers
- ❖ Specific staff to assist with behaviour management and ensure the safety of all
- ❖ A continuation of specific physical education specialist provision
- ❖ The introduction of a music intervention teacher
- ❖ A new transition worker, helping with the return to mainstream for some and the start of their new placement at Larwood. Also with Year 6 transition
- ❖ The reduction of staffing in the residential unit to replicate the reduced number of pupils
- ❖ The introduction of extra capacity within the staffing to cope with teacher/learning support illness. When not needed, they are deployed to close gaps with individuals or small groups.
- ❖ The governing body group has reduced and we still pursue the aim of engaging parents to support and maintain the challenge that this group provides.
- ❖ A carefully planned reward system for staff that supplements performance management processes. For example, Perkbox, 'buy your own tech' and attendance reward scheme for staff.

In 2015, there was a turnover of 4% of staff.

The curriculum has been reviewed in line with DFE and governmental recommendations and timescales. This has also led to a review of our assessment procedures and our timetable. All of which were implemented from Sept 2014 onwards with a newly adjusted timetable in place for Sept 2015.



We continue to maintain our drive for better literacy and numeracy for all pupils. Our assessment procedures allow us to see where pupils are and intervene where needed to maintain or improve this drive. Our 2014-15 review lead us to note that we still wanted more time devoted to reading and therefore the timetable was adjusted. A reduction in the number of assemblies (M/W/Fr rather than every day) also released further time for reading and additional class based PSHE type activities.

There continues to be great emphasis placed upon reflection and taking responsibility for your own actions. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged by the range of eating options available, Physical Education lessons and interventions, aspects of PSHE devoted to the subject alongside the skills curriculum and reward activities. Carefully monitored medical procedures support those that need school based medication and have been reviewed internally, by a Doctor and Ofsted. All pupils are offered fruit during morning break and at lunchtime.

ALL PUPILS ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A HOT MEAL WHETHER THEY QUALIFY FOR A FREE SCHOOL MEAL OR NOT!

Creativity remains high on our agenda with weekly singing assemblies, a specialist Music Intervention teacher, lesson time and playtime opportunities, skills curriculum events and courses, as well as the Arts Award program for Year 6 pupils. Pupils are constantly asked to reflect and consider new ways of working, whether that may be using an ipad or increasing their personal capacity to write paragraphs. We strongly believe that it is matter of time before, 'the pen is no longer mightier than the sword and no more so than the keyboard!'

A school play, gym and dance event and a revised sports day also enhance the creative and healthy curriculum.

