

# Radlett Lodge Schools

Radlett Lodge School, Harper Lane, RADLETT, Hertfordshire, WD7 9HW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	13/03/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Extremely personalised care provided and effective use of communication aids, ensures young people are able to influence care. They know their views are important which influences their personal development and well-being.
- Staff at all levels have the skills, knowledge and ability to safeguard residential pupils and promote their welfare. Skilled night staff are an integral part of the staff team. This ensures consistency of care.
- Feedback from parents, pupils and external professionals is unreservedly positive about the residential provision and the significant difference it has made to pupil's lives.
- The management of the residential provision is effective and efficient. There is a strong commitment to improve the school further with the development and expansion of the services offered while keeping a strong focus on the needs of the individual pupil.
- All national minimum standards are met.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

Three hours' notice was given prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included: observation of residential routines and practice; discussions with external professionals involved in the care of pupils, scrutiny of school policies and records; discussions with parents and residential pupils as well as meetings with staff and residential pupils.

Discussions took place with a range of staff responsible for leading, managing and organising residential care these included, residential staff, support staff and the head of school. A tour of the premises with residential pupils took place which covered education rooms used to support homework studies.

## Inspection team

Gwen Buckley

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Radlett Lodge is a National Autistic Society school that caters for 55 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 6 March 2013.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further consider and explore ways in which the accommodation can better meet the needs of all the residential pupils. This specifically relates to: the size of bedrooms; the wider age range of residential pupils cared for and the stressors this brings to the group and individuals and how this impacts on freedom of movement around the residential provision.
- Satisfy yourself that the recruitment process enables you to fully consider if you can support new candidates to undertake their duties prior to employment. This specifically relates for candidates' levels of physical and mental fitness.
- Further develop the guidance on restraint recording. This is to ensure there is no ambiguity on what records need to be maintained when staff use a door, such as an environmental barrier.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

The progress residential pupils make is excellent, taking account of their starting points. Parents confirm the children quickly settle and make excellent progress. Staff are aware of the individual needs of the residential pupils at the lodge. This ensures residential pupils get the support needed to settle into and move on from the school and this is a positive experience.

Speech and language therapists work with the staff, residential pupils and their families providing a variety of communication aids and strategies which helps pupils to communicate and be understood. Because of their residential experience, residential pupils gain confidence in their abilities, build positive self-esteem, and develop new skills.

Residential pupils enjoy their time at the lodge and develop constructive friendships with staff and other pupils. Residential pupils' have formed strong attachments to staff based on affection and these relationships help pupils develop emotionally and feel secure. Pupils make extremely positive contributions to the wider community and life within the Lodge. They do this by raising money for local charities as well as improving facilities available within the Lodge and school. They also take an active part in local community life helping them gain in confidence.

The emotional and physical wellbeing of residential pupils is extremely well managed with care plans highly personalised. For example, the use of bedtime settling routines means each pupil gets individual time with staff in a safe caring environment. Parents report that the bedtime routines are especially valued by their children.

Residential pupils benefit from a wide choice of interesting activities, structured to enhance their social skills and experiences. This highly individualised focus on care ensures residential pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their life, whether it is within the school/residential provision or moving on. However, the ages of residential pupils in recent years has increased and the building, on occasions means the staff have to be creative and imaginative with the activity timetable to ensure the needs of all the residential pupils are met. They report that over time, with the increasing number of older pupils, this is becoming more difficult.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Information sharing between care and education staff in meetings is effective. A holistic approach to care by a multi-disciplinary team ensures excellent outcomes for residential pupils. This includes the use of Learning Support Assistants in residential time and close working with therapeutic staff, supporting consistency of care and the effective implementation of the 24hr curriculum. This ensures the residential and academic provision is fully integrated and highly individualised packages of care and support.

Family members and visiting professionals are extremely complimentary about the support family members receive. This includes behaviour management and communication strategies. Parents report this is helping them to manage and helping their children to develop as individuals both at home and at school.

Activities to meet individual preferences and abilities are provided. These are well managed with clear directed learning that keeps the residential pupils focused on the task. Residential pupils were seen to enjoy activities and share jokes with staff, which for many of the residential pupils with Autism is significant progress. Staff instantly recognise and reward achievements. Depending on age and understanding staff use different methods such as a star reward system.

Achievements are continually celebrated, these range from small steps achieved by individuals where praise is given to meeting more formal targets. Care planning is highly individualised and addresses all aspects of pupil's health and well-being, building essential foundations on which pupils can develop as individuals. When needed these plans include specific medication and epilepsy care plans as well as how to help residential pupils understand and manage their behaviour. This timely and child focused approach to care helps ensure residential pupils feel valued and learn to recognise and manage their own behaviour in a more positive manner.

Parents consider the staff listen to them and work in partnership with them. They report that when working with their children staff are very respectful and discreet. They stated this is evident when staff undertake personal medical or care tasks. Residential pupils themselves feel the care 'staff are very, very good'. Pupils gave staff the thumbs up or scored staff above 10 out of 10 when asked how well they are cared for.

Residential pupils enjoy communal life and they learn to get on with each other. The camaraderie and empathy amongst them is evident and shows that pupils have made significant progress since staying in the residential provision. The environment and management of leisure time reflects the need for some pupils to have low arousal areas such as one-to-one time with staff and separate dining and lounge areas can be provided.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

The safety of residential pupils is outstanding. Staff have a clear understanding of their role in keeping residential pupils safe and consider pupil's safety at all times. Robust policies and procedures are well understood and implemented by staff at all levels with comprehensive risk assessments in place. The Local Authority Designated Officer is complimentary about the way the senior staff work with him and the way they manage allegations and he considers staff awareness of safeguarding issues as outstanding.

Staff effectively help residential pupils, subject to their individual understanding, to develop an awareness of different forms of abuse such as cyber bullying, including media use and e-safety. This helps residential pupils feel safe and ensures they know what to do to keep safe or if they are concerned.

A particular strength of the staff team is their ability to understand the differing ways residential pupils' communicate and the level of observation undertaken. Effectively sharing information means highly individualised behaviour support plans, reflecting particular strengths and vulnerabilities are developed which helps keep residential pupils safe.

Staff help residential pupils manage their behaviour and assist them to develop strategies to address issues they may have. Parents consider their child will try to push the boundaries but they know the staff will hold the boundaries and keep the children safe. They feel their children are cared for by staff who listen and address any concerns they have. Since 2009, no sanction has been imposed on a residential pupil. Physical restraint keeps residential pupils safe, when needed. Records of these incidents are generally well maintained. However, when a door in a corridor is used to keep young people apart and safe, there is confusion whether to record the use of this environmental barrier as a restraint.

Although no residential pupil has gone missing, staff are aware of the actions to take should this occur. The management team has strengthened links with the local missing person liaison officer, helping them understand the needs and vulnerability of the residential pupil's and ensure an appropriate response is made by the police should a pupil go missing.

Staff recruitment checks undertaken ensure all checks are undertaken prior to a member of staff

starting work. This helps to protect pupils. An external company oversees the recruitment checks and undertakes checks on the suitability of staff, such as verifying the candidate's medical fitness. The management team are not involved in this decision. This means they are unable to assess fully if they can support the candidate to carry out all of their expected duties prior to them starting work. For example, how any allergies can be managed within the residential accommodation.

The building is safe and well maintained; any safety issues addressed immediately such as a broken window. When possible, due to the individual needs, pupils are encouraged to bring items from home to personalise their room. Rooms then reflect the needs of individuals and their ability to manage different levels of stimuli. Medication administration is well managed: medication is safely stored and all seniors and several practitioners hold a relevant first aid qualification. This ensures residential pupils have a safe and pleasant environment in which to live.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding**

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. A strong management team sets the ethos of the residential provision and the management structure is clear with lines of accountability transparent. A multi-disciplinary approach to care ensures staff work effectively with others to help each pupil achieve and develop. Staff actively consult and involve the residential pupils and their parents ensuring consistency of care between home, school and residential provision.

The residential service is integral to the school. Senior managers are accessible to both the staff and the residential pupils. The management and detailed planning of residential time, ensures the smooth running of the home.

Residential staff are very well trained and part of an effective multi-disciplinary team which enables them to meet the specific needs of residential pupils. This very knowledgeable and experienced staff team has an excellent understanding of each pupil's unique needs and how best to support them as individuals. They bring issues from the residential pupils to the management team ensuring the voice of the child is heard at all levels. Parents have every confidence in the staff's ability to care for their children and report excellent communication between them and the residential staff.

There are good monitoring arrangements in place, regular visits ensure compliance with expected practice. The management team are aware of the strengths and weakness of the service and have clear plans in place to develop the service. The upper age that residential care is provided has increased to 19. As a result, the layout of the accommodation now limits the staff's ability to meet the needs of individuals and the differing groups. At present staff manage this carefully and imaginatively and it is helped by the fact the residential provision is not full. For example, the use of locks to keep some pupils separated limits the ability of the more able, older pupils to move about the building. In addition, two bedrooms, in particular, are very small but as these are not both needed and this is a choice of room used, this does not affect the present pupils in a negative way.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117646
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC019505
<b>DfE registration number</b>	919/6215

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Jo Galloway
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/03/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 854922
<b>Email address</b>	radlett.lodge@nas.org.uk



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