

Laleham Gap School

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

Inspection dates

19/01/2016 to 21/01/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Young people flourish as a result of the supportive, nurturing and highly individualised support they receive from committed staff working in close collaboration across the school. Significant improvement in their social skills, behaviour, self-confidence and self-esteem is having a positive impact on their learning and academic advancement, improving their future life chances.
- Within a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance, young people benefit from positive staff role models and the mentoring and role modelling of their older peers. They learn how to manage social situations and establish friendships. Their behaviour is excellent.
- Through extremely responsive, sensitive and consistent support, staff develop positive relationship with young people. Young people trust staff, know they will protect them and accept the support they offer. They know and appreciate that staff value their unique qualities and listen to their views.
- Effective safeguarding arrangements protect young people. Staff are confident and competent in their safeguarding roles and implement appropriate action to protect their welfare.
- Young people appreciate the new high quality, purpose-built accommodation provided. One young person commented that it is 'four/five star'.
- Dynamic, forward-looking leadership and management, effective monitoring and evaluation ensures the service continues to maintain high standards, improve and develop to provide opportunities for young people to achieve and succeed.

- The highly skilled and long-established care staff team offer a wealth of experience, stability and continuity so that young people benefit from the highest standards of care. Parents and carers are highly complimentary, acknowledging the intense input from staff and the beneficial impact on both the young person and the family of working together to promote young people's development.
- One minor shortfall relates to the recording of incidents that involve physical intervention.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools:

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that sufficient consideration is given in the record of incidents involving physical restraint to the views of the young person and the de-brief with staff following any such incident.

Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the acting head, head of care, business manager, school nurse, head of speech and language therapy, care staff, teachers, designated safeguarding lead, two governors and young people. Both residential units were visited with observation of staff and young people's interactions and activities. The inspector joined young people for two meals. Policies, records and individual young people's files were examined. Telephone or email contact was made with parents and external safeguarding agencies.

Inspection team

Jan Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Laleham Gap school is situated in Ramsgate, 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 in a separate block on the school site. It provides overnight accommodation for up to 24 residential pupils. At the time of the inspection there were 9 residential pupils and 189 pupils on roll. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people make excellent progress as a result of the highly individualised, nurturing support they receive. A young person commented 'when I was younger I was a bad person and always getting into trouble. Staff have helped me a lot to change and I realised that being like that was not getting me anywhere.' Parents and carers recognise the immense progress their children have made. One parent remarked that in the short period since their son has been residing at the school, other family members had commented that 'he is a much more confident young man'. Other parents noted their child is more sociable, less anxious and showing considerable progress in their social development. Academically, young people are making significant progress, with some making exceptional progress, evidenced in improving grades and taking additional GCSE subjects.

Within a calm, nurturing and very supportive environment, young people enjoy their experience and respond to the warmth and respect from staff who offer personalised and consistent support. As they develop their social and communication skills and benefit from positive role modelling from staff and other young people, they learn how to deal with social situations and establish friendships. Within the culture of mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance, young people thrive.

Developing life skills and independence is an important aspect of residential life. Staff encourage young people to start thinking about their future at an early stage. As they progress towards the transition from the school they engage in formalised programmes to prepare them for adult life, focusing on shopping, cooking, travel, household skills and taking social responsibility.

Young people are proactive in their contribution to residential life and the school. Knowing that staff respect their views and are genuinely interested in their opinions, young people engage in various consultation processes resulting in their evident commitment to the development of the school and themselves.

The welfare of young people is at the heart of practice. Managers and staff are highly effective in protecting them, promoting their well-being and implementing tailored strategies to advance their development. Strong, effective leadership and management and the commitment of the experienced staff team ensures young people's needs are met and that the provision continually improves so that they have maximum opportunities to succeed in the future.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Young people have recently moved into a newly built residential block on the site of the

new school. They are complimentary about the new accommodation with one young person commenting that 'it's better than the hotel I stayed in on holiday. It's 4/5 star'. Young people all have their own room with en-suite facilities, a laptop and television for their personal use. Large communal sitting and dining areas are bright and modern with smaller communal rooms available for different activities when needed. The residence has new furniture throughout. Staff have worked hard and achieved superb results in preparing the new accommodation in a short space of time and creating a warm, welcoming, homely environment which the young people are justifiably proud of.

Staff know each young person extremely well and continuously implement supportive, nurturing strategies to promote positive outcomes. Individualised placement plans identify needs with specific targets reviewed weekly by the young person with their key worker. Young people play an active role in this process, tracking their progress and agreeing changes to their targets as they achieve set goals. Parents acknowledge the input from key workers in supporting young people to make progress. A parent commented that key working support is 'unparalleled, absolutely amazing' and another remarked 'staff go above and beyond expectations'. Through patient, tolerant and caring relationships, young people's anxiety levels reduce, they become more self-confident, more able to communicate their feelings and more effectively manage their day-to-day lives.

The school nurse oversees young people's health, both physical and emotional. They all have individual health plans compiled in consultation with parents and carers which identify specific health needs and targets. The emotional and psychological needs of young people have a high priority with the nurse playing a pivotal role in monitoring their well-being. She is accessible to young people, having a room in the residential building, meeting them informally and getting to know them. She works collaboratively with care staff, education staff and therapists to promote healthy outcomes. Liaison with external health professionals, such as the child and adolescent mental health service, ensures young people receive the specialist support they require. Systems for the safe administration of medication are robust.

Senior leaders have embedded collaborative working across the school. Teaching staff report enthusiastically on the positive impact of care staff's support for young people's education. In addition to consistent, practical support for homework and reading, care staff have developed a culture of high expectations and the vital emotional support for young people to believe in themselves and have the confidence to challenge themselves to achieve. Consequently, their grades have improved and they are making significant academic progress. The lead speech and language therapist confirms the success of working together. She commented that as a result of residential stays 'they are more confident, willing to try new things and are not so shy'. Care staff implement daily therapy programmes for young people and embrace bespoke training in relation to individual support to advance progress

A wide range of activities, on-site and in the local community, keep young people busy and enables them to try new leisure pursuits whilst extending their social experiences

with support. They learn to manage group activities and social situations. When asked what activities their son does, a parent replied 'what doesn't he do'. Activities include fencing, horse riding, rock climbing, swimming, cinema, gym, soft ball, archery, shopping and vary according to young people's specific interests. Encouraging physical activity is part of promoting a healthy lifestyle, as is healthy eating. The school provides high quality, nutritious meals during the day. Evening meals are sociable occasions where young people enjoy healthy, home cooked meals. Lively discussion and debate takes place amongst staff and young people on current topical themes with staff guiding and assisting them to respect each other's views whilst promoting British values.

Young people know their views and opinions are important. Staff consult with them at all levels including key working, residents' meetings, the school council and informally on a day-to-day basis. Young people have chosen the name of the new residential building and their individual units. Staff have consulted with them in relation to how they would like to be referred to in documents and reports and they chose to be referred to as 'young people'. Recently they have been consulted regarding how they would like to refer to staff and have decided that care staff will be referred to by their first names, thus developing a more informal, family-like environment on the new site.

Young people report that 'there are always staff to talk to' if they have concerns. They know how to make a complaint, though rarely use the process, as staff listen and are responsive to their views. One formal complaint from a young person since the last inspection outlining a number of grievances in a lengthy letter, resulted in a thorough investigation by the head of care. It involved the young person at all stages and achieved a satisfactory outcome. The young person expressed surprise as to how importantly it had been viewed and dealt with. Through such processes, young people feel valued knowing their views matter thus developing self-confidence and self-esteem.

Staff encourage young people to maintain contact with their families. Parents report that they can call at any time. Young people use their own mobile phones to contact their families or have easy access to the school phone to keep in touch.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The welfare and protection of young people is fundamental to all practice. Highly effective policies and procedures implemented by well-trained staff who are vigilant and confident in their role, safeguard young people. Staff have the necessary understanding of issues that can pose risks to them such as child sexual exploitation, e-safety and radicalisation. Young people say they feel safe and through their conversations confirm that their feelings of security result from knowing that staff protect them from harm. Parents and carers report that they have no concerns about young people's safety.

The experienced designated safeguarding lead (DSL) manages child protection concerns with the assistance of other trained safeguarding officers and key staff. Prompt and appropriate action is taken in response to immediate concerns. Less urgent concerns

are diligently recorded and thoughtfully monitored for patterns and trends which may indicate that intervention is required to support the welfare of young people. External safeguarding agencies report good working relationships with the school and the DSL who consults with them on safeguarding matters. Weekly multi-disciplinary meetings, focusing on the well-being of pupils, consider particular concerns which staff have identified and agree a plan of action to support them and protect them from harm.

Extremely positive relationships between young people and staff underpin successful behaviour strategies. Through thoughtful, sensitive and consistent support from staff, young people develop a sense of safety, protection and trust enabling them to benefit from the support staff offer. Staff have high expectations of polite, respectful behaviour with tolerance of differences. Instances of bullying are rare. With effective role modelling by staff and the celebration and recognition of good behaviour through rewards and incentives, young people are motivated to behave in a socially acceptable manner. As young people grow and develop, they too become role models and mentors for those who are younger or less confident, helping them to understand appropriate, mutually respectful behaviour.

Within this culture, incidents of inappropriate behaviour are uncommon. Staff are highly skilled in responding to young people's emotional needs, know them well, understand their specific vulnerabilities and de-escalate potentially difficult situations quickly. Consequently, there have been no incidents requiring physical intervention since the last inspection. Staff undertake regular training to manage challenging behaviour safely. Formats for recording such incidents are in place and managers need to ensure that sufficient consideration is made in the report of the young person's views and the record of the de-brief with staff following any incident.

Risk assessments for all young people reduce the likelihood of harm and staff implement individual behaviour management plans when necessary. Currently, there are no young people who require such dedicated measures. This is testament to the success of staff in creating an environment of mutual respect, care and understanding where young people learn appropriate ways of managing their difficult emotions and trust staff to support them in challenging situations.

There have been no incidents of young people leaving the residential provision without permission. Staff implement an appropriate policy to safeguard them if such an event occurs.

Rigorous and robust health and safety processes, diligently and thoroughly overseen by the school's business manager, protect young people and staff. In the complex transition to the school's new premises, she has ensured that all health and safety matters relating to the new building meet requirements. Appropriate fire safety checks are routinely applied including regular fire drills.

Meticulous attention to detail, again by the business manager, in recruitment procedures safeguard young people from unsuitable adults working with them. All checks and

references are concluded before new staff join the school.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The head of care provides dynamic, forward-looking leadership and management of the residential provision. With clear oversight and an aspirational view, he seeks to develop the service continuously to improve opportunities for young people to progress and achieve. The highly skilled and long-established staff team offer a wealth of experience, stability and continuity so that young people benefit from the highest standards of care. Within a culture which is open to new ideas, staff embrace change as part of the on-going drive to support young people to succeed.

Training and development of staff is a priority. They are keen to expand their knowledge and understanding of young people's specific needs through specialist training opportunities such as attachment theory and managing self-harm. Regular high quality supervision, annual appraisal and on-going support from the head of care ensures their practice develops and improves.

Continuous, effective monitoring on all levels maintains high standards and drives improvement. Active involvement with the process of external monitoring and a responsive attitude to recommendations in these monitoring reports results in prompt action to enhance the provision. Through review and evaluation, the head of care compiles improvement plans with a sharp focus on key areas to advance development and further enhance young people's experience and progress. Consequently, provision for developing their independence skills has been extended to younger groups, they each have laptops in their bedrooms for personal study and safe recreational use and they are involved in creating a new young people's guide in video format.

Working in partnership with others to promote young people's positive outcomes is an intrinsic element of the ethos and a clear strength. Parents unite in commending staff for involving them, supporting the family and working with them for the benefit of their child. Staff are accessible and available to parents and carers, collaborating closely so that young people benefit from consistent care at home and school. A parent remarked that when they are at a loss as to how deal with a situation 'staff are there with the ability to understand. I know I can always talk to staff'. Another parent commented that staff 'have done so much good and gone above and beyond' to support her and her child's progress. The result of this co-operative approach is that there have been no complaints. Communication with parents and carers is effective.

The school has very recently moved to new buildings on a different site. The acting head, the senior leadership team and all staff have worked tirelessly planning the move and ensuring that young people's levels of stress and anxiety have been kept to a minimum during the transition. In an unsettled period, staff have provided them with a residential environment where they feel safe, secure and happy in their new surroundings.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number

Social care unique reference number SC023691

DfE registration number

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.

Type of school Residential Special School

Number of boarders on roll 184

Gender of boarders Mixed

Age range of boarders 4 to16

Headteacher

Date of previous boarding inspection 04/03/2015

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