

# Laleham Gap School

Northdown Park Road, Margate, CT9 2TP

## Inspection dates

21–22 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- All groups of pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science and in their personal development.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. In the best teaching, pupils are challenged so that they work quickly and extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Older pupils attain good-quality accreditation by the time they leave the school in Year 11.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and, as a result, children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is rising. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Outcomes for pupils in the residence are outstanding, preparing them extremely well for their futures.
- Pupils receive good-quality care and support benefiting from effective integrated therapies which promote good personal development.
- Parents and carers are rightly pleased with the school.
- Efficient planning by the governing body means money is spent well for the benefit of all groups of pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for additional funding.
- Leadership and management are good. The senior leaders have a clear vision and an accurate view of the school. They place a high focus on improving the performance of staff through rigorous monitoring and training.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, too little work is planned for pupils to do so that learning slows and not enough challenge is provided.
- Teaching assistants are not always used well enough to monitor progress, model activities or record outcomes.
- A few key health and safety risks in the residence have not been identified.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons, most of them jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a few short visits to observe pupils' learning.
- The social care inspector paid several visits to the residence both after school and in the mornings, observing the work of the residential staff and the outcomes for residential pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and managers, the head of care, the school nurse, a group of pupils in the school and in the residence, a local authority representative, the outreach manager, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information, residential care plans and pupils' work.
- The inspectors took account of 48 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and to several letters and emails that were received from parents and carers. A telephone conversation was held with a parent. The inspectors also took account of 44 responses to the inspection questionnaire from staff in the school and in the residence.

## Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Graham Pirt	Additional inspector
Carol Vant	Additional inspector
Anna Williams	Social Care Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Laleham Gap is a special school for high-functioning pupils with autism spectrum disorders and/or specific language impairment. A few pupils also have challenging behaviour difficulties linked to their autism.
- The school has weekly residential provision for up to 20 pupils of secondary age at the Margate site and takes pupils from the whole of Kent.
- The school occupies two sites five miles apart. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those aged 5–11 are educated at the primary site in Broadstairs. Older pupils aged 11–16 are educated at the main school site in Margate. There is one leadership team and governing body.
- Almost all pupils are White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- A few pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding (such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is above average.
- The school provides an outreach service to local mainstream schools. This service is managed by the governing body.

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

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by
  - making sure that teachers' planning fully meets the needs and abilities of each pupil in the class, including those who arrive late due to attendance at therapies
  - ensuring that all pupils are challenged well enough to complete enough work in the time allowed
  - making better use of teaching assistants to monitor pupils' progress, model activities and record outcomes.
- Ensure that internal monitoring within the residential areas is robust enough to identify and quickly attend to key health and safety risks.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- The vast majority of pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, achieve well at Laleham Gap. As a result, they make at least good progress in English, mathematics and science, and in their personal development.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils in the primary school make rapid and sustained progress in reading because of the very effective phonics approach (linking letters and sounds). This enables pupils to quickly identify new words. The high focus placed on improving reading skills is also evident in the secondary school where pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in reading, developing effective skimming and scanning skills.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start to their education because provision is tailored well to children's needs and abilities. Children showed good progress in mathematics, for example, as they counted up to 20 and then correctly added one more. Very effective questioning helped them to improve their understanding of addition.
- Older pupils in the secondary school attain good-quality accreditation. By the time they leave Year 11, all pupils have acquired qualifications that prepare them well for their futures. Accreditation in mathematics and science are particularly good.
- Just occasionally, pupils on both sites are not challenged well enough because too few tasks are set to meet all the individual needs of pupils in the class. This is also evident when some pupils return to classes after therapy sessions and nothing is prepared for them to do in the time left. As a result, the pace of their learning dips and they do not make enough progress in the time allowed.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well by staff in the school and in the residence. All groups have many opportunities to have their say and take part actively in discussions. Pupils told the inspector that they were regularly involved in making decisions and choosing activities.
- Those known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as other pupils because the extra funding is used to employ additional staffing and to fund additional activities to meet these pupils' needs.
- Parents and carers are rightly pleased with their child's progress. 'We are extremely pleased with provision at both sites. There is endless enthusiasm and dedication to meet children's needs,' commented a parent.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- Teachers almost always plan challenging tasks that fully engage pupils in learning. High-quality relationships and effective support ensure that lessons are calm with a good work ethos. Routines are clear so that pupils know what is expected of them.
- In the best lessons, teachers extend pupils' skills and build on previous learning through focused questions, challenging them to find answers for themselves. An example of this was seen in science in Year 8 where a very well-prepared lesson challenged pupils to describe the changes that happen when malachite is heated up. Pupils were enthused by the teacher's use of humour and the way in which a 'learning wall' helped them with their different literacy levels, ensuring that they were all able to succeed in the task.
- Reading is taught well and there is good focus on improving writing skills. Effective strategies for the teaching of spelling and phonics, along with regular celebrations of pupils' achievements, leads to pupils on both sites working hard and being keen to do well. They value seeing examples of their work displayed on their classroom walls.
- Some outstanding teaching was evident in Year 10, where pupils made excellent progress in understanding the different features of poetry because they were enthused by the teacher's challenging approach, the clear discussion and the high expectations of their success.

- There are a very few occasions when teachers do not challenge pupils well enough because too little work is prepared for pupils to do. At these times, the pace of pupils' learning dips and they do not make enough progress in the time allowed for the lesson.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support learning and to listen to reading, but just occasionally, teachers do not make the best use of their expertise in monitoring progress, modelling tasks or in recording outcomes.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils are very happy to come to school each morning. This is evident in their rising attendance, which is now above that found in most other special schools. Pupils told the inspector that they know how to stay safe at school. They get on well together and work happily in small groups.
- Pupils in the primary school showed their enjoyment of school as they arrived on Friday morning and eagerly checked their rewards for the week. They use these to purchase small toys and games. Some pupils said that they were saving rewards so that they could buy a particular item.
- Behaviour across the school is at least good, and often outstanding. Only very occasionally is learning disrupted due to the challenging behaviour of pupils. Case study evidence shows that behaviour improves quickly once pupils start at the school.
- No evidence of any bullying was seen during the inspection and records show that any issues are quickly dealt with by staff. Older pupils said that there is no real bullying of any kind.
- Behaviour is managed well on both sites, and pupils, and parents and carers, rightly say that behaviour is good. Effective training in the management of behaviour has been provided for all staff. School documentation shows that exclusions have dropped significantly in the past two years. Pupils work well together and are often seen helping others with their learning or sharing activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum. An excellent example of this was evident as older pupils prepared for a forthcoming drama production. This group of pupils found performing difficult, but they were very willing to participate in the technical side. The high level of delegated responsibility challenged their organisational and managerial skills, led to very good discussions and high levels of responsibility, and showed clear evidence of their strong personal development.
- The many visits into the community, and the learning and sporting links with other schools, ensure that pupils are enthusiastic about their school experiences.
- A good range of college links and work-related opportunities for the oldest pupils are helping to prepare them well for their futures.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders, effectively supported by staff and the governing body, have successfully maintained the quality of teaching and achievement, and improved the curriculum and attendance, in the past three years. They have woven the two schools successfully together so that there is continuous provision for all pupils. Effective use of the "Teachers' Standards" to improve teaching shows their strong commitment to improving teachers' skills so that they can progress and seek promotion.
- Leaders have made sure that staff receive effective training to keep pupils safe and help them make the best possible progress. For example, training in the teaching of reading is having a big impact on pupils' improving reading skills in both schools.
- Performance is rigorously monitored through regular observations and, as a result, senior leaders have a very clear view of how well the school is doing. They know that a small amount of teaching and learning requires improvement.
- Leadership responsibilities are effectively distributed to the different departments, each of which is fully involved in evaluating its own outcomes. This ensures that staff are proactive in

transforming their own departments and in their own performance management.

- There is a positive partnership between the school and the local authority. The school manages a successful outreach service to other local schools in the area. Effective support is provided to the school and to the outreach teachers by the local authority, especially in identifying where improvements are needed, providing training and in supporting the wide range of needs of the pupils.
- The school promotes very positive relationships with parents and carers, local schools, support agencies and a range of work-related providers. Several parents at a school coffee morning told the inspectors that they feel extremely well supported by leaders who are always approachable.
- Leaders make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities, as demonstrated by the high proportion of pupils who benefit from individual support and the full inclusion on trips, and in accreditation and vocational opportunities.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body provides effective direction to the school, promoting an atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Governors are fully involved in checking the school's strengths and areas for improvement through regular updates from leaders and through visits to the school. They know about the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. Governors have a clear awareness of their role in managing the performance of staff and they make sure that there are sufficient funds to provide the training needed to improve teaching further. They manage the school's finances well and make sure that money allocated to support pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is used for the benefit of those pupils. Governors make sure that good teachers and staff are rewarded through the school's performance management structure and that any underperformance is improved through additional training and support.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are good</b>

- Residential pupils say they feel very safe within the boarding environment. Excellent relationships exist between boarders. A supportive environment encourages older residential pupils to help and support younger pupils.
- An example of this is seen in the successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Residential pupils enjoy warm relationships with staff. Boarders' personal and social development is excellently promoted through the key worker system.
- Residential pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences within the boarding provision. Their behaviour is very good. Some have made exceptional progress socially through their boarding experience.
- Almost all pupils enjoy the extensive and creative range of extra-curricular activities on offer. These include clubs within the community such as street dance, explorers, army cadets and karate.
- These help to build on their school activities, which include football club, circuit training, arts and crafts sessions, pool, film evenings and musical workshops. Residential pupils say they have tried new activities and have discovered new talents and interests since boarding.
- The voice of residential pupils is heard through an elected member of the school council. Through this forum, pupils have seen changes in many areas, particularly in after-school activities and in changes to the equipment for the houses, as well as the redecoration of their accommodation, showing that their views are valued and listened to.
- Healthcare arrangements within the school are good. Residential pupils' individual health and

medication needs are proactively identified and fully met. However, there are a few health and safety risks that have not been identified or attended to.

- Partnership working with parents and carers, and external professionals, is strong and effective. Residential pupils benefit from well-established, close working relationships with local children's mental health services. This ensures their psychological health needs are fully met.
- Residential pupils enjoy taking part in a variety of fitness and sporting activities which are enthusiastically promoted by staff. This supports their physical health.
- They make significant progress with hygiene and personal care, and overall, the well-being of residential pupils is promoted to an extremely high standard.
- Engagement with life-skills sessions in the evenings is excellent. Within these focused activities, residential pupils learn appropriate budgetary, shopping and cooking skills.
- Many residential pupils have substantially extended their daily living skills and feel confident about moving on. The residence supports a successful transition to independence and adult life, preparing them well for their futures.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
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>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	402659

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	176
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Hawthorne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Keith Mileham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17–18 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 861679
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