

Inspection of Laleham Gap School

Ozengell Place, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6FH

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Laleham Gap School provides an exceptional quality of education. Pupils thrive here and are very well prepared for their next steps after leaving the school. The school's motto, 'learn, grow, succeed', is built into the fabric of the school. The strong pastoral care helps pupils to feel safe and happy here. The relationships staff develop with pupils are very special. Staff take time to get to know pupils on an individual level. They find out about pupils' likes and dislikes, and what they are good at. As a result, pupils feel understood, well cared for and well supported. One pupil said to the lead inspector, 'I love the teachers here.'

The school day gets off to a positive start because of the well-established routines that give pupils predictability. This helps to reduce pupils' anxieties. Pupils know exactly what to expect when they arrive at school. Importantly, the morning 'check in' gives staff an indication of any problems they need to resolve to ensure a smooth day for pupils. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They are experts in understanding the challenges that pupils with autism face. Staff use restorative approaches well to support pupils so that their learning is as effective as it can be.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

While Laleham Gap is a relatively large special school, it has a 'family feel' that helps pupils to feel secure. Many pupils have had negative educational experiences before coming here. This school offers them a fresh start. Highly trained staff develop a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs, talents, interests and academic strengths. As a result, they personalise the curriculum to meet pupils' different needs exceptionally well.

Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about learning. This is because staff create learning opportunities that are fun and engaging, and that capture pupils' attention and interest. Staff teach pupils how to understand and talk about their emotions. Leaders and staff understand that for pupils to learn well they need to be in the right place socially and emotionally.

Getting pupils ready for later life starts in the early years. Children settle in quickly and get to know the very clear expectations in place. Staff model the social communication and interaction they want pupils to develop. They regularly reinforce what they expect of children. For example, 'good looking', 'good listening', 'good sitting' and 'good thinking' are common prompts staff use to recognise pupils' positive behaviours. Staff make the most of every opportunity to show children how to interact with each other. Consequently, children play happily together and learn to take turns and share.

Staff place great importance on reading. The teaching of phonics is very strong. Pupils learn the sounds they need to be able to blend them together and read well. The books they read match the sounds they learn. This helps them to feel a sense

of success and to read fluently. Pupils develop confidence in reading as they move through the school. A love of reading pervades the school. Pupils regularly read for pleasure, and staff often read to pupils.

Pupils enjoy learning about a range of topics and subjects from primary through to sixth form. Leaders have thought very carefully about the key knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn as they move through the school. They regularly check that pupils have grasped this important content before moving on. Where pupils need additional help and support, they receive it quickly. This careful approach ensures that pupils' knowledge and skills build as they move through the school. As a result, pupils achieve very well, and many pupils achieve a range of GCSE qualifications.

In the sixth form, the curriculum is highly personalised. Students experience the world of work and learn about important topics such as managing money. All students focus on English, mathematics, independence and life skills, travel training and transition. Crucially, what students learn is precisely matched to what they need to be prepared for further education, training or employment.

The personal development of pupils is exceptional. Pupils are supported extremely well by a wide range of therapies and interventions which leaders carefully monitor. Pupils benefit from many opportunities. There is an abundance of clubs and trips for them get involved in. Pupils talk fondly of various drama and music events. A well-thought-out careers programme ensures that pupils have suitable advice about the different future options available. The learning for life curriculum is successful in teaching pupils about important topics such as religion, equality, diversity and relationships.

Governors have a wealth of experience. They have a strong understanding of the school and understand what it does well and what could be even better. Governors work closely with leaders and ensure that they are held to account effectively. They do this by scrutinising the school's work and asking useful questions that make sure everyone is working towards the same goal.

Leaders work very well with the other special schools in the local area. They share best practice and are keen to learn from others. In addition, Laleham Gap provides a wealth of support and professional development to other schools, particularly mainstream schools in Thanet.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a very strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Rigorous recruitment processes ensure that leaders recruit suitable staff. Leaders and staff are trained well in safeguarding. This helps them to know how to spot behaviours that may indicate a concern about a pupil. Effective systems are in place that help staff to report concerns quickly. Safeguarding leaders take swift,

appropriate actions as required. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including online.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 134971 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10286728 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Foundation special |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 220 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 12 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Daniel Chantler |
| Headteacher | Les Milton |
| Website | www.lgs.kent.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Laleham Gap School is a communication and interaction special school for pupils aged four to 18 who have autism, speech, language and communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has opened a sixth-form provision since the last inspection.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, and teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to an adult from the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils to gather their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held meetings with safeguarding leaders, governors, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised the single central record and sampled safeguarding records.
- Inspectors also took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor minutes.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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