

# Laleham Gap School

Laleham Gap School, Northdown Park Road, Margate, Kent, CT9 2TP

<b>Inspection dates</b>	06/02/2014 to 07/02/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The overall effectiveness of the school's residential provision is good. The quality of the care provided is outstanding. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with the staff team. The establishment of trust, mutual respect and clear expectations enables pupils to realise their social, educational and behavioural potential.
- Robust safeguarding systems are diligently implemented. Residential pupils reside in a safe and secure environment. They are looked after by appropriately trained staff who understand how to meet their needs. Pupils are confident to express their views and opinions. Risk assessments across the service are generally completed to a high standard. However, those relating to absence and being missing should be reviewed and updated.
- The quality of the nursing provision is a particular strength. Pupils' wider health needs are given a high priority. Excellent monitoring systems readily identify any areas of concern.
- The residential team welcomes external quality assurance monitoring, constructive criticism and inspection. The school's own development plan contains its own areas for continuing improvement. Senior leaders are fully aware that some relatively new processes still need to be embedded. These include the updated supervision and appraisal processes for the staff team. The general standard of monitoring is good but needs strengthening with regard to the use of behaviour management sanctions.
- Residential pupils, their parents and carers speak with real pride and affection for the school. Comments include, 'it's an exceptional place', 'I would not be the person I am today without my school' and 'I want to leave for college but a part of me doesn't. I've loved it here.' External professionals comment upon the school's continued professionalism in working as part of a multi-disciplinary team which places the safety and welfare of its pupils at its core.

**Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

The school received a morning's notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the residential lead officer, the designated child protection officer, the school nurse, the business manager, the independent listener and the residential team. Documentation including survey returns, local authority feedback and previous inspection reports were reviewed. Records pertaining to behaviour management, fire safety, site security, child protection, human resources and a number of individual care plans were scrutinised. On-site activity included a full tour of the premises led by pupils, taking meals with pupils, individual discussions with pupils and an evening spent on various pupils' activities. Family members, visiting at the time were also interviewed.

## Inspection team

Sophie Wood

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Laleham Gap school is situated in Margate, Kent. It is a residential special school, maintained by the local authority. The school provides care and education for boys and girls who have high functioning autism and/or speech and language difficulties aged between 10 and 16 years. The residential provision is located within the main secondary school site. It provides overnight accommodation for up to 26 residential pupils. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2013.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review and update individual pupil risk assessments with regards to unauthorised absences and being missing, in line with local authority and police protocols
- monitor sanctions records against individual behaviour management plans.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils are nurtured and supported to make the most of their talents and to face the things they find difficult to cope with. They enjoy warm and loving relationships with long-standing staff members who know them well. Consistently delivered, high quality care provides boundaries, safety and a wealth of fresh experiences. Pupils' self-belief and confidence soars as a result. Parental comments include, 'The change in my child is overwhelmingly positive' and 'One of the best things is his growing confidence, his self-belief.' Residential pupils say, 'I have grown up since being in boarding because the staff believe that I can do things for myself' and 'I actually know that I have done better in boarding than by being a day pupil. I have learnt so many things that will help me when I leave.'

Inquisitive pupils thrive in an environment which provides a comprehensive range of activities and new experiences. Good staffing levels ensure pupils can mix with their peers, focus upon their own unique interests and fully utilise school facilities as well as external ones. Aspiring musicians, would-be chefs and potential engineers also take full advantage of sports opportunities and the school's computer suite. Consequently, residential pupils become more versatile in their interests, developing a hunger for fresh experiences alongside their preferred favourites.

This thirst for knowledge continues to be positively exploited by the staff team. Pupils are encouraged to think about their own health and social development. The nursing provision is integral to this. The team's educative approach towards personal relationships and sex education is sensitive and well received. Pupils also learn to take appropriate responsibility for their own physical and medical well-being within safe parameters. Evening activities frequently include physical games which are extremely popular. A staff member said, 'It's a great way to combine exercise with teamwork. Learning to work together.' One pupil remarks with insight, 'When I'm here I eat healthily and do loads of sports. At home I would be very tempted to play on my X-box and eat junk. My mum is delighted.'

The residential provision, although small is an integral part of the whole school community. Pupils feel highly valued. Effective school councils make meaningful contributions to the on-going development of the school. This includes members from the residential provision and there is a clear drive to consider all matters of day and boarding equally and fairly. Pupils learn about democracy and working collaboratively through this forum. Their ideas and suggestions become tangible realities.

Pupils embrace the residential provision as an extension of their own family. Younger pupils refer to staff members as, 'Like your mum', 'Strict but kind' and 'Always listens to me.' Older pupils particularly notice and comment upon the seamless transition in this relationship which occurs over time. This is captured by the following statement from a pupil in their final year; 'When you start you are a bit immature, you need more looking after. Then the staff give you more trust and opportunities to grow up. You start to be treated more like an adult but you are also expected to behave like one.'

New pupils experience a thoroughly planned, bespoke introduction process. Well thought out planning results in pupils and parents joining the school with excitement and optimism. One parent said 'After a previous experience elsewhere, this has been refreshingly wonderful, we could not be happier.' The inclusion of current pupils in this process works beautifully. Older pupils remember what it is like to be new and they embrace this position of trust. Newcomers say, 'it's like having big brothers' and older pupils say, 'we're all a bit different and that's a good thing, we just all need to look after each other.' Such statements epitomise the inclusive culture

and ethos of this school. Staff are particularly proud to receive visits from leavers. Their return is used to inspire current pupils to succeed as they have.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

## **Outstanding**

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Experienced, well-qualified staff deliver consistent and thoughtful care and support. Pupils make rapid progress upon joining because this small, welcoming environment receives them readily, warmly and based upon thorough assessment processes.

Highly individualised care plans capture the very essence of pupils' personality traits, needs and aspirations. These documents are derived from a multi-disciplinary approach and pupils are integral to this. The contents are not always rigidly followed; staff are confident to respond flexibly to pupils' changing needs. This is where their experience and expertise comes to the fore. Pupils feel that they are understood and valued. Comments include, 'My key worker knows me really well' and 'When I'm finding things difficult, the staff always give me good advice and ways around it.'

A whole team approach towards care planning captures the holistic needs of pupils. Some areas are prioritised but no area is ignored. Teaching targets are incorporated into social opportunities and vice versa. Excellent mentoring systems provide pupils with key personnel allocated to them within the school and residential departments. Communication between such personnel is slick and targeted and as a result consistency is achieved.

The outstanding nursing department is integral to care planning. A small team of assistants, led by a highly organised, qualified nurse is woven into the whole school provision. Residential pupils receive individually tailored support and advice which aids their own understanding of their wider health needs. Excellent links with parents and where necessary, external health services, are maintained. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. This ranges from very small steps up to taking greater responsibility for the self-administration of medication, based upon sound risk assessment. Individual and group support and teaching covers topics including, personal relationships, sex and sexuality, the effects of drugs and alcohol and maintaining a healthy diet. The latter is further complemented by the catering department which provides a wide range of healthy and nutritious meals. The residential provision is suitably equipped to enable pupils to practice their own cooking skills. Such opportunities incorporate budgeting, planning and thinking about healthy options.

Pupils speak of 'a brilliant range of activities.' Comments include, 'I do absolutely loads here' and 'It's one of the best things about boarding.' The space within the residential provision is fully maximised to ensure a wide range of activities remain readily accessible. Quiet lounges, games rooms and music rooms equipped with drums and electric guitars are at pupils' immediate disposal. Pupils also access the wider school site, including the sports hall, computer suite and grounds. Excellent staffing levels, combined with transport, ensures ready access to the wider community and the leisure facilities this offers. The drama group is currently preparing to perform at a local theatre.

Funding for new residential accommodation has been secured and pupils are excited about this. Current buildings are old by comparison but they remain very well maintained and immaculately cleaned. Individual bedrooms are uniquely characterised by each occupant. Pupils are encouraged to really own their bedrooms; some do this with absolute relish and creativity. Dining areas are highly valued by the staff teams. These are roomy and brightly decorated. Great emphasis is placed upon sitting together, social interaction and reinforcing the positive relationships between the pupils, with each other and staff. A real sense of a family atmosphere is created, which is confirmed by family members when they visit, something they are actively

encouraged to do.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

**Good**

The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. Senior staff throughout the school are suitably trained to effectively implement clear and effective child protection policies and procedures. Residential staff also receive regular training, commensurate with their roles. They know exactly what to report and to whom. The designated child protection officer implements tracking and monitoring systems which are fed into by all staff members. Potentially low level concerns are as diligently explored as complaints and allegations. The school mantra of safeguarding being at the heart of service delivery is embedded. It is central to everyone's practice.

Safeguarding monitoring systems are conscientiously maintained. The senior team knows precisely where any individual concerns are. This results in an excellent relationship with external safeguarding agencies. Pupils are in a safe place, where their welfare and continued protection is paramount. Processes in respect of complaints, allegations and incidents are understood by all.

This well organised safeguarding practice and mind set is also prevalent throughout the curriculum, in both the teaching and residential provisions. Staff use daily occurring activities to teach pupils to keep themselves safe. A staff member said, 'It would be foolish to ban 'phones, tablets and Facebook. It is our job to teach safe use.' Pupils say, 'You never know who you might be talking to on-line' and 'If you use a site here that's banned, the staff always find out.'

Since the last inspection, staff recruitment practices have been meticulously reviewed and updated. A personnel file audit has also been conducted. Additional checks and safeguards are now in place. No new appointments have been made to the residential provision, so the impact cannot be fully tested. However, a renewed process with a more robust approach stands to provide additional protection for all pupils.

Residential pupils commend the provision for all of its safety practices. Comments include, 'It's safe and cosy' and 'There are rules but you are also expected to think for yourself.' Staff routinely talk to pupils about internet safety. This spills into the risks of cyber-bullying and the impact of seemingly innocent, unintentional teasing. Incidents of friendship issues, misunderstandings and the rare occurrences of more obvious forms of bullying are swiftly identified and appropriately responded to. In addition, pupils speak of staff throughout the teaching, residential and nursing provision as adults, whom they trust and can go to. A further safeguard includes the regular independent visitor. Pupils understand her role and see her as someone uniquely for them. She is very well received when she visits and enjoys a strong rapport with the pupils.

Incidents of pupils being absent without authority are extremely rare. Those pupils who do or may present this risk have individual risk assessments in place. Some contain clearer, more prescriptive details than others. In all cases, these are linked to the wider local authority guidance, albeit not the most up-to-date local authority and police protocols.

Clear and effective behaviour management systems are consistently implemented by well trained staff, following individual prescribed guidance. The use of physical interventions are very rare. Any such use is robustly monitored and followed by a forensic de-brief. The use of appropriate sanctions and consequences for negative behaviour are more commonly used. Staff spend a lot of time through regular key working to teach pupils to develop better coping mechanisms to deal with anger and frustration. There are a few examples of a pupil receiving a relatively high number of sanctions and that these incidents receive the same level of scrutiny to ensure such measures are either judged to be effective or may require a different approach.

Since the last inspection, a number of health and safety procedures have been reviewed and updated. As was recommended, appropriate action has been taken to ensure the safe operation of designated fire doors. Routine health and safety premises checks are up-to-date; the fire risk assessment has also been updated and pupils regularly practice fire drills at different times of the day and night. Robust security measures serve to protect the residential pupils. There is a good balance between appropriate levels of security while taking care not to restrict pupils' liberty and freedom of movement. This is another positive example of pupils learning to be responsible for keeping themselves safe.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Good**

Leadership and management arrangements for the residential provision are good. A cohesive residential team works in tandem with the teaching and nursing departments. Pupils receive high quality care that is consistently delivered and takes into account their holistic needs. The current plans for a new build place the residential provision as a central aspect of the wider service.

Many staff members are long-standing. All are suitably qualified and they fully embrace the ethos and culture of the school. Within this, a strong drive to seek continuous improvement is evident. Individual staff members actively look for ways to achieve this. Examples include a dynamic nursing provision which teaches and trains members of the residential team to competently deliver specific health-related care and procedures. Another staff member is currently pulling together additional information relating to specific medications to ensure the whole team can readily access this. Such examples are typical of the team's continued improvements.

The residential lead officer has particularly focused upon the regularity and quality of staff supervision and appraisal processes. These meetings are linked into personal development plans which are similarly linked into the overall continued development of the school. The common goal throughout is to implement excellent practice for the benefit of the pupils.

Pupils receive high levels of support and supervision. The expertise of the residential team ensures this is not oppressive. Pupils can make mistakes but they are not exposed to unsafe situations. The staff team receives regular good quality training opportunities. This aspect further enhances the care qualifications already possessed. Beyond this, the team is driven by its passion to deliver the best possible practice. Pupils thrive in this environment and culture of equality and acceptance.

Parents speak of 'excellent communication' and where relevant, social workers and other professionals are equally positive. The residential team understands its role within a network of services for pupils. This is reflected within policy and procedural guidance, such as safeguarding.

Complaints about the provision are extremely rare. One external complaint, received since the last inspection is satisfactorily concluded. Pupils, parents and carers routinely make suggestions, ask for guidance and take full advantage of the varied consultation processes in place. The general consensus is that informal resolution is effective.

Quality assurance processes are continuing to improve. All of the necessary policies and procedures are in place. Some areas are better monitored than others, for example, the use of sanctions is not as scrupulously examined as physical interventions. The residential lead officer is aware of the areas for improvement. These include the further development of life skills opportunities for pupils and for staff supervision and appraisal processes to become fully embedded. An additional source of good quality monitoring includes the school's independent visitor. These visits frequently result in recommendations for continued improved practice. The residential team welcomes such feedback and readily implements the suggestions made.

## What inspection judgements mean

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134971
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC023691
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/7073

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Maintained
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	21
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	10 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Mileham
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	20/03/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 221946

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