

Laleham Gap School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	John Chivers
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Nominated person	
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 from 10 to 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 27 boarding pupils of both genders accommodated on three boarding wings. 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

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The inspection was a full inspection and announced. All of the key national minimum standards for residential special schools in the outcomes being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed. There were no recommendations to follow up from the last inspection and no recommendations are made as a result of this inspection.

The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high standard of care and support to the boarders, having full regard for equality and diversity issues throughout its operation. There were 27 boarders resident at the time of the inspection, a number of whom took part in the inspection process via interviews and discussion.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no areas set for improvement as a result of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school nurse is responsible for health and medical matters concerning the boarders and organises such areas in a diligent and professional manner. Boarders

benefit from excellent health and medical care at the school. They are encouraged and advised to live healthy life styles and are further advised of the dangers of choosing inappropriate habits and life choices. Boarders engage in a range of physical and mentally stimulating activities which helps keep them alert and fit and promotes their general development, coordination and receive enjoyment from participation. A local general practice is available to the school and signed parental consent for medical and emergency treatment is held. Boarders receive medication from staff who are appropriately trained in medication administration and first aid. Some boarders are also trained in these areas, an achievement in which the boarders themselves and the school are very proud of. Boarders have individual risk assessments regarding their health and medical care arrangements and medication is administered in a safe, caring and reassuring way. Medication is safely and securely stored with additional secure provisions for controlled drugs. Medication administration is clearly and diligently recorded. Boarders are clear that the staff have full regard for their health and medical care.

Boarders benefit from a healthy and nutritious diet with any special religious, cultural, medical and preferential diets catered for. Boarders are encouraged and help to prepare meals in the boarding wings. Boarders enjoy the meals provided which are of a very good standard. Meal times are a well ordered social occasion. Provisions are safely and correctly stored and refrigerator and freezer temperatures are taken and recorded. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high and the school's catering arrangements meet the standards set by the local environmental health department. Staff are trained in food hygiene.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality and reassure boarders about keeping information about them confidential. Confidential records are securely held in locked cabinets within locked offices. Boarders have lockable cupboards in their bedrooms in which to keep valued and treasured possessions. Telephones are available where boarders can make and receive calls without reference to staff and there is ample space where boarders can receive appropriate visitors in private. Toilet and bathing facilities afford adequate privacy. Boarders said staff treat them with dignity and respect their privacy.

Boarders and their parents have unrestricted access to the school's complaints procedure. Boarders are clear they have no complaints or concerns about the staff and the standard of care and support they receive. Boarders know how to make a complaint and who to complain to. Comments from boarders and their parents are very complementary about the school. Staff are trained in the school's complaints procedure and boarders agree that staff would take any complaint seriously. Complaints are clearly recorded and show the action taken and an outcome.

Boarders are protected from abuse and harm by staff who are appropriately and regularly trained in child protection and safeguarding. There are a range of child

protection procedures which now include internet and cyber safety of which all staff are aware. Boarders learn about aspects of their personal safety via the school's curriculum. This is reinforced by staff in boarding time in one-to-one and group discussion. All boarders have individual risk assessments which are reviewed on a regular basis and staff are diligent regarding the supervision of boarders. Currently there are no child protection or safeguarding issues at the school. Boarders say they feel safe in school and staff have full regard for their safety, protection and well-being.

Boarders live in a bullying free environment and confirm that staff are alert and act promptly should such conduct be evident. The boarders supervision arrangements coupled with the homely and cohesive atmosphere established and maintained helps to ensure the likelihood of bullying not becoming an issue. There is a detailed procedure regarding missing persons. However no unauthorised absences have occurred within the boarding provision at the school.

Boarders' behaviour is very well managed and there are excellent working relationships between staff and boarders. There is sound interaction and engagement, coupled with banter and good humour to which boarders respond positively and feel comfortable with. Staff requests and instructions are generally met with cheerful compliance and boarders said the standard of discipline is balanced and fair. Boarders benefit from having behaviour management plans in place and understand the school's positive reinforcement programme where they attain prizes and awards for good conduct and effort. Sanctions and restraint are rarely used and are clearly recorded in the event. All of the current boarders are within the school's remit in terms of behaviour management and control and no significant issues in these areas are evident. Staff are appropriately trained in behaviour management and the school also runs courses in positive handling for taxi drivers who frequently transport boarders.

Boarders live in an old, though safe and well-maintained environment, which is monitored closely by staff. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed. The school takes active steps to keep boarders, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards.

The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and staff files previously checked hold all required information including a minimum of two written references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. No new boarding staff have been appointed since the last inspection and therefore staff personnel files were not revisited on this occasion. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures helps to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the boarders.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from a wide range of extra curricular education and learning activities which are enthusiastically promoted by staff. There is close liaison between care and teaching staff and information exchange between the two professions is held daily. Boarders' progress and achievements are held in their personal progress files which cover all outcome areas of 'every child matters'. Care staff are aware of the contents of boarders' statements of special educational needs and individual education plans. Staff also encourage boarders to complete homework. Music and the playing of musical instruments are very popular among staff and boarders with some boarders demonstrating their proficiency at playing musical instruments. The school came top in attaining GCSE results for state special school's in the country in 2009, an achievement of which staff and boarders are very proud of.

Boarders enjoy a high standard of holistic care and support from a committed and professional staff team. There is an effective key worker system in place and key workers meet with boarders on a regular basis. In addition there is support from a range of external professionals. An independent person is also available and visits the school on a regular basis. Any special racial, cultural or diversity needs are met as appropriate and boarders' progress and issues are monitored and reviewed regularly. Boarders said they are appreciative of the high level of care and support afforded to them and that staff are always approachable.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders learn about decision making and making choices via a range of forums which include one-to-one discussion with staff and the school council and boarding wing meetings which are held each evening. Boarders say that staff listen to what they have to say and act on appropriate suggestions and requests. In addition parents' questionnaires are used in order to secure their views and opinions on the service. Questionnaire feedback is very positive and include many comments such as: 'My son is turning into a happy and polite young man and couldn't thank the school enough'; 'We are grateful to all at the school'; 'We are vey happy with the residential arrangements'; 'Very supportive and adaptable staff'; 'Carry on doing a superb job': and 'Boarding staff are amazing with the kids'.

The boarding section has a clear admissions criteria and procedure which helps to ensure only suitable boarders are accepted who can fully benefit from the service provided. Most boarders leave the school in a carefully planned and appropriate way. This includes the use of transition plans and undertaking life skills, independence training programmes and work experience which helps equip boarders for adult life.

Boarders benefit from having clear care plans in place which are further enhanced by action plans, progress reports and behaviour management support plans. Boarders

are aware of their future plans and are in agreement with them. Boarders care and support is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Boarders also enjoy comprehensive life skills programmes which cover a range of areas and topics which will assist them in future life.

Any contact boarders have with their parents and significant others is clearly recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Parents supply boarders with pocket money, clothing and personal requisites. Boarders are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothing and staff keep accurate records of pocket money transactions.

Boarders are well prepared to leave the school and benefit from a range of social skills and independence training programmes. These help prepare boarders for later life.

Boarders and staff are disappointed and disadvantaged in that the service will not now move to new premises due to a government directive regarding financial restrictions. The school has therefore applied for substantial refurbishments in order to enhance the quality of life for those who live and work there. Despite the age of the building, boarders live in a safe and well-maintained environment where most areas are decorated and furnished to a good standard. The age of the building and its limitations are well compensated for by substantial inputs from staff and boarders. Staff and boarders are committed to creating and maintaining a homely and comfortable ambience, where boarders feel secure and enjoy their living experience. There is adequate communal space which has a range of domestic fittings, fixtures and equipment. The boarding wings have a range of play and learning materials and recreational facilities. Boarders' bedrooms are of single and shared occupancy and are decorated and furnished to an equally good standard as the communal areas. Boarders enjoy personalising their own rooms and some are involved in decorating their own private space areas. Boarding wing kitchen facilities are of a good standard and well equipped. Toilet and bathing facilities afford privacy. The school grounds are spacious and well maintained.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school's curriculum has full regard for such matters and these areas are reinforced by staff in pastoral time. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high standard of care and support to the boarders.

Boarders and their parents are given sufficient and appropriate information about the

school. The information accurately describes the facilities and services provided.

Boarders receive a high level of care and support from a well supervised, trained and appraised staff team. Staff have sufficient experience, skills and competencies to meet the needs of the boarders and enable the boarding section to effectively achieve its aims and objectives. Staff are avidly supportive of the school's management and ethos. Staff are also clear that the service has full regard for equal opportunities, equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the school. There is sound communication between the boarding staff team and senior staff. Care staff meetings are also held on a regular basis. Boarders benefit from a service which has an open and inclusive policy with staff and management being approachable and available to them at any time.

Boarders and their parents are assured continuity and consistency of care by rigorous internal quality assurance systems which are undertaken by senior staff and by the organisation responsible for the school. Views and opinions are sought as part of this process and are recorded. The school has an annual development plan for 2010-11 and a current insurance liability certificate is held which complies with the school's responsibilities as an employer.