

Laleham Gap School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Patrick Gough
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Address	Laleham Gap School Northdown Park Road Margate Kent CT9 2TP
Telephone number	01843 221946
Email	
Registered person	Keith Mileham
Head of care	Mr Keith Mileham
Head / Principal	Ms Helen Rogers
Date of last inspection	13 November 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The Laleham school and Gap House School amalgamated in April 2005 and the provision is now known as Laleham Gap Residential Special School. The schools are on different sites. Gap school ceased to have residential status at the beginning of the 2006/07 school year and the Laleham site now provides care and education for pupils who have high functioning autism and/or speech and language difficulties for an age range spanning 10-16 years. The school does not normally admit children or young people who, for emotional or behavioural reasons, may inhibit the care, education and management of the majority of pupils. At present, there are 24 pupils boarding, two girls and 22 boys, accommodated on four Wings, Northdown, Dixon, Viking and Gap. The schools, separated by a distance of five miles, are both well positioned to provide the pupils with the necessary opportunities and experiences to support their education and social development. Both schools are located in residential areas, close to local amenities and within easy reach of the seaside.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection. The visit was conducted to assess the school's commitment to providing good outcomes for children in relation to the national minimum standards and best practice. The actions recommended at the previous inspection were addressed satisfactorily. The school continues to provide excellent care for the pupils and has further developed the approach to life skills learning. 'Healthy schools' status has been achieved through positive reinforcement of 'being healthy' principles. There is good health care planning and the pupils are provided with healthy eating options as well as a variety of exercise opportunities. Pupils are safeguarded through a range of child protection and safety measures. There are comprehensive procedures to inform and guide the staff and these are followed and implemented by a knowledgeable and committed team. Each activity is risk assessed so as to ensure pupils can safely engage in meaningful programmes and participate in life learning experiences. The application of a positive behaviour programme, based on intensive support to the most vulnerable and improving individuals' self esteem, is a major contribution to the school's success. There is good inter-disciplinary co-operation, within the school, engaging staff fully in the planning, implementation and review of the various programmes in place for each individual. The four residential wing staff teams work well together, support each other and achieve a consistency of approach to learning, whilst maintaining the special identity of each wing. The care staff team have a good understanding of pupils' needs, a good awareness of their targets and work co-operatively with education staff, other colleagues and parents to support pupils to achieve. The staff and the pupils have excellent relationships, which play an important part in the young people's social learning process. The pupils are consulted on matters relating to their wellbeing and interests and encouraged to play a prominent part in school life. There is good communication between the school and the pupil's home, with parents being fully involved in their child's learning and development. The school is well managed and senior staff give effective leadership. It is a happy school reflected in how the pupils perform and respond and the way the staff carry out their duties.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The three recommended actions from the previous visit have been satisfactorily addressed. There is a more focussed approach to the delivery of the life skills programme. This involves consultation with the pupils, practical experience in the community and within the wing with shopping and meal preparation, and a resolve to prepare young people for varying degrees of independent living. Bathroom facilities have been improved in Dixon wing with the reconstruction of the shower room. There are, now, three private showers and a private bathroom. The recruitment process is fully adhered to and all the personnel files hold information consistent with requirements. The learning support unit has been further developed to provide specific support for pupils who display challenging behaviour. Pupils' behaviour, through the records of incidents, is analysed frequently to identify trends and patterns so as to further develop and improve the approach. There has been a marked improvement in the way daily practice and pupils' performance is recorded. The content of the daily records are consistent across the wings and is relevant and aligned to the set targets in the care plans.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school supports the pupils with their physical and emotional development. Health plans are produced for each pupil and these are monitored regularly by the key worker and the school nurse. Various policies and guidance documents on health related matters, inform the staff on best practice. The school nurse coordinates the medical and health provision effectively through a thorough regular monitoring process involving key staff and parents. All medical information is securely filed and the prescribed and non prescribed medication is appropriately stored and audited. Medication administration training is provided for selected staff and their competency is regulated by the school nurse. The nurse maintains good communication with parents on their child's health development, particularly following medical appointments or treatment. The school has, in the past year achieved 'healthy schools' status by demonstrating its positive approach to developing healthy eating programmes and providing exercise opportunities through a range of activities. The meals are varied and reflect, where possible, the pupils' likes and dislikes whilst adhering to national guidance on healthy eating. The pupils play a prominent part, through the school council and residential wing meetings, in making choices about food and activities. The general consensus, from pupils, is that they enjoy the food, are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles and look forward to the evening activities. The school has been consistent in its pursuit of higher standards within the health provision.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The pupils enjoy single bedroom facilities and have sufficient communal space within their living environment to maintain their privacy and store their personal possessions. The staff respect their desire for personal space and their practice reflects the guidance in procedural documents, particularly those on the provision of personal care. The school's desire to further enhance child protection practice through the restriction of the use of mobile telephones does not inhibit the pupils from maintaining contact with their family or significant others. Pupil records are stored securely and shared only with relevant personnel. The children have the necessary forums and written formats to register concerns or complaints. No such complaints were registered in the complaints log and pupils indicated that, such is their relationship with the staff, that issues are dealt with as they are raised. The pupils also have direct access to

independent visitors and various independent help lines are made available to them. There is a rigorous approach to child protection, supported by clear policies and procedures and regular staff training. The designated person responsible for child protection policy and its implementation keeps up to date with local initiatives and national guidance. The staff are alert to possible dangers, presented to the children, within the residences and on the school grounds and respond swiftly and appropriately. All risks to the safety of the children are assessed and reviewed regularly. The school continues to focus on reducing the impact of bullying on pupils and is highly successful in promoting tolerance and respect amongst the pupil population. Organised events coinciding with national initiatives, such as, 'anti bullying week' and the school's initiative in setting up a pupil mentoring support system, has emphasised the importance of mutual respect. The establishment of an 'anti bullying crew', a group of pupils with a mandate to support the more vulnerable and provide an immediate response where minor bullying incidents occur, has had a major positive influence on peers. The pastoral care, provided by staff committed to promoting fairness and equal opportunity, remains a major strength of the school. Inappropriate behaviour is managed well through individual plans and various incentives to improve relationships and understanding of the importance of appropriate social interaction. There are few school rules and expectations of pupils are made very clear. Sanctions are applied sparingly and are commensurate with the offending behaviour. The pupils confirmed that sanctions are fair. All the staff receive physical intervention training and this is regularly updated. The staff confirmed this practice is rarely used and then only to maintain the safety of the child and others. The availability and use of the learning support unit, a facility designed to provide pupils who experience difficulty managing their own behaviour, with a place of safety and individual staff support, has been further developed to focus on those pupils with more challenging behaviour. Such is the success of this provision that pupils with less challenging needs are requesting an extension of the facility so that they can also access this important resource. The staff are regularly reminded of their responsibility to support health and safety measures. There is a good response from the maintenance team when health and safety issues are highlighted and all the necessary annual and periodic checks on fire equipment and other appliances are conducted. Generic and individual risk assessments are completed and reviewed as necessary or as circumstances change. There is a sound recruitment process which is evidenced by documentation, including full employment history, checks and references in personnel files.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is a multi-disciplinary approach to the personal, social and educational development of the children. The staff work well together within each discipline and replicate their efforts when working with fellow professionals on common aims and objectives. There is a particularly good relationship between the care, education, therapies and medical teams resulting in a corporate focus on the principal needs identified for each child. Each team contributes in some part to the child's care plan and individual education plan. The plans, with their identified targets remain a focus for each team in their daily practice. The school nurse provides valuable input through the sexual outreach team focussing on emotional health and sex education, particularly relationships, including topics such as 'what makes a good relationship'. There are meaningful award systems supporting the school's approach on rewarding positive behaviour. The pupils are complimentary about the way the school recognises effort and indicated that the systems in place are an inducement to do well. There were a number of fine examples of pupil achievements in the realm of life skills and social interaction including a an event prepared and managed by the food technology department and another one recently organised by a team

leader celebrating the achievements of a number of pupils involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The pupils displayed a variety of life and social skills learned and developed over a period of time. Each pupil has a key worker who is responsible for providing them with individual support as well as coordinating the efforts of the other staff on the targets identified in the care plan. There is clear evidence of care and education staff liaison designed to ensure that each pupil is given the required support to enable them to achieve their objectives in the classroom and social setting. Support needs are discussed within interdisciplinary and team meetings on a regular basis. Pupils are encouraged to integrate through visits to other residential wings and by participating in events and activities within the community. Other forms of support include listening to children read within the residential wing during the evening. Examples are given under a previous outcome of the level of support given to pupils, including the learning support unit and that given through the various health and social education programmes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The pupils are consulted and listened to in various forums. Each individual has a role to play in devising their care plan and the key worker, where appropriate considers the views and opinions of the pupils before implementing their care plan. Residential wing meetings occur weekly and even daily in some residences. These are designed to maximise the pupils' opportunity to express themselves, contribute to matters relating to their own development and living environment and to listen and respond to reasonable propositions. The pupils demonstrated their ability to present their views and indicated that 'the staff are happy to listen and chat to us'. The pupils are encouraged to make choices, particularly on the colour scheme for their bedrooms and other features in their living environment. The relationship between the staff and the children is of a high quality and is a major factor in the success that the pupils achieve. The staff are fair and reasonable and demonstrate a desire to engage pupils in their development and celebrate their achievements. Prospective pupils are properly prepared for admission to the school. A learning support assistant, with the pupil's current school's permission, works within the classroom with the pupil to establish some familiarity and to ascertain the pupils needs and abilities. Pupils to be placed on a residential wing visit the school with their family to meet staff and see the living environment. The school implements an admission programme designed to prepare the prospective pupil for residential living which includes the child's former school and his parents through dialogue, observation and visits. Each child has a care plan prepared in consultation between the relevant staff and with the child. The plan highlights the main objectives, taken from the statement of special education needs and assessment through observation, and three to five targets are identified for implementation. The plans are competently constructed and skilfully implemented through daily practice. There is clear written evidence of the implementation of targets, reflected in daily logs, weekly progress sheets and wing progress reports. The staff have developed their recording skills and now provide clear measurements of pupil responses, progress and achievements from their daily interaction. This evidence informs reviews of practice methodology and further planning. The pupils benefit from inclusion in the early stages of the care planning process and the frequent updates indicating their progress. Contact between pupils and their parents is actively encouraged and maintained. Although the school has decided, with pupils' safety and wellbeing in mind, to restrict the use of mobile phones in the school, the pupils are not disadvantaged. As mentioned previously they have access to resources to contact independent sources for support and the school provides them with the opportunities and means to speak to their family and friends. There are facilities within the school to support on site contact between parents and pupils.

The school has established good links with parents and there is regular communication between the staff and parents through home/school books and by telephone.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school has worked hard to improve and enhance the pupils' accommodation. The pupils are largely accommodated in single bedrooms with only 'flexi boarders' sharing in some cases. The bedrooms in all the residential wings are comfortable, have adequate heating and lighting and are appropriately furnished. The pupils have been consulted on the colour scheme for their rooms and where appropriate they have been decorated according to their choice. Pupils are also encouraged and supported by the staff to personalise their rooms using posters reflecting their favourite cartoon character or sports idol. There is a large lounge and a games room in each residential wing and some residences also have facilities for art and craft work. Some pupils were engaged in constructing model aeroplanes, using a kit, whilst others were making Christmas decorations. The kitchen facilities in the residences are limited, however staff in Gap and Dixon wings are engaged in preparing breakfast and evening meals with the pupils. The school is actively seeking to extend this provision to all residences so that all pupils are given the opportunity to learn and practise their life skills. The bathroom and toilet facilities have been considerably improved in Dixon wing, providing the pupils with separate showers and a bath. There are an adequate number of showers, baths and toilets in all the residences for the current number of pupils. There are ongoing negotiations regarding plans to construct a new building on the current site which will provide separate classroom facilities and boarding accommodation. In the meantime, therefore, the school intends to utilise the present facilities wisely and with future plans in mind.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school mission statement details the aims and principles of its service. The school brochure provides a greater level of detail on admission criteria, the residential provision, a range of policies, the curriculum and more. Some policies are currently being updated, such as the staffing policy with details of current staff and their qualifications and experience. The text is clearly presented and adequately informs parents and other stakeholders on the essential information required when considering the placement of a child. The school adheres to its admission policy and ensures that staff are trained and equipped with the knowledge and skills to fulfil the school's stated purpose. The school has a governing body which meets regularly and is supportive to the school senior management. The residential wings are adequately staffed at all times, providing the pupils with practical support, advice and guidance. The care plan details the level of practical support needed by individual pupils and this is addressed in pre-school and after school programmes and activities. The care staff role is focussed on out of school activities and therefore the staff rota is likewise devised to concentrate their working hours on those periods. The school ensures that minimum levels of staff are always in place and given that all pupils go home each weekend, continuity is maintained throughout the week. Some staff provide additional support, during the school day, to pupils in the classroom setting. There is a team leader in charge of each residential wing and senior staff on call at all times, ensuring that staff are adequately supported. The school benefits from good management and strong leadership from the head teacher and the head of care in their respective roles. The head of care is suitably qualified and has considerable experience both within this setting and

previous residential placements. The head of care is supported by a deputy with similar extensive experience and a long serving staff team who provide consistent, excellent care to the pupils. The school actively promotes National Vocational Qualification and supports candidates through the process. All but two of the staff, who are currently engaged in the training, have successfully achieved NVQ level 3 qualification. The care practice is regularly monitored, audited and care records are scrutinised and signed by the Head of care and independent visitor. The reports compiled following each visit are informative and where appropriate make recommendations for improvement.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.