

The Robert Ogden School

Clayton Lane, Thurnscoe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 0BG

Inspection dates

3–5 February 2015

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

- Good teaching ensures that students make good progress, often from low starting points.
- Staff cultivate good relationships with students so that students feel safe and well cared for.
- Students in the residential accommodation do well because of strong links between care and school staff. As a consequence, their independence is developed well and they make good progress.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from well organised provision, such as the on-site kitchen and café, where they effectively develop life and work place skills.
- Staff training is a high priority. Consequently, staff know how to keep students safe, and are very knowledgeable about autism and other special educational needs.
- Students' behaviour, often associated with their complex needs, is managed very well.
- Personalised learning programmes for students prepare them well for their lives beyond school.
- Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and where most improvement is needed. Consequently, some strengths have been maintained and some areas improved.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching does not always meet the needs of all students, particularly some of the most and least able students.
- Some of the residential planning and policies do not reflect fully the effective work of the team.
- Some middle leaders are new into post. Recent staff changes mean that some staff are not clear about the school's approach to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and handwriting.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the work of the school by making short observations of each of the five class groups, most jointly with the Principal, the four sixth form groups and the individual learning rooms in each of the two hubs. They observed break times, lunchtimes and two school assemblies. They spoke with pupils in the school and the residential accommodation, and observed the evening routine.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, teachers, care staff and other professionals as well as a senior member of the National Autistic Society. The inspector conducted a telephone conversation with a member of the National Autistic Society’s Executive Board.
- Inspectors examined school policies and documentation from the education and residential provision. They scrutinised students’ work from across the school and looked at students’ records and assessment information.
- Inspectors took into account the views of staff expressed in 49 returned questionnaires. There were insufficient responses on the Parent View website to take into consideration but inspectors spoke with a small number of parents by telephone.

Inspection team

Amraz Ali, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sarah Drake

Additional Inspector

Christine Scully

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Robert Ogden School, run by the National Autistic Society, is a residential special school for disabled students and those who have special educational needs connected to the autistic spectrum. Opened in 1977, it is located in a semi-rural area near Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster.
- It is registered for up to 165 students aged from five to 19 years of age. There are currently 78 students on roll, including 32 over the age of 16 and two part-time students. The majority of students are boys. Three students reside in the residential unit, Thurnscoe House, located approximately one mile away and have 38 week placements. This also offers flexible boarding stays of one or two nights for up to 10 other students. This provision was inspected at the same time as the school.
- More than half of the students have additional difficulties or more complex needs. The range of students' cognitive abilities varies and students' needs and behaviour are at the more challenging end of the autistic spectrum. For several students, their previous school placements have not proved successful and some have not attended school regularly prior to admission to this school. Eight students are looked after by the local authority.
- All students have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. These are funded by 14 local authorities, mostly in the north of England. Almost all are day students.
- The school uses no other off-site educational provision.
- The school was last inspected in November 2011. The residential provision was previously inspected in March 2014.
- The aims of the school include promoting understanding and appropriate provision for autism, thereby enabling students to achieve, and develop the skills they will need in their future lives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and students' learning so that more is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers use their detailed knowledge of students' abilities to adjust tasks to challenge the most able or more precisely meet the needs of the least able
 - identifying, in teachers' planning, the very small steps they expect students to make in each lesson to build on previous learning
 - ensuring that all staff understand and implement the school's approach to teaching reading, writing and handwriting.
- Improve the skills of middle leaders so that they are better able to judge and influence the quality of provision and outcomes for students.
- Further improve the leadership of the residential provision by:
 - ensuring that health care plans are sufficiently detailed with regards to students' specific medical conditions
 - developing individualised missing-from-care risk assessments for students
 - making sure that all policies and risk assessments are specific to the residence.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management ensure that students' needs are well met both in the school and the residential provision. The staff are flexible and the curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of students with autism. Students, who often enter the school with negative experiences of education or who lack confidence, are welcomed into the school and benefit from a staff team who understand autism and provide a positive experience for students.
- Self-evaluation is effective and accurate. Systems to manage the performance of both the school and residential staff are in place. These include the observation of teaching and learning, and the close tracking of students' attainment and progress. Consequently, leaders know the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and provide teachers and support staff with additional guidance and support where required.
- Recent changes in the leadership and staffing mean that some leaders and teachers are relatively new into post. Although induction of new staff is done well in terms of helping staff to understand autism and the arrangements for keeping students safe, not all have been made clear about the school's approach to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and handwriting. Consequently, practices vary and some students do not always secure these skills as rapidly as they could. The role of middle leaders in judging and influencing the quality of provision and the impact on students' learning is limited.
- The curriculum and how it is adapted to the needs of students is a strength. It provides a good range of subjects including, for example, expressive arts, geography and history. It rightly places strong emphasis on promoting students' communication skills, including using signs and symbols, and personal development. Students in the individual rooms within the learning hubs cover the same topics as their peers elsewhere in the school. Careers guidance is provided, as are opportunities for work experience both within school and, for a small number of students, outside in the community, for example, in shops. Extension activities and themed days, such as Italy and safety awareness, add interest as do visits to, for example, the Yorkshire Wildlife Park for younger students.
- The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students with particular strengths in social and cultural development. Students' spiritual development is promoted through assemblies and lessons which give them the opportunity to think about other people.
- The school's commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity is reflected in the way that students are prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they are provided with a rich array of cultural opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. Students learn about the Hindu festival of Diwali as well as learning about the Christian story of Easter. Visits from police and fire officers help to provide students with a broad understanding of English institutions. Elections for representatives on the school council give them some understanding of democracy.
- There has been a strong focus on helping new students to settle into the school by providing safe spaces for them; some, because of their acute needs, like to have their own rooms to work in. Well-structured routines have been established and these help to give students a sense of security.
- Arrangements to safeguard students meet requirements. Recent reviews of policies and procedures ensure that staff are aware of the potential dangers of grooming and sexual exploitation and they work to ensure that students are kept safe. Students are taught about the dangers of using the internet and e-safety generally. However, the arrangements to develop students' understanding of the dangers of grooming beyond the internet are less well developed.
- The school premises and residential premises comply with all requirements. They are well-maintained and are attractively decorated with examples of students' creative work. Great thought has been given to ensuring that the spacious school buildings and grounds are adapted to meet the needs of students. Specialist classrooms include food technology areas, a science laboratory and an art room along with an on-site café and kitchen, a shop and pottery rooms to provide life and work-related skills. The school site has been enhanced to provide more specialist sensory experiences for students. Safe spaces outdoors, including climbing frames, are enjoyed by students. There is a large sports field as well as a sizeable gymnasium which students benefit from.
- **The governance of the school:**

The National Autistic Society ensures that its executive board, through its executive director, has a clear overview of the school's staffing and use of resources. A member of the board is linked to this school. An external consultant is used well to challenge the work of the school, including the quality of teaching and data on the school's performance, and this is reported to the National Autistic Society's Executive Board. A recent development has been the establishment of an education quality development group. However, this is a new development and the impact of this group on challenging

the work of the school is not evident.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The positive atmosphere and well established routines, along with good relationships, means that students' individual needs are met well. Consequently, almost all improve their behaviour and attendance, often from a position where regular school attendance was not common. Lessons usually get off to a smooth start and staff have clear expectations of behaviour in classrooms. Any inappropriate behaviour is managed well, for example by taking students out of situations where they feel anxious and using the sensory rooms for a short period of time before returning to the classroom.
- Students behave well around school and in lessons. Their enjoyment of school is evident, and they indicate they are happy and safe at school. Students invariably enjoy good relationships with staff. Staff use these positive relationships to encourage students to behave appropriately and engage in their lessons.
- Some students find behaving well a challenge, in part connected to their often complex needs. Where incidents of inappropriate behaviour were observed during the inspection, they were managed well by staff. For example, when two students both wanted to use the same go-cart staff were firm and talked to students about the importance of sharing and taking turns.
- Good attention is given to developing students' independence and life skills. Good work in citizenship, personal, social and health education and religious education enables students to develop an awareness and respect for British values, and for the diversity of beliefs and cultures represented in the wider community. The students are taught about wide range of significant world religions. The nature of the community within the school and students' residences provides the opportunity for first-hand experience of different beliefs, diets, customs and celebrations.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Work covered within the curriculum enables students to consider the impact of healthy lifestyles. As appropriate, students are taught about safe routes to school and how to use public transport safely. Consequently, following appropriate assessment of risks and work with individual students, some walk to school from Thurnscoe House each day. However, although meeting all requirements, the missing-from-care risk assessments are not highly individualised and do not always reflect what staff know about their students.
- Arrangements for the assessment of risk on the premises and during off-site activities are robust. All aspects of health and safety, including fire safety, are checked and recorded appropriately. Arrangements for the recruitment of staff and training in all aspects of practice are robust.
- Within the residence, care planning is comprehensive and allows for the uniqueness of each student. Student's health care needs are met well. However, although not compromising the quality of care, on a small number of occasions care plans do not provide sufficient information with regards to specific medical conditions. Additionally some policies within the residence are generic and although meet requirements are not specific to the site.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching and assessment is good and, as a consequence, students across the school make good progress from their starting points. In addition to knowing much about autism, teachers and support staff know students well and establish good relationships and clear routines to support students' learning.
- Many students benefit from individualised learning programmes. Some are taught in their own personal learning spaces within each of the two learning hubs. Students with acute needs, due to their complex issues, respond well to having their own personal spaces. The spacious accommodation lends itself to this. Consequently, students feel safe and are engaging with learning.
- The ratio of staff-to-students is generous and this contributes to the success of the school. Teaching assistants make a particularly positive contribution to the students' learning but there is a little variability. Some are very patient and skilled at managing students with challenging behaviour or teaching particular aspects of the curriculum, such as food preparation. However, on a small number of occasions some staff are a little too quick to give students more help with a task than they necessarily need.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively across the school but there is a little variability in

the quality of teaching and its impact. Students are taught to read using a range of approaches, including commercial schemes and teaching students about letters and the sounds they represent (phonics). However, although the development of their reading, writing and handwriting skills are generally secure, there are some inconsistencies in the school's approach. Consequently, some students do not learn to form letters correctly or to write as neatly as they could.

- Teachers plan sequences of lessons for the classes they teach. Although these usually meet the needs of all students, there are times when the work is not at just the right level for every student. On a small number of occasions, more able students have to wait until others have caught up before moving on or the work does not challenge them fully. Similarly, on a small number of occasions the tasks are not at just the right level for the least able; sometimes they do not do enough practical work before they move on to recording. Sometimes plans do not identify the very small steps that will move students' learning forward.
- Where teaching is most effective, good links are made with previous learning. For example, in one lesson photographs were used well to remind students of what they had done in a previous lesson. However, this is not always the case.
- The expectations of the oldest students are made explicit. A strength is the opportunity for students to practise life skills in the on-site café and kitchen. For example, one Key Stage 4 student was observed inducting a fellow student in how to set up the café ready for customers. Others were observed very carefully to prepare and cut up fruit. The café very effectively provides all students with useful opportunities to read menus and use money in a real life situation.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most students enter the school with levels of attainment lower than expected because they have missed considerable parts of their school education. They typically achieve well because teaching is effective at meeting their needs. All groups of students make equally good progress from their starting points, including those looked after by local authorities. Teachers have a good understanding of students' individual needs and abilities, and ensure that they make good progress in lessons. Students' greatest gains tend to be in their personal, social skills and communication skills.
- Students in the primary classes are making secure progress. Their achievements are greatest in learning to communicate. For some, using pictures is less successful and instead objects are used to help students to communicate. For example, a toy car is used to indicate that it is the end of the school day and a car will be used to transport the student home. Some are reluctant to read and write, in part because of previous unsuccessful experiences in schools. Staff have successfully encouraged them to read shop and road signs and words in the local environment and have introduced some students to comics.
- Residential pupils achieve well because of the support they receive. They are helped to develop their social skills and independent living skills. For example, students enjoy the opportunities helping to serve at meal times and help clear away afterwards. They are encouraged to get on with others by attending a youth club and taking part in activities such as bowling.
- The National Autistic Society's 'my progress' system tracks what students can do. This helps to celebrate their achievements, such as taking part in small group activities and joining in with lessons.
- The school offers a range of recognised academic and vocational qualifications appropriate to the needs and abilities of students. Most students leave school with some qualifications, related to their personal and life skills, including units of accreditation from the Association of Qualifications Alliance (AQA), and life skills courses accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students achieve well in the sixth form groups because the activities provided are well adapted to their individual needs. For example, when using money, lower ability students matched coins to their images and confirmed their value, while the most able were calculating totals and working out the change from given amounts.
- Work in the café and attached kitchen is used very effectively to promote students' social skills and also their mathematical and communication skills, both written and verbal. Work is well planned and organised, with a good balance between supervision and independence, and students can appreciate the purpose of their learning.
- Students achieve a range of Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards which demonstrate the school's strengths in helping them to develop their personal and life skills.
- Good quality teaching over time underpins students' good achievement. Work is individualised, with some

learning in small groups organised by ability and others on a one-to-one basis.

- Teachers make the purpose of the lessons clear through the use of simple language and visual clues so that students know what to do and can concentrate well. Good use of praise builds students' self-esteem and creates a positive environment for learning. Learning often starts with a photographic recap of the previous lesson in the same subject, which enhances students' awareness of their progress.
- Adults, including teaching assistants, provide sensitive support but, on occasion, are too quick to do too much for students which can sometimes reduce the level of challenge.
- The behaviour and safety of students are good. Students show tolerance of difference and an interest in visitors. Those of different ethnicity and with highly individual needs accept each other and, in some cases, form good quality relationships. All those spoken with said that they feel safe in school. They move sensibly around the extensive building and outside. Unasked, they use recycling bins and replace chairs under tables before leaving a room.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are shared by the senior leadership team and are good. Staff feel well supported and there are clear expectations of their role. This ensures that students make good progress overall and are well prepared for when they leave the school.

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

- The outcomes for boarders are good. The head of care leads the staff team well so that together they have high but realistic aspirations for students. Priority is given to enabling students to become as independent as possible. Staff enable young people to develop skills for life, such as shopping to purchase their own food and drinks. As a result, students are able to manage their personal care needs and to prepare their own snacks.
- Students enjoy helping to serve themselves at meal times and clearing away afterwards. Students enjoy an extensive range of activities to develop their social skills, such as youth clubs, bowling and visiting parks.
- Students' health care needs are met well. Health care plan plans provide an outline of their needs, but on occasion do not provide sufficient information about specific medical conditions. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the quality of care provided. Students are developing an understanding of healthy eating, such as not eating too many sweets. All meals are freshly prepared to the individual preferences of each student. Most students enjoy the opportunities to sit with their friends and staff at meal times.
- Students indicate that they feel safe. Although there is no history of students going missing, there are protocols in place should this occur. While the risk of young people being missing is low due to the high staffing ratios in place, there are no individualised missing-from-care risk assessments in place for students. Risk assessments and policies to help keep students safe are in place but on occasion are not individualised to the residence.
- Effective links with parents and school means students are making good progress as a result of their experiences in residence. This provides seamless transitions between school and residence. Parents say the students 'love staying with you' and comment that they value the high quality of support they receive from staff.
- Staff are attentive to each student's preferred communication systems and are skilled at reading each young person. For example, staff identify when students are becoming anxious due to the number of people in the home or are feeling unwell. This means that staff are able to respond effectively to the ever-changing needs of the students. Students are developing an understanding of right and wrong and how their behaviours may impact upon others.

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.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

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.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-schedule-for-the-inspection-of-boarding-and-residential-provision-in-schools.

School details

Unique reference number	106965
Social care unique reference number	SC473713
Inspection number	446377
DfE registration number	370/6004

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Residential and day special school for boys and girls with students with autistic spectrum conditions
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	32
Number of part time pupils	2
Number of boarders on roll	3
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Janet Corcoran
Headteacher	Lorraine Dormand
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,101
Annual fees (boarders)	£82,629
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