



# Laleham Gap School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 134971  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 294234  
**Inspection dates** 21–22 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Mike Kell

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Northdown Park
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Margate
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16		CT9 2TP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 221946
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	195	<b>Fax number</b>	01843 231368
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Clive Hart
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Keith Mileham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–16	21–22 February 2007	294234

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is the school's first inspection as it was only established in April 2005, following the amalgamation of a primary and a secondary special school. The school is able to take pupils from throughout the local authority as it has a residential facility for a small number of pupils. The Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) is responsible for inspecting the boarding units. The school is widely dispersed. Two groups of nursery children are based in Ramsgate. Each group has two days each week in the Laleham Gap provision and the children spend the remainder of the week in their local primary schools. Most of the children transfer to Reception classes in these local schools. The children in the Laleham Gap Reception class and the pupils in Years 1 to 6 are located in Broadstairs, while the oldest pupils are accommodated in Margate.

The new school was specifically designated for 'high functioning pupils with autism and/or specific language impairment'. Therefore, most pupils have a statement of special educational need for these learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties or physical disability. Almost all the pupils have a White British background and they all speak English as their first language. A large majority of the pupils are boys. A small proportion of the pupils are in public care.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Laleham Gap is outstanding. It is a hugely impressive school that enjoys the overwhelming support of parents. Following a very detailed audit of provision at the time of amalgamation, senior leaders determined that they needed to focus on the pre-school and primary phases and this has paid dividends. Outstanding leadership and management have enabled the leaders to produce marked improvements in these phases while simultaneously maintaining the long-established excellent work of the secondary department.

The whole staff team has produced an environment in which the pupils flourish. Very high expectations and a commitment to developing the pupils as young people are evident in all the school's work. Excellent levels of care, guidance and support provide the pupils with a very secure foundation for learning. Crucially, the pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and associated competence in communication. Their excellent attendance, behaviour and attitudes put them in the best possible position to learn. Even though the pupils' standards of academic work are exceptionally low compared with national expectations, they make good progress from their starting points. The achievements of the pupils in the secondary department are excellent. The progress made by the younger pupils has improved dramatically since amalgamation. It is now good and continuing to improve as the school's senior leaders' robust monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice have raised teachers' expectations. The school's commitment to all of its pupils means that equality of opportunity influences all of its work. Senior staff's exceptionally detailed analyses of all pupils' progress make sure that none are being disadvantaged. The excellent residential provision makes a very substantial contribution to the boarders' learning and personal development.

The pupils receive a good curriculum and teaching and learning are good, although there is variation between the age groups. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in learning basic skills and excellent progress in their personal development. The primary curriculum is good and the pupils are taught well, although teachers' planning does not always show what individual pupils or groups are expected to learn. In these instances, the pupils are not always given activities that meet the learning needs of each of them. On a very few occasions this happens in the secondary department too, but generally the quality of learning on this site is outstanding. The pupils rise to the challenge of the very high standards that their teachers set. Their curriculum is excellent, although the school is seeking to develop the vocational education component in Years 10 and 11.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

A CSCI inspection in November 2006 judged that the school met all the national minimum care standards and exceeded most of them. The school was praised for its procedures for safeguarding pupils and for its establishment of a very healthy

environment. The report noted as striking features the extent to which a range of professionals plan and work together to meet individuals' needs and the excellent opportunities the pupils have to contribute to decision making. This was confirmed during the inspection.

Procedures for guiding and supporting pupils are very effective. Each pupil has a designated key worker, and a designated member of staff has a particular responsibility for looked after pupils. The pupils benefit enormously from the close liaison between residential care workers (RCW) and their colleagues in school. For instance, RCWs help to carry out speech and language therapy and occupational therapy programmes and they support pupils with their homework. Such links enable RCWs to reinforce the boarders' learning and personal development very effectively. The pupils have extensive opportunities to spend time in the local community: some are members of a cub pack, others are army cadets and a number go horse riding. A very good range of on-site activities is also available each evening.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Routinely write lesson plans that identify what individual pupils or groups are expected to learn.
- Provide activities that always match the learning needs of each pupil.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The nature of the pupils' learning difficulties means that the standards they attain are exceptionally low compared with the national average, but they achieve well. No groups of pupils, such as looked after children and boarders, underperform compared with their classmates, irrespective of the nature of their learning difficulty.

Children enter the Nursery with significantly delayed language and limited communication skills. The Nursery is successful in getting the children to communicate by putting them into situations where they are encouraged to interact with others. Activities are carefully structured and organised and so the children make good progress. For instance, they respond to symbols of happy and sad faces and repeat the words, and a few make spontaneous comments, such as 'My cat's at home' when looking at a picture in a book. The children who stay at Laleham Gap for their Reception Year continue their good progress as they become more inquisitive and increasingly independent.

Pupils in the primary department now make good progress and achieve challenging targets. Secondary aged pupils make outstanding progress because teachers set very high standards and the pupils rise to the challenge. As a result, they do very well in accredited examinations at the end of Year 11. A small number of pupils obtain a grade C or above in the wide range of GCSE examinations they take.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The pupils make huge strides in their personal development, communication competence and social skills. The pupils with communication disorders become more confident and competent at expressing their views and those with autism learn to interact with others. As a result they are able to work as small groups, such as when considering how to produce a television campaign to promote healthy eating. They also show excellent progress in their spiritual, moral and cultural development, including learning about those from other cultures and with different faiths. The pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of a safe and healthy lifestyle. They are aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are willing participants in the many sporting activities that are available.

The pupils enjoy everything that the school has to offer and are keen to make the most of all the opportunities that present themselves, both in and outside the classroom. The pupils take up the outstanding opportunities that are presented to contribute to the school community. For instance, older pupils volunteer to be on the school council and there is an anti-bullying 'crew' who help to ensure that no pupils feel intimidated. The pupils are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors, and many are very keen to show visitors around the school. The pupils are prepared very well for leaving school. Their positive attitudes and confidence are bolstered by a good range of accredited qualifications.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are interesting and the pupils are very willing contributors. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin the pupils' good learning. Teachers and teaching assistants (TA) in the Foundation Stage use praise and encouragement to get the children to participate and to be successful. They use a variety of communication methods to gain the children's attention and provide activities that motivate them to explore and become more confident learners and communicators.

The pupils in the primary department build on the skills they have acquired previously. They learn well. Lessons are orderly and organised and teachers manage their pupils very well. Lesson plans identify the aims of the lesson in broad terms but they do not routinely show in sufficient detail exactly what it is hoped individual pupils, or small groups, will learn. This is rarely the case in the secondary department. Here, teachers' very high expectations are evident in the brisk pace with which lessons proceed and the levels of challenge they give their pupils. The pupils respond so positively that they learn exceptionally well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A good curriculum that meets the needs of individual pupils is promoted very well. For instance, the curriculum of the potentially more vulnerable groups, such as looked after children, is monitored to ensure that they have the same opportunities as others. Nursery and reception children now receive an array of exciting activities. The full Foundation Stage curriculum has only been in place a short time, but it is now being implemented well, as the activities provided cover all the areas of learning. The accommodation is generally satisfactory across the sites as a whole, but the school is acutely aware that the layout of the accommodation makes it difficult for reception children to access the outside play equipment. This means that they cannot easily make the most of these facilities.

In the primary department, teachers' adoption of the national strategy is influencing and improving the way in which they plan and teach. This is having a positive impact on the progress that the pupils make. The excellent progress they make in their personal development is enhanced by the very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The secondary department curriculum is outstanding, with an excellent balance between enabling pupils to gain accredited qualifications and giving them opportunities to develop the personal and work-related skills they will need when they leave. The PSHE programme meets the needs of the age group very well, incorporating features such as careers education and work experience, and the school has begun to broaden this vocational dimension by working in partnership with other education providers.

The school supports classroom learning very effectively through educational visits, including residential trips, and an extensive range of after school clubs that give pupils the chance to pursue their interests and develop new ones.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding levels of care, guidance and support give the pupils a very good platform for learning. There are very secure systems for safeguarding the pupils and ensuring their welfare. Parents are unanimous in agreeing that their children feel safe and well cared for. The school's concern for the individual shines through. Speech and language therapists and occupational therapists develop individual programmes that are reinforced by teachers, TAs and RCWs. The pastoral system supports the pupils' day-to-day well-being very well and learning support units help those pupils who find learning difficult. The special educational needs coordinator manages very smoothly the links between all the adults who work with pupils. As a result, there is a clear connection between the various targets set at pupils' annual reviews, covering therapy requirements, academic targets and personal development objectives. This coordinated approach is a highly influential factor in the strength of pupils' personal development and achievements.

Strong links between different departments ease pupils' transition from one site to another. The nursery teacher maintains very good contact with the children's mainstream schools. These links are crucially important in smoothing the transfer for children who move into Reception in mainstream schools rather than remain at Laleham Gap.

Effective assessment and recording procedures provide teachers with detailed information about the pupils' achievements, which they use when advising their pupils. The pupils are becoming increasingly involved in self-evaluation. For instance, they are encouraged to contribute to annual reviews and school reports. As a result, the pupils have a very good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The very perceptive headteacher has put together a highly effective senior leadership team. They share a very clear vision for the school. Their early audit identified the quality of education on the primary site as an urgent priority. The audit identified that expectations were not high enough and so the pupils did not make sufficient progress. They quickly implemented robust programmes for monitoring the extent of the pupils' learning and tracking their progress. To support staff further, they also introduced focused professional training. The improvement in the progress that these pupils make is testament to the effectiveness of their work.

Even though the school is widely dispersed, all leaders fulfil their responsibilities very effectively and efficiently. The deputy headteachers maintain an excellent oversight of the quality of education by monitoring and evaluating all aspects of classroom practice. They are especially effective at analysing the pupils' achievements and evaluating their progress and in using this information as a basis for future monitoring. Staff with pastoral responsibilities carry out their duties diligently and so the pupils become increasingly mature in dealing with their emotions and in making sensible decisions. The very high quality residential provision is due to its excellent management, as noted in the CSCI report.

The senior leaders are not content to rest on their laurels. The school development plan is constantly evolving as self-evaluation processes continually unearth aspects of the school's work that the leaders want to make even better. A lot has been achieved in a short time. This indicates that senior leaders have an outstanding capacity to maintain the momentum of school improvement through the school's internal systems and its outstanding links with partners. The senior leadership team has the confidence of parents. 'An excellent school with a dedicated staff team. The management team is very responsive and willing to address issues swiftly and competently' is typical of the type of comment they make.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You are extremely polite and friendly and we really enjoyed the time we spent with you.

Laleham Gap is an excellent school. Your teachers do a good job. They make lessons enjoyable and plan interesting things for you to do. As a result, you learn a lot and make good progress. Most of you do very well in your examinations at the end of Year 11. You do a great deal to help yourselves too. You are very enthusiastic and go to school very regularly. Your behaviour and attitudes to school are excellent. The ways in which you give things back to the school are also very impressive. You do this by your membership on the school council, being a member of the anti-bullying crew and showing visitors around the school. Your school is very successful in helping you to understand what being healthy and staying safe means. You are prepared very well for leaving school.

All adults look after you exceptionally well. The school is a very safe and caring community. Those of you who stay overnight are cared for very carefully in the boarding units too. Residential staff are very good at supporting the work that you do in school. They also do a great deal to help you to take part in activities in the town, such as going to the cubs and horse riding.

Senior staff are excellent in the way they manage the school. It is difficult to run a new school when it is not all in one place but they have done an outstanding job. They work very hard to make sure that every one of you has the same chance to take part in everything that the school offers. They are also very good at checking that each one of you is making good progress with your work. They are very determined to keep improving the school. We have given them some further suggestions to help them to do this:

- Teachers should make sure that in every lesson they plan exactly what they want each one of you to learn.
- In all lessons your teachers need to give each one of you work that is at just the right level for you to learn as much as possible.

Once again, thank you very much. We wish all of you luck in the future.