

Radlett Lodge Schools

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

DfE registration number	919/6215
Unique reference number for social care	SC019505
Unique reference number for education	117646
Inspection dates	14/12/2011 to 15/12/2011
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

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, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Radlett Lodge is a National Autistic Society school that caters for approximately 50 pupils aged between 4 to 19 years of age. Attached to the school is a residential building called 'The Lodge' catering for up to 14 pupils on either a weekly or termly basis. There are currently 11 pupils resident. The school also offers respite service during weekends and holidays to children attending the school and other schools. All children attending the school or respite service have a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The staff group are contracted to work in both the school and the Lodge. The residential provision was last inspected on 27 January 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Radlett Lodge School is outstanding. The care provision is exemplary and a highly driven staff team enable residential pupils to learn new skills and develop as individuals. The quality of residential provision and care has made a positive impact on the quality of pupils' lives and opportunities in life.
- The robust safeguarding procedures result in pupils feeling safe and secure. The school place great importance on promoting the safety and well-being of residential pupils.
- The stimulating activities tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils helps to enhance the residential experience. The post 16 unit helps to develop pupils' independence and acquire life skills.
- The highly effective links between school and the residential provision mean that there is continuity of care and pupils are well supported in reaching their full potential.
- The impressive work on managing behaviour promotes the safety and well-being of pupils. Individualised care plans and programmes mean that care is focused on the needs of individuals and that each pupil is respected and treated as an individual in their own right.
- The residential provision is well organised and run for the benefit of residential pupils. Excellent communication between staff and parents mean that there is an integrated approach to care. The successful joint working that staff engage in with placing authorities and other professionals ensure that the best interest of the child is central to the work undertaken in promoting positive outcomes for

young people.

- The residential environment is welcoming, satisfactorily maintained and provides a nurturing environment in which pupils are able to develop as individuals. Forward thinking leadership ensure ongoing commitment to further improvement of the residential provision.
- The school meets all the national minimum standards.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils are extremely well supported by staff and make progress from the starting point when they entered the residential provision. The high level of staff support given to pupils enables each pupil to participate in a range of purposeful activities. While pupils have complex needs and either limited or non verbal communication, observations conducted showed that every effort is made to ensure meaningful communication and active participation in activities. Staff are extremely committed and driven to improve outcomes for the pupils in their care. In addition, the consistent use of varying communication methods and the close monitoring of behaviour helps to identify pupils' needs and promote their best interests.

The school has been proactive in extending the activities available in the local community. These opportunities positively enhance pupils' personal growth and development. The highly nurturing environment help pupils to feel safe and well cared for. The established model of individualised care practiced within the residential provision shows a commitment to equality and diversity. It also helps to improve the quality of lives and opportunities in life for pupils.

The positive relationships between staff and parents help to support parents and promote consistency of care. Communication between staff across the school and the residential provision is excellent, with individual education plans including objectives relevant to the residential provision. This demonstrates highly effective work amongst staff and that the welfare of boarders are central to the care delivered.

While due to the complex needs of pupils it was not possible to seek their views, pictures displayed and observations made demonstrated that they enjoy the residential experience.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision and care is outstanding. The quality of care delivered to residential pupils is exceptional. The completion of a thorough baseline assessment with input from parents and the multi disciplinary team in the first eight to ten weeks of a child's admission, assist staff in gaining valuable information about

individual needs and informs the care given. In addition, a comprehensive transition which is individualised helps pupils to settle into the residential provision. As part of transition planning, staff produce a 'passport' for each residential pupil and gain their opinions and views regarding likes, dislikes, communication methods and causes of anxiety. This helps to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about individual needs and supports the importance of continuity of care. The 'passports' have been highly successful in promoting positive outcomes and subsequently the plan is to introduce these across the whole school. While all children have very complex communication needs and in some cases are non verbal, staff work extremely effectively together and every possible effort is made to promote actively listening and to use appropriate communication methods to understand the pupils in their care. Staff skilfully arrange and facilitate activities to promote fulfilment and improve the quality of life experiences for pupils. Activities such as music and aerobics are enjoyable social events as is sailing which has recently been introduced for some pupils.

The school provides outstanding arrangements for promoting and caring for pupils' health. A comprehensive medication policy and procedures implemented in practice, appropriately trained staff, ongoing training, robust health planning and effective links with health professionals underpins the high emphasis the school places on health care. Comprehensive medical forms and consents are completed and updated regularly so that the school is fully aware of pupils' current health needs and has relevant permissions to administer medication, first aid and emergency treatment. Staff work incredibly hard in preparing children as thoroughly as possible for any impending change, including bodily changes as they move towards adulthood. They do this through discussion with parents and the use of visual cues to detail the course of events and stories to support understanding. This helps pupils to prepare for future changes and develop as individuals.

All pupils receive annual reviews and where appropriate 'Child in Need' and 'Looked After Child' reviews in which educational and care teams contribute. Individualised care plans, epilepsy care plan where appropriate, toileting and eating programmes and developmental learning outcome records set out each residential pupils' care and support. They are well-focused and uphold the strong emphasis on improving outcomes for pupils. In addition, key workers spend time in class on a weekly basis. This helps pupils to progress across both the education and residential settings and means a consistent approach to the 24-hour curriculum. Pupils are actively encouraged to engage in self help skills appropriate to their ability so that they can become more independent and learn new skills. The post 16 unit which is a new initiative since the last inspection has been a welcome addition to this valuable life skill work. Two pupils engaged in independently making tea and coffee in the presence of the inspector during the inspection. This provided a delightful social event and more importantly evidence of one aspect of the successful work done by the school to promote the independence of individuals with complex needs.

Pupils are provided with a good choice of nourishing meals which they enjoy. All staff are either trained in 'Safer Food, Better Business' or 'Basic/Intermediate Food

Hygiene' and special diets are appropriately catered for. The school was successful in achieving 'Healthy School' status in January 2010 and continues to develop their practice in this area.

The residential accommodation is clean and pleasant. A plentiful range of photographs displayed on walls throughout the accommodation highlight the range of activities pupils get involved in. Areas throughout the residential accommodation have been personalised to promote a homely atmosphere. Staff manage well with the residential facilities on offer, despite the limitations of the building in catering for the complex needs of the children in their care.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare. Everyone involved in the school plays a important role in making sure pupils are protected from harm. Recruitment procedures are robust and ensure that staff are fully checked prior to starting work at the school. The school have also adopted a number of good practices to provide additional safeguards. These include updating enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau disclosure checks for all existing staff every three years, formalising the verification of written references through introducing a standard form to document this check and making sure that at least one member of staff on all interview panels has been trained in safer recruitment. An established induction and ongoing training programme which covers safeguarding is provided so that all staff are aware of the policy and of their specific responsibilities relating to child protection. Staff including the school's designated senior person who is the head of care are trained in child protection to the required level. The principal, head of care, and residential service manager have all received current training specific to designated persons' responsibilities for safeguarding from Hertfordshire Child Protection Team. In addition, there are vigorous child protection procedures successfully implemented by appropriately experienced designated staff. Effective links with placing authorities and the programme of ongoing training in child protection ensure that pupils' welfare is at the forefront of everyday practice. The high emphasis placed on working in partnership with parents and other professionals result in pupils feeling safe, well protected, valued and respected as individuals.

An intimate care policy and the use of carefully risk assessed activities support promoting pupils' welfare and safety. For example, regular bank and long term agency staff do not engage in intimate care with the young people until they have developed a relationship with those young people, have worked a minimum of ten shifts and have had the intimate care discussion with their respective line manager.

An anti-bullying policy and guidance which has recently been updated to include cyber-bullying supports the ethos of positive regard for all. Two behaviour co-ordinators and a clinical psychologist work closely with staff to implement behaviour management plans and provide ongoing advice and support. The impressive work undertaken to assist pupils to improve their behaviour through the use of individual

behaviour support plans for every child helps to improve their learning and progress. A recent example includes some targeted work with a young person who was in crisis and was not doing well in education. The outcome of the intensive work undertaken and the individual programme introduced was evaluated as having a positive impact on the young person concerned by reducing their level of challenging behaviour. The school anticipate that given the success of this model of approach, this will be disseminated wider in the hope of benefitting other individuals facing similar situations. The electronic incident recording system which recently replaced a paper based monitoring system, facilitates more efficient monitoring of the trends and patterns of behaviour. Clear policy for the use of restrictive physical intervention which meets appropriate guidance is consistently implemented and robustly monitored by senior staff. The deputy head successfully oversees the management of behaviour, which promotes an ideal of a low arousal approach to behaviour management. In addition, the school's senior management team are actively involved in monitoring behaviour and the management of this across the school. The recent appointment of a clinical psychologist is viewed as a positive addition to the excellent work currently undertaken in managing the behaviour of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and complex needs.

There is a rigorous approach to health and safety matters. This is underpinned by the comprehensive health and safety policy, the ongoing safety checks, monthly health and safety audits, frequent fire drills, an annual fire risk assessment, the regular servicing of fire safety equipment and the quarterly meetings of the safety action group. Detailed risk assessments have been undertaken to minimise the risk to pupils both on site and during off-site activities. Any matters relating to safety and maintenance are promptly addressed. This results in the accommodation and grounds being adequately maintained. This helps to make sure that pupils are kept safe and promotes their general well-being.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership of the residential provision is outstanding. The school is managed by the National Autistic Society, with a board of trustees responsible for monitoring care and welfare provision in the school. The school's own senior management team comprising of the principal, deputy principal, head of care, residential services manager and bursar are highly visible and effective in ensuring high quality care and support is provided to pupils. An appointed visitor attends once every half term to monitor the residential provision against the national minimum standards. In addition, senior management team members conduct regular monitoring of the records and practice across the residential provision. This results in ensuring pupils receive the highest standard of care.

The residential provision is organised and run in a reliable way to meet the varying needs of individual pupils. Routines and procedures are very well established, clear and operate consistently to provide a stable and secure environment for pupils. Regular handover meetings and senior management meetings which are

appropriately documented ensure continuity of care. There are dependable high standards among the staff which emulate in providing the very best residential experience for the pupils. The extensive transition work staff undertake to support children moving to and on from the school and the high level of support they provide to parents is impressive. The purposeful communication with parents, placing authorities and other professionals results in a highly effective and integrated approach to care which promotes better outcomes for pupils.

The excellent and proactive programme of professional development for staff, the skills and experience of staff and the appropriate staff to child ratios, mean that pupils are provided with the very best support. Staff working with residential pupils are extremely enthusiastic, committed and driven to improve and enhance the quality of life and experiences for young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Care planning documents contain information about cultural, religious, racial or communication needs and appropriate efforts are made to make sure care is delivered taking account of these. Communication needs are supported via input from a speech and language therapist and assistant, and through the implementation and use of specific programmes. The use of objects of reference, photos, symbols and electronic communication devices in addition to speech are consistently used by staff to aid pupils participation and levels of self-advocacy and choice. Two specifically adapted bathrooms for use by one pupil further endorse the school's positive approach and commitment to equality of opportunity, promoting independence and demonstrates the emphasis on non discriminatory practice.

Despite the limitation of the buildings and outside area, the school has worked extremely hard to drive forward improvement. This has included a move towards increasing community development through extending the range of activities on offer to pupils, opening the post 16 centre in September 2011, and securing funding for wireless internet connection in the residential accommodation. There were no recommendations arising from the previous inspection.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- continue to take steps in an attempt to secure an enhanced standard and layout of residential accommodation better suited to the complex needs of pupils.

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.



14/12/2011

Inspection of Radlett Lodge Schools

I like 'The Lodge'. Staff help you. Staff are very caring. It was nice meeting you. I enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Hunt