

# Laleham Gap School

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

**Inspection dates** 04/03/2015 to 06/03/2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils thrive and make excellent progress within a nurturing, valuing and fully inclusive boarding community. They are respected, very well understood and highly valued as unique individuals. Their superb relationships with their keyworkers and the wider residential team are integral to their success. Residential pupils feel supported, cared about and suitably challenged. They trust that the staff genuinely cares about their safety, well-being and progress. This inspires their own desire to achieve and work to the very best of their own abilities.
- The implementation of safe systems and procedures protects and promotes the welfare and safety of the pupils. Robust staff recruitment practice, diligent health and safety checks and weekly welfare meetings place the safety and welfare of the pupils at the very centre of the school's practice.
- Collaborative cross-remit communication between all of the school's departments is key to the school's success. Mutual respect is evident throughout the entire school. The tremendous impact of this multi-disciplinary approach pushes pupils to achieve to the very best of their ability.
- Strong and effective leadership provides excellent support and guidance for the residential staff team. This group of long-standing and dedicated staff have seized the recommendations made from the previous inspection to affect positive changes and continuing improvements. For the first time in five years, the residential provision is now judged outstanding.
- Residential pupils appreciate the difference and impact the residential provision has had on their lives and outcomes. Comments from pupils include, 'I know I wouldn't have worked so hard if I didn't stay here' and 'I use my personal time much better by staying at school than I would at home.' Such sentiments are echoed by parents who say, '[child's name] has a much better social network by staying at school' and '[child's name] is more confident, socially adventurous and all round happier because of the boarding.'

- All of the national minimum standards for residential special schools are met and in some cases, exceeded.

### **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

This stand alone welfare inspection was conducted over three days by one inspector. Key staff members were individually interviewed and pertinent documents and records were scrutinised. Groups of additional staff were also seen and handovers were observed. A number of individual pupils were case tracked and spoken with. Additional time was spent engaging with groups of pupils on activities, their free time and during meals. Considerable time was spent with the school nurse due to her integral role with the residential pupils. A tour of the premises was also carried out.

Parents and carers were spoken with on the phone and one was interviewed on site during the inspection.

Close attention was paid to the school's response to its previous inspection recommendations, as well as its own development plans. The head teacher is imminently due to retire and a new school site is currently being built. Succession plans are diligent and robust.

The school is fully able to demonstrate that it meets, and in some cases exceeds the national minimum standards.

## 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 February 2014.

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

- review the proposed layout of the new health and medical suite.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Residential pupils thrive and flourish within a nurturing and homely environment. They benefit from superb relationships with long-standing staff who fully understand their needs. Pupils grow in confidence. They become determined to succeed and they develop tremendous insight. They learn to appreciate and accept their own difficulties. Over time, these become less of a barrier as pupils become rightly proud of themselves.

A culture of acceptance, tolerance and inclusion is embedded. New pupils join an environment which is akin to a large family group. Long-standing pupils look after the new ones. They do this quite naturally, without being prompted. The level of mutual respect, care and understanding demonstrated between pupils is delightful.

Superb health care arrangements stem from a creative and highly enthusiastic school nurse. Pupils are empowered to take responsibility for their own health needs as far as their disabilities allow. They learn to understand how their medication works. A number of pupils are learning to self-administer their own medication, in line with growing up. Residential pupils also learn to understand and make sense of their own particular diagnoses. They learn to challenge stigmas and stereotypes. The impact upon their mental and emotional well-being is fantastic. One pupil says, 'My Autism is just one part of me. It isn't who I am'.

Residential pupils are extremely proud of their school. They frequently speak about the difference it has made to their lives. Comments include, 'I've learned to accept myself and that makes me so much happier' and 'I know I'm going to do better in my exams because of the extra support I get after school here'.

The wide range of activities receives an equally positive response from the pupils. An engaging extra-curricular programme effectively targets pupils' personal and social development needs. One pupil says, 'Joining an outside astronomy club feeds the science geek in me' and 'I'm not good at socialising so the staff are always trying to get me to go out more'.

Residential pupils learn to take appropriate responsibilities as soon as they join the residential provision. Practical and life skills rapidly develop because every opportunity is exploited by the staff in order for pupils to do things for themselves. Consequently, pupils leave the school equipped with many of the skills they need for the next stage in their lives.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

New pupils join the residential provision based upon rigorous and thorough assessment procedures. The excellent quality of this information enables staff across all departments to work collaboratively with parents and carers. Effective and informative immediate care plans are implemented as a result. Very new parents say, 'Of all the schools we visited, this was the only one where the actual pupils gave us the tour. We saw things from their perspective and could immediately see our child here. For us, there was absolutely no other choice'.

Current residential pupils make genuine efforts to assist their new peers to settle into the provision. Evening mealtimes are an excellent example, whereby little prompts and gestures enable new pupils to feel welcomed and part of the group from day one. During this inspection, a new pupil joined the school. By the evening, they were engaging with peers and preparing to go out on an activity. This pupil said, 'It was really good to get my bedroom decorated before I joined. It's just how I wanted it'.

Pupils are highly valued as unique individuals. A sense of self-worth is instilled at the very onset of joining the school. It is an overriding driver for the staff. Their genuine affection and desire for pupils to succeed is demonstrated through their actions and comments. These include, 'I wish [child's name] could accept just how truly fabulous he really is' and 'Just look at [child's name] one year after joining us. He is confident, more self-assured and making excellent social progress. This is what we're all about'.

The residential provision is viewed as an integral feature of the wider school. Teaching staff routinely speak about the positive impact for the residential pupils. Their comments include, 'The attainment figures speak for themselves when we look at the results for our residential pupils' and 'the head of care has absolutely driven better communication between the teaching and residential departments'. These comments are echoed by colleagues within the nursing and therapy teams. Quotes from the lead speech and language therapist include, 'The programmes we write are directly factored into the residential care plans. Pupils practise these targets on a daily basis and they make great progress'.

The school nurse is a regular visitor to the residential provision. Her wider role encompasses some direct work with pupils in respect of their health, personal and social development. Residential pupils are confident in exploring their own developing personalities. They receive clear advice and guidance with regards to relationships, sex education and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Residential pupils learn to make safe choices which promote their own good health.

Individual care plans are of superb quality. Residential pupils are integral to this process. They genuinely own their care plans and can give detailed descriptions about their own targets and goals. Keyworkers provide intensive support which routinely pushes pupils to think for themselves and to take control of their own learning and development. This 'can do' culture challenges pupils to achieve beyond their own previous expectations.

Excellent catering arrangements ensure that residential pupils receive nutritious, healthy and well-balanced meals. Residential pupils routinely prepare and cook their own food. They learn about nutritional value, budgeting and portion control. Breakfast and evening meals are relaxed, social occasions which occur within homely, well furnished dining rooms. The remaining residential areas are furnished and decorated to an excellent standard. Bedrooms are highly personalised. Residential pupils look after their physical environment and proudly show it off to visitors.

Excellent consultation processes actively encourage the residential pupils to make realistic contributions to the on-going development of the school. Residential pupil representatives join the wider school council. The whole school community has equal status and importance. Residential pupils say, 'We also have our own meetings to talk about our living areas, activities and just generally how things are going.' Another pupil says, 'We've also been involved with staff recruitment which was really good'. The independent listener is well-known to the residential pupils. This role is fully understood and appreciated by residential pupils who say, 'If we had anything to worry about we could tell him'.

Superb activity arrangements successfully cater for every residential pupil. Afternoons and evenings are extremely busy. Parents say, 'My child is often not there when I call, they are usually out and about, too busy to be homesick'. Pupils enjoy an array of activities which suit their individual and collective needs. The wider school is readily accessible in the evenings. Pupils can use the computer suite, sports hall and outside sports pitches. Indoor provision includes a music room, various games rooms and a variety of lounges. There is much current excitement amongst the residential pupils as they are working together to produce their own film about understanding Autism. The creativity of the pupils and staff knows no bounds.

Whole school handovers occur on a daily basis. This forum examines daily progress, welfare concerns and any immediate information which needs to be shared. Staff across all departments are active participants. A culture of mutual professional respect is embedded. It serves to provide an exceptionally high quality all-round provision.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

## **Outstanding**

The promotion of the safety and welfare of all pupils is at the very core of the school's practice. Robust policies and procedures are underpinned by regularly updated training for staff across every department. Through its guidance, training and daily meetings, the school reinforces that the promotion and protection of pupils' welfare and safety is everyone's responsibility. Lines of accountability and reporting procedures are explicitly clear. They are followed in practice. They keep pupils safe.

The designated child protection officer (DCPO) is suitably qualified and very experienced. Beyond obvious and immediate safeguarding concerns, the DCPO maintains meticulous welfare logs and records. Lower-level safeguarding concerns and potentially minor welfare issues are recorded and sensitively monitored in order that patterns and trends do not go un-noticed. This diligent practice ensures that pupils and their families receive appropriate support, guidance and assistance at the earliest opportunity.

Staff fully understand and appreciate the changing landscape of the potential safety risks for the residential pupils. Recent updates to their training programme includes topics such as sexual exploitation and on-line safety. The latter is particularly targeted in terms of allowing pupils to take some appropriate and measured risks. For example, the school does not block or filter all social networking or internet sites. Its practice is to teach pupils how to use them safely. This educative approach equips pupils with the skills they need to think about their own well-being and protection.

Residential pupils say they feel safe and very well cared for. They trust the school's systems and procedures. In respect of the safety of the premises, they say, 'We often practise fire safety', 'nobody can get into the building if they're not supposed to' and 'staff are always nearby if we need them.' When asked about bullying, they say, 'Sure, some people do stupid things and get on your nerves but the staff don't let it become bullying.'

Residential pupils take risks. These are measured, calculated and carefully monitored. Valuable lessons are learned when mistakes are made. One pupil says, 'it helps to remember to turn the actual oven on when you're trying to cook your own pizza'. Where appropriate, other risks are not taken. For example, additional discreet control measures are in place to ensure the separation of bedroom and washing facilities between boys and girls. Privacy, dignity and safety is assured.

Residential pupils enjoy the freedom of movement within and around the residential provision. Minimal restrictions, including some coded doors, are only in place for valid safety reasons. These measures are openly shared and agreed with parents, carers and the residential pupils. One historic example of a missing pupil was well-managed and appropriately resolved. This was a one-off incident. Every residential pupil has detailed risk assessments in place in this regard. This aspect is further strengthened by the head of care's regular positive liaison with the local police.

The behaviour management policy of the school is simplistic and straightforward. Residential pupils understand it. Although staff are suitably trained in the use of physical intervention techniques, these are very rarely used. Rather, the use of de-escalation is favoured. Staff understand the triggers and flash points for individual pupils. Hence, they intervene early. Pupils have the time, space and opportunity to be with a trusted staff member in order to talk and work through their difficulties. The head of care explains, 'Very few residential pupils have or need a

dedicated behaviour management plan. Our biggest strength here is to model and reward positive behaviour'. The extremely low number of incidents of challenging behaviour supports this statement.

The school business manager implements robust recruitment procedures for every staff appointment. All checks and references are completed before new staff join the school. Her attention to detail with regards to the interview process demonstrates strong recruitment practice which protects the pupils. A process of the random auditing of staff files is separately undertaken by the head teacher. This practice brings additional safeguards.

The school business manager brings the same detailed and thorough approach to the health and safety needs of the premises. A superbly well-structured process of reporting and managing maintenance and repair needs is diligently undertaken by her team of ancillary staff. Routine health and safety checks are up-to-date; this includes all fire safety equipment. Residential pupils understand and trust this department. One residential pupil pointed out an out of use shower and said, 'Don't worry, we've reported that and it's all in hand'.

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

Outstanding leadership and management arrangements ensures the efficient, high quality and smooth running of the school. Within this valuing and inclusive community, the residential provision is highly regarded. Department heads and line managers across the school work collaboratively to deliver an exceptionally high quality service to every residential pupil.

The long-standing care team brings professionalism and an abundance of collective relevant experience. Key workers inspire the pupils because they strike an excellent balance in terms of their encouraging, appropriately challenging and always loving approach. Their ability to maintain clear boundaries while establishing such positive relationships keeps everyone safe. Residential pupils respond by becoming insightful, enthusiastic and confident.

Residential care staff receive high quality supervision which is underpinned by a wide range of relevant on-going training opportunities. The team presents an impressive collective portfolio as a result. Their individual supervision and group staff meetings bring self-analysis, insightful practice discussions and healthy debates. Such practice keeps them up-to-date and forward thinking.

Excellent planning is securing a smooth transition with regards to the new school building. Its construction is almost complete. Residential pupils have effectively contributed to this planning, in terms of décor and bedroom furnishings. The arrangements for the new health suite present some potential supervision issues for pupils when they are ill. It is recommended that the proposed layout of this area is reviewed. Some residential pupils have already moved within the school's current accommodation. Through detailed consultation and planning, this transition went extremely smoothly for pupils who ordinarily struggle with upheaval and change. Succession planning is also a strength.

Parents and carers provide overwhelmingly positive feedback about the residential provision. In many examples, they cite excellent communication as one of the most valuable aspects. Regular telephone and written updates are built into keyworker's time to ensure this is maintained. Care records are diligently completed and accurately demonstrate the progress of the pupils.

No recent complaints have been received about the residential provision but a clear policy is effectively communicated to all stakeholders. One parent states, 'I have never had cause to complain but I fail to understand why the school does not have a Sixth form provision. My child would really benefit from this'. This comment is repeated by a number of parents and carers.



The continuing progress of leavers is monitored, where possible by the residential team. Some residential pupils have experienced poorer outcomes since leaving. This research has led the school to create an extended role for one of its teaching staff in an attempt to provide additional transition support. This is beyond the school's responsibilities but a demonstration of the school's continuing investment and support for pupils who have left.

Diligent monitoring systems are effective. This includes internal and external arrangements. Previous recommendations made by Ofsted are robustly implemented. Challenging development plans maintain the school's pace and determination to continually improve. A rigorous governing body understands the needs of the pupils and holds the school to account in their best interests.

The head teacher is retiring and a seamless handover is underway.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	9
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Mileham
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/02/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 221946

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

