

Radlett Lodge Schools

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Kay Mehrtens
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Head / Principal	Lynda Tucker
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Radlett Lodge is a purpose built school and residential facility for children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and is owned by the National Autistic Society. The home is located just outside the village of Radlett and approximately 2 miles from the city of St Albans. Both facilities are located on the same site and are integral to each other. The School and Lodge provide a service for 38 weeks of the year. The Lodge is a two-storey house, which accommodates up to a maximum of 14 pupils at any time. The lounge and dining areas of the home are light and airy. There are televisions, videos and play stations available for all pupils to use, as well as a large selection of outdoor equipment for use in the garden area. There are also computers that can be used for homework or leisure. The Principal is Mrs Lynda Tucker, who has overall responsibility for both the school and the Lodge. The Head of Care manages the residential care provision. The staff group are contracted to work in both the school and the Lodge.

Summary

This visit is a Key announced inspection of the service looking at standards identified by Ofsted as key areas of care. Additional standards with regard to catering, activities and staff training were inspected. The overall judgment is based on the outcomes of the standards inspected.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations from the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health and care files of the young people are very detailed. They contain clear information regarding the complex health and physical needs of the young people at the school. The systems in place ensure that all the required health information is gathered from parents and shared with all agencies involved with the young people. There is a support team of specialist health professionals including a speech therapist, occupational therapist, educational psychologist and physiotherapist. The arrangements for young people's health are detailed in the school's Statement of Purpose and information available for parents. Health checks and appointments are generally arranged by parents with support from the school, as required. Good links are maintained by the school with the young people's families ensuring that well informed, consistent care is provided. The staff have an excellent understanding and awareness of the particular needs of young people with autism. The use of pictures and social stories, to help the young people understand social situations, is evident throughout the school. Staff were observed to use these tools effectively and carefully with some of the young people. The staff are aware that they can seek advice, support and training from the speech therapist and psychologist as part of the school training programme or as required for individual issues with some young people. The support provided from health specialist is well documented and advice and comments are clearly reflected within individual support plans. The records evidence careful and considered interventions to support the young people. For example, helping young people understand their bodies and changes as part of their personal health development and developing

communication plans to enable the young people to exercise informed choice and better express themselves. The approaches used by the whole school team ensure that the health and personal needs of the young people are well met. The school approach is to work with and support the young people over their whole day to ensure a consistent approach to enabling their development. The staff are well trained in the health needs of the young people, medication administration and first aid. The school is proactive in ensuring access to current and relevant practice and guidance. For example, the medication policies and procedures have been recently updated to reflect advice and guidance from regulatory bodies. The Head of Care has done training in the new policies and procedures and will share this information with the staff team. The systems in place ensure the safe administration and storage of medication. Parents' consent for the school to administer medication is sought and recorded. Parents are pleased with the medical support provided. One parent survey states, 'excellent standards with medication. Feel very confident with staff's knowledge of administration. 'Specific health plans with regard to supporting young people with epilepsy are detailed and regularly reviewed with health specialist's input. The school is linked to a local surgery who state that, 'Any medical care we have had to provide has been dealt with efficiently and appropriately by the school'. The menu reflects the dietary needs and choices of different young people accommodated. The meals provided are well presented, healthy in content and much enjoyed by the young people. Fresh fruit and vegetables are always available for the young people as well as snacks and drinks. The staff are very aware of the individual needs of the young people with regard to their eating plans. They encourage and support the young people to eat together and develop their social skills. The staff work with parents and support the young people to try new foods and exercise choice in a careful, considered and professional manner. Outings to local cafes and restaurants are encouraged and staff help the young people develop their social and independent living skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The staff are good at ensuring the privacy of young people when bathing or attending to their personal needs. They are very aware of the need to respect the young people's confidentiality and only discuss issues and arrangements with the young people or in private office areas. Information held about young people is stored securely and staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to keep information confidential. The staff handbook contains policy documents and information regarding practices and procedures to ensure young people's privacy and confidentiality. The school has not received any complaints. The school complaints procedures is made available to parents and staff. The young people know how to make a complaint as the procedure is produced in a format that enables them to have a good understanding of what to do. The formats providing information for the young people about bullying are also produced in similar formats. The school ensures that the young people are kept well informed and supported with regard to complaints and bullying issues that may occur in the school. The staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for the young people. Comments and records by staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection issues. The Head is the school's designated child protection officer and ensures that all staff receive child protection training. The child protection policies and procedures link into the local authority process and are contained in the staff handbook. Staff recruitment procedures ensure that the young people are only cared for by staff who have had appropriate checks undertaken on their backgrounds. The policies and procedures with regard to the induction of agency staff and checks on visitors are well implemented by the staff team. In their survey response, the independent advocate for the young people, states that 'There is a clear and sensible emphasis

on safety. The children are appropriately supervised at all times. I am subject to a wholly sensible and necessary regime of signing in and being identified as a visitor'. Parents feel that their children are kept safe and secure when at school and on trips and outings. The staff are aware of the individual needs and risks for young people with regard to their potential for running off. The risk assessments and behaviour plans, for the young people, reflect the school's procedures and include clear actions for staff to ensure the well-being and safety of the young people at all times. The school approach to behaviour management is very much focussed on encouraging the positive behaviours of the young people. The staff are all trained in Studio III techniques, which is accredited training, that helps them to work positively with the young people, enabling the young people to move away from difficult situations and return to a calm, positive learning place. The behaviour training is co-ordinated and organised by senior staff with support from the school psychologist. In addition, staff receive training in understanding of autistic behaviours. There are few incidents of physical restraints. All interventions are recorded in detail and monitored by the Head, deputy and senior psychologist and the young people's behaviour management plans are amended, if appropriate. The behaviour support plans are agreed and signed by the young people's parents, the Head, school psychologist and Head of Care. Staff are supported and encouraged to discuss any interventions and outcomes as part of their ongoing training and to encourage reflective practice. Following any interventions, the initial response of the young people are recorded either as an observation or through the use of communication tools used by individual young people. The staff are well trained and competent in the use of the different communication tools used by the young people. Appropriate processes and checks are in place to ensure that young people are cared for in a safe environment. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place with regard to the premises and activities available for the young people. Checks are undertaken of the fire alarms and regular fire evacuation drills are held with both staff and young people. Other checks with regard to gas, electrics, water temperatures and systems are up to date. The school has sufficient parking and security systems in place to ensure the safety of the young people and visitors to the home. Good systems are in place in relation to keeping young people safe and promoting their general well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school has clear development plans and reviews of records and paperwork designed to ensure that appropriate information is gathered, recorded and shared with all agencies involved with the young people, especially with regard to their education needs. The young people are provided with additional support from speech therapists, occupational therapists and from the school's psychology team. The individual education plans are linked to the care plans for those young people that board at the school. The young people participate in a variety of activities throughout the whole day that help develop their social and educational skills, as the school operates a '24 hour curriculum'. The school states that 'The emphasis is on fun and participation across a wide range of areas'. The activities and interaction observed between the young people and the staff support this statement. The staff receive training with regard to communicating and working with young people with autism. The young people are encouraged and supported by staff to voice their feelings and comments about school life. The young people produce a 'record of achievement' that is taken with them when they attend their annual reviews. The input and care practices, used by the whole staff team, focus on building the young people's self-esteem and support their social and educational development. The Ofsted education inspection report states, 'The residential unit provides a facility for extending the educational

day and enables up to 14 weekly boarders to learn and practise skills in a more relaxed and homelike setting than is possible in school'. The staff team 'practice what they preach', in that they were observed to actively and professionally use the different techniques and interventions that reflect the school's ethos, training and approaches to working with the special needs of the young people in the school. The staff are aware of the individual education and care plans of the young people. They are trained in the approaches, used by the school, to help the young people achieve their potential. The young people are encouraged and supported by care staff, speech therapists and psychologists to use different ways of communicating and expressing their feelings and needs. Parents are pleased with the support provided. One parent states, 'My child has become calmer and more confident since being a residential pupil at Radlett. I know this is predominately down to the care that they have received from the staff'. All activities reflect the young people's education and care plan programmes regarding their achievement and behaviours targets. The young people are offered a variety of trips out each evening. They have access to lots of in house activities and different facilities to suit their needs and moods. The young people are allocated to a member of staff for each activity and are told who it is. Each activity has a set plan with aims and outcomes for the young people and staff to achieve. The staff are good at following the plans and guidance for the activities with the young people. Recording is detailed and demonstrates a good outcome for the young people, especially with regard to developing integration and independence skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The staff encourage the young people to have their say and respond well to their requests. The young people were helped by staff to complete an amended and child-friendly version of the Ofsted questionnaire for young people. The school had produced it in 'Widget' and picture form for those young people that could not use verbal or written formats. The young people's answers on their picture boards were photographed as evidence of their responses. This is an excellent example of the school's approach to ensuring that all young people had the opportunity to voice their feelings about life as a boarder. Young people are represented on the school council which meets regularly to discuss issues and activities in the school. The minutes and the agenda are produced in formats that enable the young people to have a good understanding of what is said and done. The young people are encouraged to make choices in every activity they participate in throughout the day. They are visited regularly by an independent advocate. There is good evidence of different activities, within the school and boarding houses, that reflect the different cultural and religious needs of the young people. The care files for individual young people contain good information and details regarding their health and social care needs. The standard of information gathered and shared with all disciplines and staff working with young people in school and family is excellent. All aspects of the young people's needs are assessed and identified actions and interventions are clearly stated in their care plans. Each child has an autistic assessment baseline report completed by the school's psychologist. This is linked to individual targets for the young people and progress is regularly reviewed and linked to the 24 hour plan to ensure a consistent approach to working with the young people. The staff are aware of the individual needs and abilities of the young people in their care. The Statement of Purpose contains good information for parents regarding contacting their children whilst boarding at the school. The young people's care plans detail individual contact arrangements and ensure a consistent approach with the young people so as to reduce any anxiety or distress. Staff support the young people to write home or use the telephone.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a written Statement of Purpose and Function which sets out all required areas of information about this service. The document is not clear regarding the arrangements for day and weekend respite care. The young people are provided with information in various different formats that enable them to have a good understanding of what is provided at the school. The stated aim of the residential department is 'To provide a positive, caring, environment that promotes the development of the whole child'. The systems, training, commitment and positive approach by the whole staff team ensure that this aim is achieved. The staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The staffing levels are continually reviewed to ensure that they meet the needs of the young people. The level of agency staff used is low with most staff absences covered by regular bank staff. The staff team are positive in their approach to working with the young people and each other. They are keen to achieve the best for the young people in their care. Staff are well trained in the different methods and approaches, used across the whole school, to support and enable the young people to achieve their potential. The school is managed by the National Autistic Society and the staff are well supported in receiving training to meet the needs of autistic children. All staff are trained in an autistic specific approach that encourages structured, positive, empathetic, low arousal and linked approaches (SPELL) in working with the young people. The staff have access to a wide variety of training opportunities including basic health and hygiene, first aid, food hygiene, communication skills, medication and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) to Level 3 in child care. The training programme for NVQ's is well developed. The staff are given time to attend meetings, handovers and training sessions. The induction training programme for new staff is comprehensive and covers all areas of their work. All new staff progress to NVQ Level 3 on completion of their induction training. Each member of staff has an individual training profile that contains records of supervision and appraisal. Records evidence that the school benefits from a well trained staff team. The Head has delegated areas of responsibility to members of her senior staff team. Regular senior staff team meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the Head and school governors. The school development plan gives clear indicators for the management, monitoring and development of different aspects of school life over the next year.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the Statement of Purpose describes the approved number of day and residential pupils, age range and gender accommodated. NMS 1.3

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.