

The Sybil Elgar School

The National Autistic Society, Havelock Road, Southall, UB2 4NY

Inspection dates 7–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because:

- Students with profound learning, social and communication difficulties make good progress because they are taught well.
- The curriculum is flexible and is suitably adapted in response to the interests, needs and abilities of individual students. This secures their engagement and enjoyment in their learning.
- The leadership and management are good and have ensured that students receive high-quality teaching and achieve well.
- The sixth form is good. It equips students well for the next stage of their life.
- The arrangements for safeguarding the students are very secure and the school is a safe place for them. Students' behaviour is good.
- The residential experience is good and the provision for residential students' safety is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not always use information from assessments to set work at the right level for all students.
- Learning does not always focus appropriately on students' academic or personal development.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and assessment are not frequent enough to drive forward and sustain rapid improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools (if RSS)

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was undertaken with one day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, most of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the school's leaders, teaching staff and students. A range of documentation was examined, including policies, assessment records, the curriculum and teachers’ plans. Inspectors looked at students’ written and other work. Inspectors ate lunch with older students and observed break times.
- The views of 24 members of staff were considered through survey questionnaires.
- There were no responses to Ofsted’s Parent View survey. The school had carried out a recent survey and parents confirmed that they were happy with the provision for their children at the school. The views of one parent, spoken to by telephone were considered.
- This was an integrated inspection and the provision and outcomes in the residential setting were evaluated by the social care inspector.

Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jo Curd

Additional Inspector

Angus Mackay

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Sybil Elgar School is a mixed, independent special school providing day and residential places for students aged from four to 19 years of age with complex learning difficulties who are within the autistic spectrum. It was originally established in 1965 and gained approved status in 1984. It moved to the Southall site in 1994. It is owned and managed by the National Autistic Society (NAS). It is situated on three sites.
- The sixth form is situated in a dedicated building on the campus of Ealing, Westminster and West London College in Acton for students over the age of 16. The residential accommodation is provided off campus in a large detached house in a residential area in close proximity to Ealing town centre, parks and leisure facilities. This part of The Sybil Elgar School is for young people between the ages of 11-19 and attended by students from the Southall and Acton sites.
- The residential provision offers weekly boarding during term time for up to 17 students. There are currently 10 residential students. A residential short-break service operates during some of the school holidays to provide respite for parents and carers.
- Currently there are 74 students in total on roll aged from six to 19 years. A large number have either no or limited communication skills. There are six looked after children. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs and come from a range of local authorities.
- The school uses local sports provision and the older students use the adjacent college facilities.
- The Sybil Elgar School aims to be a caring and progressive school, which gives students every opportunity to learn and achieve, holding students in high esteem and working in partnership with families and professionals.
- The last joint inspection of both the education and residential provision was in 2011. The residential provision alone was last inspected March 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching so that it is typically outstanding to further raise students' achievement in all subjects by:
 - ensuring assessment information is used more effectively to set work so that it is suitably challenging for all, including the more able
 - making sure learning has an appropriate focus on students' academic as well as their personal development
 - improving the range of resources including the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and internet access
 - establish more effective systems for leaders and managers to regularly check on the quality of teaching and assessment to ensure both are of the highest standard.
- Ensure that targets set for residential students are clear, with measurable outcomes, are reviewed regularly and adjusted when necessary.
- Improve the checks on the effectiveness of the staff's development programme to ensure it includes a strategy for enabling all residential staff to gain an appropriate Level 3 qualification within the required timescale.
- Improve residential students' access to ICT and online communication systems.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good. Leaders ensure that teaching and learning are good. As a result, students achieve well and their personal development is very good
- The senior leadership team, which includes both senior and middle leaders, has devised a detailed school development plan and identified the areas in need of improvement. The school's view about its own performance is accurate with a clear focus on ways to further improve its work. Most staff who responded to the questionnaire were very positive in their response to the questions and proud to be a member of the staff.
- The curriculum is effective and meets the specific learning needs of the students.
- The management of staff performance and its impact on raising the quality of teaching are not well developed. Checks on teaching and assessment are not sufficiently frequent or rigorous to ensure there is consistently high-quality teaching.
- Communication between the school and residential accommodation is good. The premises provide a safe and effective learning environment and the residences meet the national minimum boarding standards. Parents, carers and placing authorities receive the full range of required information and feel very well informed about each student's progress. Three local authorities that place students at the school confirmed that they have settled well and are making good progress. They also commented that the school communicates very well with them. The complaints procedure meets requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors, the National Autistic Society, are the governing body and take an active role in the governance of the school. The Principal communicates regularly with the proprietors who hold her to account for the administration of the school. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching through performance management, information about students' achievement and information about the school's strengths. Regular meetings are held between the Principal and the National Autistic Society to ensure that the school is run in accordance with prescribed procedures.

The proprietors ensure that all the regulations for independent schools are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of the students is good. Students make very good progress in managing their own behaviour. Staff quickly and accurately identify individual students' barriers to learning. This ensures that there is a nurturing atmosphere throughout the school which enables students to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. Students show a marked reduction in their anxiety levels together with the increased ability to function in the school community. For some students this process is slow and gradual while others demonstrate rapid improvements in their emotional and social development.
- Students who were able to, confirmed that they have no concerns about bullying, including cyber bullying. They say they feel safe at school and always know who to turn to should they need help. In the play areas students share the play equipment and mix well with other age groups. Students were observed having fun, exchanging humour with staff, especially in sessions such as aerobics. Staff are very good role models.
- Some students exhibit outstanding behaviour. This contributes positively to their learning. Staff are skilled and effective at de-escalating any challenging behaviour.
- Students' attendance is good and is often a great improvement on that in their last school. They express a desire to be at school, which results in significant periods of calm and productive learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is very good.
- All staff have been checked for their suitability to work with young people and the school has rigorous appointment procedures which are accurately recorded on the required single central register of staff appointments. The school has thorough procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students with all staff trained to the appropriate levels. The safeguarding policy meets the latest guidance from the Department for Education (DfE).
- Risk assessments on all aspects of the premises and activities both on and off site are completed very well. All the required welfare, health and safety policies are in place. Their content is clear and they are

implemented effectively.

- Staff ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. The emphasis on the students' personal development is firmly rooted within the school and its curriculum. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is a vital and integral part of the school's work. Students have opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. They learn about how democracy works and the student committee has a 'voice', for example, the introduction of hot lunch at the Woodlands site was initiated by the student committee.
- The school prepares students well for life in the wider community. They visit local shops and some travel independently. One older student said he needed to learn about money so he could see he was given the correct change when he was shopping. They develop an understanding of English law and the way in which public services and institutions support everyday life in Britain.
- The curriculum provides students with an increasing knowledge of different beliefs and ways of life. They learn about English services and institutions through regular visits, visitors to the school and local community events. Racial harmony is effectively promoted with opportunities for students to encounter and celebrate diverse cultures and beliefs through the mixed community of the school and the celebrations of multicultural events.
- A major strength of the school's work is the way in which the students are enabled to relate to others, to respect and comply with the high expectation of staff and to begin to develop relationships with each other. For example, a student with a high level of social difficulty was seen helping another student put on her coat.
- The school does not promote any partisan political views and ensures that any controversial issues are addressed in a balanced way.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The learning is good throughout the school as a result of effective teaching. This enables students with profound challenges to make good progress in their academic learning and personal development. The quality of the relationships which staff build with the students is a key factor in the students' success.
- Students are taught in small class groups carefully matched to their individual needs. Their behaviour in class is good. Most are ready to listen and some are able to join in group activities. Staff are good at engaging the students and eliciting positive responses. Staff working closely with students have a clear understanding of their ability and level of engagement. This effective support by staff helps the students to trust them and they are helped to grow in confidence.
- All staff are very well informed about the students' individual learning characteristics. Learning activities in classrooms, especially in English and mathematics, build well on students' previous learning. However, in some lessons too much time is spent on promoting students' personal and social development even though they are settled and ready to learn, rather academic learning and the subject being taught.
- ICT is used well to underpin the students' learning. However there are limited ICT resources. Older students commented that they would like internet access for their research. A mostly adequate range of resources is used to provide interesting activities to develop students' skills.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to meet the specific learning needs of students with autism and to help them overcome their challenges and help prepare them for later life. It is based on the National Curriculum and it is broad and balanced. A wide range of subjects are taught which are effective in meeting the needs of the students.
- The adjacent sports complex and local amenities are used well for physical education activities.
- Therapists make a very valuable contribution to the students' progress preparing them for learning. Staff work very well together as a multi-disciplinary team which includes a speech therapist, occupational therapist and chartered practitioner psychologist. Together they plan detailed programmes of work to help develop the students' skills.
- Students are assessed carefully when they enter the school to find out what they know and can do. A well-planned transition process ensures that most students settle easily into life at the school. This assessment process enables teachers to provide work at the correct level for each student. The school has rightly identified that assessment information could however be used more effectively to make sure that all work is suitably challenging for students, including the more able. The ongoing assessment of students' work is accurate and parents and carers are kept very well informed at all stages.
- Teaching and learning assistants play a vital role in aiding and guiding students, for example, in keeping them focused on tasks set and assisting them to move safely around the school.
- Careers advice is provided for older students through an outside agency. Students are given opportunities

for work experience, both on and off site.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well and make good progress with their learning. This is due to supportive teaching and mentoring and the range of learning opportunities provided for them.
- Attainment on entry is different for each student. Typically students enter the school with levels of attainment which are far below average for their age. This may be as a result of their learning difficulties and disruptions to their previous education, including persistent absence. Once they have settled into the routines of the school, the majority make good progress from their various starting points.
- Staff demonstrate good awareness of the uniqueness of each individual student and are successful in identifying appropriate strategies which enable each student to enjoy school and overcome their barriers to learning. Staff demonstrate a rapidly increasing understanding of what the students can do which results in improvements in communication and learning.
- The school fosters an effective partnership with parents and carers so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the students' interests, strengths and areas for development. This information, combined with an in-depth assessment when the students have settled into school, helps them to devise a tailored programme for each student's education. This, combined with the effective teaching, builds students' confidence and engagement in learning.
- Staff take every opportunity to extend and develop students' communication skills and understanding. They support students' learning by the use of communication aids, such as visual pictorial cues, prompts and gestures. They also develop students' spoken language skills by explaining what they are doing, and requiring more extended student responses. Those students who are able to read make good progress in their reading and writing skills.
- Students' mathematical skills are developed in meaningful ways, often in cookery and art. Sensory experiences are used effectively to help engage the students in play and exploration.
- Students who have a statement of special educational needs are well served by carefully devised education plans which set realistic targets for them and which are regularly reviewed. Annual reviews are carried out and very well documented.
- Improvements in students' attendance and attitudes to learning make a positive contribution to their achievement.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Sixth form students achieve well. Some more-able students acquire literacy and numeracy skills, which equip them well for the next stage of their life. More-able students are appreciative of the level of challenge they are given in their work. One said, 'I have been given work which is good for my level.' All students are provided with a range of life skills, such as cookery, to enable them to function more independently once they leave full-time education. Some students go on to a career in catering.
- Students who were able to communicate well confirmed that they enjoy their life in the sixth form. They made comments such as, 'I am happy... I am doing well... I am not worried when I am here.' Students especially enjoy the performing arts in music and dance and have participated in concerts and an overseas arts festival.
- Students have the opportunity of entering accredited examinations in life skills and music.
- Lunch is a civilised occasion with students using the recently refurbished café, collecting their own lunch and then clearing the tables.
- The school is active in helping older students begin their preparation for life after school. There are positive transition strategies to help these students, using relevant work experience wherever possible and introductions to other educational facilities, such as the adjacent college.
- Teaching in the sixth form is relevant to their needs and equips them with skills for their future. The sixth form is led and managed well.

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

- Outcomes for residential students are good. Students develop good relationships with staff and other students by aiding them in improving confidence and communication skills. Students take part in a wide range of activities, which gradually increase their confidence in social situations.
- Residential students make good progress in addressing health issues. A parent or carer commented on the progress her son had made in broadening his diet to include healthy options saying, 'The food is fantastic! He now eats fruit and vegetables.' Another parent or carer explained how delighted she is that her son is being set challenging tasks in the residential setting and is learning transferrable self-help skills such as food preparation.
- The quality of care is good. Staff and students have positive relationships displaying appropriate affection with good boundary controls related to their behaviour. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the personal and cultural identities of students. Staff engage students in highly imaginative activities, broadening their understanding of their multicultural community. They work closely with parents and carers ensuring that all religious, dietary and personal care needs are met.
- Placement plans and risk assessments are detailed and helpful to staff in working with students.
- Targets are not always clear. They lack sufficient detail, outcome measures and any regular recorded review. A detailed analysis of the good progress is not currently possible due to this lack of evidence.
- Parents and carers complain about the lack of access to tablet devices and online communication systems, which they feel limit their children's development and opportunities for communication and reassuring contact with home.
- Students' safety is outstanding and they are relaxed and feel safe in the residential setting. One social worker said, 'They are very open and honest in the school and residential setting. It is a safe environment.' Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding and have an impressive knowledge of safeguarding issues.
- Recruitment procedures are very well managed and staff adhere to strict recruitment guidelines. Students live in a safe environment where all health and safety checks are maintained. Staff are highly trained and skilled at managing challenging situations and students behave well.
- Leadership and management are good. The head of boarding is well liked and respected by staff, parents and carers, social workers and students. She provides clear guidance, supervision and appraisal to staff. Parents and carers describe her as, 'helpful, flexible and always available'. Staff value supervision which occurs regularly. Opportunities for further training are excellent and enhance staff competencies in working with autistic children and young people. However the analysis of the effectiveness of training is insufficiently rigorous and does not ensure that all staff have an appropriate Level 3 qualification.

What inspection judgements mean

School and residential provision

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

Grade characteristics for the judgements made on the school's boarding/residential provision can be viewed in the *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of boarding and residential provision in schools* which is also available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110096.

School details

Unique reference number	101953
Social care unique reference number	SC027798
Inspection number	446376
DfE registration number	307/6064

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of residential provision 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	Independent
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	38
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	10
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Carol Homden
Principal	Chloe Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 September 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,532
Annual fees (boarders)	£73,401
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