

Laleham Gap School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 134971 **Local Authority** Kent **Inspection number** 341584

17-18 November 2009 **Inspection dates**

Michael Farrell Reporting inspector

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school Special

Community special **School category**

Age range of pupils 3-16 **Gender of pupils** Mixed Number of pupils on the school roll 175

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Clive Hart Headteacher Keith Mileham **Date of previous school inspection** 1 November 2007 **School address** Northdown Park Road

> Margate CT9 2TP

Telephone number 01843 221946 Fax number 01843 231368

Email address secretary@laleham-gap.kent.sch.uk

Age group 3-16 Inspection dates

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Inspection number

Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference NumberSCO23691Social care inspectorJohn Chivers

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Royal Exchange Buildings St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors and a social care inspector. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and several part lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, and groups of parents and pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at a range of documents including the school development plan, policies and school data on pupils' progress, and examined 73 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the clarity of learning outcomes in lesson planning, pupils' understanding of learning outcomes, the effectiveness of assessment in teaching, and match of work to pupils' learning needs
- the levels of attendance of different groups and different phases and the effectiveness of steps taken to improve attendance
- the effectiveness of boarding provision, including its contribution to personal development and well-being.

Information about the school

Laleham Gap School is designated for 'high functioning pupils with autism and/or specific language impairment' and all pupils have a statement of special educational needs for these difficulties. The school has boarding provision and takes pupils from all over the local authority area. The school now occupies two sites rather than the three it occupied at the previous inspection. Children in the Early Year Foundation Stage and pupils of primary school age are educated at the Broadstairs site. There have been difficulties with staff absence in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Older pupils of secondary school age are educated at the Margate site. Almost all pupils are from a White British background and all speak English as their first language. A large majority of the pupils are boys. A small percentage of pupils are cared for by the local authority. At the time of the inspection there were no three-year-old children on the school roll.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Laleham Gap School is a good school that provides excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils. Leaders and managers drive ambition to succeed well and the governing body support the school well but maintain high expectations that the school can continue to improve. Parents are extremely appreciative of the school because it goes that extra mile to involve them as fully as possible in their child's education. Partnerships with other services such as the health services and other schools are excellent because all make a great coordinated effort to contribute to improving provision. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and thorough, giving the school an accurate picture of its strengths and where it can improve. The school has made considerable efforts to improve attendance but has not analysed and monitored the attendance of pupils of different groups and ages sufficiently well, so is not fully aware of what works best.

Comprehensive policies and documentation are developed into excellent provision through the great sensitivity of the staff and their commitment to the highest standards. Links with other services and schools makes a very strong contribution to this area, leading to excellent outcomes in pupils' personal development and well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because the school's ethos and practice put great emphasis and effort into this, especially raising self-esteem by valuing pupils greatly and celebrating their successes. Pupils behave extremely well because behaviour is very well managed. Pupils feel safe because of the systems that help keep them safe and because the curriculum and practice in lessons reinforce the importance of safety. Pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and their strenuous efforts to be healthy are also greatly encouraged by the school's values. The excellent boarding provision makes a considerable contribution to the personal development and well-being of residential pupils.

The curriculum is very appropriate to the learning and developmental needs of the pupils and provides a wide variety of stimulating activities that capture their interest. It is enriched by a good variety of extra activities including residential trips. Innovations in the primary creative curriculum and the secondary alternative curriculum have not yet had a full impact on standards. A good range of suitable examinations is offered, enabling pupils to demonstrate what they have achieved.

Teaching is good, and the use of assessment to support learning is also good, and particularly strong in science. Tasks in lessons are well pitched because teachers know pupils very well and plan accordingly. Teachers and learning support assistants work closely together and relationships with pupils are very good, supporting their excellent conduct. Lessons are well paced and interesting. However, it is not always clear in planning or in instructions to pupils what exactly they are meant to learn, and this slows

progress in some lessons. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, leadership is satisfactory but provision has been affected by staff absences, and teaching does not always take full account of the particular ways in which the children learn best. Because of the good curriculum and good teaching, older pupils make good progress and learn well, and leave school well prepared for work or the next stage of their education. Boys and girls, pupils of different ages and pupils cared for by the local authority all make good progress because the school focuses well on their individual needs.

Although the Early Years Foundation Stage is only satisfactory, the school has maintained outstanding practice in care, guidance and support, boarding provision and outcomes in elements of personal development and well-being, and has nurtured excellent partnerships. This, coupled with the good self-evaluation systems and a commitment to doing better, shows that it has a good capacity for continuing improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to good or better by July 2010 by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently good or better
 - provision takes full account of the pupils' particular needs, such as those of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Improve the attendance of pupils in all age groups to the national average by July 2011 by the senior management team:
 - analysing data more rigorously
 - developing a wider range of interventions and evaluating their relative success.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Both boys and girls make good progress because the good curriculum helps ensure they are engaged in activities that stimulate them. Pupils reach challenging targets, supporting their good progress. In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' progress ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but overall it was good. In a good mathematics lesson on shape and calculation for pupils in Year 3, the activities were well pitched to match what pupils could do and staff were confident in focusing pupils on their tasks. The more able pupils were able to explain how they reached the answers to their calculations. Behaviour was excellent because it was very well managed. In a good science lesson for Year 10 involving making silver chloride, pupils made good progress because the lesson was well structured, pace was good, the pupils were encouraged to assess their own progress and very careful attention was given to safety. The learning support assistant gave very effective support. Where progress was not so good, this was usually because learning outcomes were not precise enough.

Pupils make excellent progress in developing their self-esteem because the school places great emphasis on this and wastes no opportunity to celebrate achievements and effort.

Good procedures exist to keep pupils safe and because lessons reinforce the importance of safety well. They have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and do their best to behave in line with this understanding, enjoying sports and other physical activities. Pupils enjoy school, are very punctual to lessons and try hard in them. They make a very strong contribution to the school as a community and a good contribution to the wider community. Although attendance is only satisfactory, good work-related activities and careers guidance combine with pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills to ensure they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2	
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2	
The extent to which pupils feel safe		
Pupils' behaviour		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being		
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	

How effective is the provision?

A particular strength of teaching is the very effective management of behaviour so that the minimum time is lost if a pupil finds it hard to cope in a lesson. Other common strengths are very good relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils, well structured lesson plans and the good support of learning support assistants, who work closely with teachers and contribute considerably to the very good behaviour

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

management. Opportunities are taken in some lessons to encourage pupils to assess their own work and progress. However, the success criteria set out in planning do not always refer to what the pupils are expected to learn and do by the end of the lesson, rather than simply the activities the pupils are doing. This blunts the opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and for the teacher to know exactly what has been achieved, and so limits progress from being even better.

The curriculum is broad, well balanced and inclusive. The highly visual and practical activities are suited well to the learning needs of the pupils. Early literacy support materials are used well. Learning to learn lessons introduced in Year 7 and spreading to other years effectively contribute to developing social skills and confidence. Extra-curricular time given to information and communication technology encourages independent learning well. Activities to encourage personal development and well-being are effectively woven into the curriculum. Residential weeks and links with the Canterbury Environmental Unit are fruitful and enriching aspects. Visits to different places of worship strongly encourage understanding of different cultures and religious education covers a range of faiths.

Care, guidance and support are underpinned by an impressive range of high quality detailed and comprehensive documentation. Excellent communication, teamwork and attention to detail are strengths of the provision. Very close liaison is developed with parents through media such as home-school books. The Learning Support Unit is an excellent resource for calming and reassuring upset pupils so that lesson disturbance is kept to a minimum and learning is not disrupted. Impressive, detailed individual plans are a mark of the school's individual care and concern for each pupil. Care systems and planning look well ahead so that transitions or any changes in pupils' lives are excellently supported. Excellent guidance on choices and career options is provided and there is very close liaison with the Connexions service. This excellent professional approach leads to real care and contributes very strongly to outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's ethos of seeking improvement drives and motivates staff well and good support for teaching and learning includes careful and accurate systems of lesson observations data collection and analysis and subsequent targets for improvement. The governing body challenges and supports the school in equal measure, and is not resting

content but is reorganising itself to improve further. Parents are deeply engaged by the school, which goes above and beyond what is expected to support parents and convey to them how much they are valued as partners in their child's education and development. Other partnerships too are excellent because the school recognises the power of effective partnerships and puts enormous effort into sustaining and developing them. Equal opportunities are effectively promoted because the school cherishes each pupil and tackles any discrimination well, and because the school ethos and the content and delivery of the curriculum reinforce the clear message that all are valued. Good safeguarding procedures are built on very well considered policies, and the excellent relationships in the school and in the boarding facility enable pupils to communicate any concerns they may have. Risk assessments take full account of the views of pupils and parents. Community cohesion is promoted well, leading to good outcomes for pupils' contribution to the community, but auditing and evaluation and communication to others of the local, national and global aspects of this area are not fully embedded. The school offers good value for money and marshals its human and financial resources well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	

Early Years Foundation Stage

The small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a group which includes pupils from Year 1. They make sound progress from below average starting points as a result of adequate medium term planning. However, lesson planning does not always contain sufficient detail and teaching does not consistently utilise visual aids to structure learning, and this constrains progress. For example, in a satisfactory

'sharing time' session language development was adequate because pupils were able to ask questions of another child, sometimes prompted by the teacher, but opportunities were missed to use visual aids to support communication. As a result of the sensitive interaction and support by adults, sessions are settled and calm. Speech and language therapy makes a valuable contribution to children's social interaction. Constraints in terms of access to the outside learning environment have been partly compensated for by having planned periods outside. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant efforts to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team have had limited impact because of staff absence.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Boarding provision

The boarding provision is outstanding because it is organised and managed to a high professional standard. It affords an equal standard of care and support to the resident children and has full regard for equality and diversity issues.

The school has a range of policies, procedures and guidance covering all sections of the key standards of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. These are reviewed on a regular basis, are known by staff and are accessible to them.

The boarding section has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the children and ensures these areas are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The school nurse is responsible for health and medical arrangements. Children have detailed health and medical histories and any progress or issues in these areas are recorded in their individual care plans and held on file. Children are taught about aspects of healthy living via the school's curriculum and this is reinforced by care staff in pastoral time. Children have the opportunity to take part in physical exercise which helps promote their general physical fitness, coordination and confidence.

Care staff are trained in first aid and medication administration and other health and medical related areas. Medication is securely held in locked cabinets and audited on a regular basis. It is administered in a caring, sensitive and reassuring manner with children enjoying the attention afforded them by the school's medical staff.

The school's menu provides for a balanced, healthy and varied diet, having regard for any special medical, cultural, religious or preferential diets as appropriate. Meals are of very good quality, plentiful and well presented. Meal times are a well ordered social occasion and children have the opportunity to prepare meals in the boarding wings.

Children are treated with dignity. Staff respect their privacy ensuring that any confidential information about them is held securely. Complaints are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and show action taken and an outcome. Children and their parents raised no complaints or concerns. The high standard of care provided helps reduce the likelihood of dissatisfaction or complaints arising. There is a clear regard for child protection and safeguarding matters throughout the boarding service. Staff are alert to potential safeguarding issues and receive training in child protection. The supervision of children is close without being intrusive. Children say they feel safe in school and that staff are diligent regarding their well-being. They are also clear that bullying is not a significant issue and that staff act quickly should such incidents arise. Children's help and advice lines are displayed should children wish to refer a complaint or concern externally.

Absconding is not a problem. Any unauthorised absences are recorded and appropriate notifications made. Staff are trained in behaviour management resulting in children's behaviour being very well managed. There are excellent relationships between staff and children with continuous interaction and engagement evident. Children respond positively to staff requests and instructions and comment that the standard of discipline is fair and realistic. Any sanctions administered and physical restraint used is clearly recorded and appears necessary and appropriate in the circumstances described in the records. No significant issues regarding behaviour management and control are evident. Areas of health and safety are closely monitored. Arrangements are practiced which help keep children, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential

keep children, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards. Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. They help ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the children and sound staff personnel files show that all required information is held.

The pastoral service has full regard for children's education and learning. This encourages and promotes their interest and participation in a range of purposeful and meaningful pursuits. Care staff encourage and facilitate children's education and learning in pastoral time, providing a wide range of sedentary and active pursuits in which children benefit from and wholly enjoy. Staff ensure children complete any home work or projects when set. Care staff liaise closely with teaching staff and sound communication between them exists. Children's accomplishments and achievements are displayed around the school and certificates and awards for their efforts and attainment are held in their individual files. Parents comment favourably regarding staff inputs and their children's progress since their admission to the school. There is an excellent standard of pastoral care and support which is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Children are allocated key workers who have specific responsibilities within the pastoral provision. Children confirm their key worker's commitment to them and appreciate the substantial inputs they contribute to their holistic care. External specialist support services are arranged when necessary.

Children's rights are highly valued by the pastoral service and a range of forums exist where children can communicate their views, opinions and exercise choice. Children are clear that care staff listen to what they have to say and act upon their opinions,

enquiries and requests. Children are consulted about their future, progress or issues and such matters are clearly recorded in daily logs, care plans, risk assessments, action plans and review reports. Children have statements of special educational needs and individual education plans of which care staff are familiar. There is a clear admissions policy and criteria which helps ensure that children admitted are compatible with the service provided. Transition plans are in place for appropriate children and independence and life and social skills training is undertaken. Children said they appreciate and value such arrangements and recognise its importance in preparation for adult life or a future placement. Any contact children have with their parents or significant others is recorded.

Children are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothes and have access to personal requisites such as toiletries. Pocket money is provided by parents and held in safekeeping by staff who keep clear and accurate records of transactions made. The boarding wings are decorated and furnished to a good standard and provide sufficient communal and private space for the children. Whilst some areas are showing signs of wear this is more than compensated for by staff inputs. They have created a bright, cheerful, and homely environment where children clearly enjoy living and confirm their satisfaction of accommodation provided. Children's bedrooms are of an equal standard and personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford privacy. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding wings and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

The school has a clear statement of purpose and informative prospectus which accurately describes the service and facilities provided. Staff are sufficient in number, skills, competence and experience to meet the needs of the children and enable the pastoral section to achieve its aims and objectives. The boarding service is managed to a high professional standard, with well trained and supervised staff who are formally appraised annually.

Staff are highly committed to the children and are supportive of the school's management and ethos. They are clear that the school has full regard for equal opportunities, equality and diversity and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service. There is sound communication between care staff with boarding wing meetings held on a regular basis. Senior staff monitor and sign appropriate records and regular monitoring visits take place. The school's arrangements in this area act as a sound quality assurance mechanism. In addition annual questionnaires are received from parents and children commenting on the service provided.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

There was a high response rate to the parental questionnaires. These were almost universally positive and reflected the great appreciation of the school that parents conveyed to inspectors in face-to-face and telephone discussions. Typical of the many positive comments were that parents were 'more than happy' with the school and that the school was 'excellent'. A very small number of parents said they would like the school to offer more therapy. A very few said they were concerned that children had to cross a publicly accessible lane moving from one part of the secondary site to the other although they considered the school did all it could to make this safe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Laleham Gap School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 175 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		s Agree		Disa	Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
My child enjoys school	46	67	21	30	1	1	1	1	
The school keeps my child safe	58	84	11	16	0	0	0	0	
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	74	18	26	0	0	0	0	
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	62	25	36	0	0	0	0	
The teaching is good at this school	57	83	12	17	0	0	0	0	
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	71	20	29	0	0	0	0	
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	58	28	41	1	1	0	0	
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	49	71	18	26	0	0	0	0	
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	77	14	20	1	1	0	0	
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	78	15	2	2	0	0	0	
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	71	20	29	0	0	0	0	
The school is led and managed effectively	52	75	17	25	0	0	0	0	
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	83	11	16	1	1	0	0	

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description	
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An oustanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.	
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.	
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.	
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.	

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	 The school's capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. The quality of teaching. The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laleham Gap School, Margate, CT9 2TP

It was good to meet you when my colleagues and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for helping us in the inspection by telling us your views and explaining what you were doing in your lessons.

Laleham Gap School is a good school. It is led and managed well. Staff care for you and support you excellently. You behave extremely well and the inspectors were very struck by how polite and helpful you are. Teaching is good so you make good progress and older pupils take a good range of examinations. By the time you leave you are working at levels that are similar to those of other pupils of the same age. The curriculum is good and you enjoy a good variety of extra activities.

There are two things the school could do better so I have asked the headteacher to:

- improve the provision for the very youngest children by improving the teaching they receive
- improve your attendance by analysing and monitoring more carefully who is absent and why, and what works best to improve attendance.

I am sure you will want to do your part in improving your attendance.

With every good wish for your future

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell

Lead Inspector

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