

Radlett Lodge School

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

Inspection dates

23/02/2016 to 25/02/2016

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

Quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision is outstanding because

- The impact of the residential experience is important in meeting children and young people’s complex learning difficulties. Children and young people make excellent progress at the school, overcoming barriers to learning and development.
- Bespoke behaviour management plans, planned with professionals, have built children and young people’s confidence and reduced their anxieties.
- The safety of children and young people is paramount. Safeguarding arrangements are established and effective.
- Activities are varied and stimulating. Children and young people are busy. They enjoy a number of exciting opportunities, providing them with equality of opportunity.
- Children and young people are encouraged and supported to share their views, and to express their feelings.
- The partnership with parents is an important strength of the provision.
- The residential provision is intrinsic to the school, and the senior leadership team supports and monitors it exceptionally well.
- The record of complaints could be improved to capture conversations where parents have expressed concerns.

- The environment is homely and well maintained, although some areas require refurbishment.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the record of complaints includes those raised verbally and the action taken in response.
- Continue to redecorate and refurbish throughout the residential provision to provide a high standard of decor.

Information about this inspection

This inspection took place with four hours' notice prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included observation of routines and practice, scrutiny of policies and records, discussions with parents, meetings with staff and residential pupils. The inspection activities included meetings with therapists, catering staff, senior managers, the principal, care staff, children and young people and their parents. Parents gave feedback directly and through telephone discussions. There were four parent view responses.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

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 four and 19 years. Attached to the school is a residential building catering for up to 14 pupils. There are currently 13 pupils who are resident. All children attending the school have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. The residential provision was last inspected on 12 February 2015.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Children and young people clearly benefit from being at the provision. The provision of care and education is seamless, reducing transitional anxieties for children and young people. Attendance is excellent and data shows that the residential provision improves this. The school is highly proactive in advocating for children and young people. Children and young people entitled to the pupil premium receive this allocation, which is spent on resources tailored to their specific needs. This helps reduce barriers to their progress. Parents spoken with highlighted the significant progress made by their child since being at the school. Children and young people who had previously been unable to manage a classroom environment are taught with others with few incidents. This prepares children and young people for adult services and managing different environments.

The senior leadership team ensures that the residential provision is central to the whole school. It strives to improve outcomes for children and young people using research to inform future practice. The introduction of the 43-week provision has evolved in line with the needs of children and young people and their families. The senior leadership team works with innovation and energy, continually identifying areas for improvement.

The progress that individual children and young people make is robustly monitored. This demonstrates the optimum benefits of the residential provision on children and young people's emotional and social development. Analysis and use of data collected are used extremely well to measure progress.

Safeguarding arrangements are embedded and tight. The environment is safe and parents are fully reassured about children and young people's welfare and safety.

Children and young people are encouraged to form trusted relationships with staff and to live alongside one another peacefully. The management of complex and difficult behaviours is an important strength of the school. Therapy-based approaches are tailored to children and young people's unique understanding. Planning and implementation use a system that measures impact and informs future strategies.

The residential provision is orderly and well run. Children and young people's progress and well-being are at the forefront of all practice. The staff team is established and well supported. Children and young people's health needs are met by a multi-disciplinary team that supports their physical and psychological needs. Staff take into account diet, medication and environmental changes, providing holistic care.

Children and young people have complex communication barriers. Therefore, staff are solely dependent on the quality of the relationships children and young people have with them and the partnership with parents. Staff actively seek children and young people's views, and surveys are given to children and young people in pictorial format. The views and feelings of children and young people are sought in key worker meetings. This has provided further choices and opportunities to develop life skills, including shopping, cooking and meal planning.

Quality of care and support

Good

Staff provide a bespoke introduction to the residential provision, planned in accordance with children and young people's ability and understanding. This is important for children and young people who use alternative means of communication. Three young people have recently settled very well and benefit from the consistent waking day curriculum. One parent said, 'I feel, for us, starting at this school has been life changing'.

The multi-disciplinary staff team works extremely well to overcome barriers and obstacles faced by children and young people. Professional therapists guide staff and parents. Occupational therapy and speech and language therapy increases children and young people's confidence and experience by building on motor and communication skills. Consistent strategies make a huge difference to children and young people, giving them control over their activities and the ability to share their feelings.

Food is mainly cooked from scratch and is generally homemade. It is of good quality, varied and plentiful. Healthy dessert options such as yoghurt and fruit are encouraged to reduce calories and sugar intake. Food is served in the dining room, and some children and young people cook their own meals. The school caters well for individual dietary needs. This is detailed on every menu and provided unobtrusively.

Single rooms and high levels of staff supervision ensure that children and young people's dignity and privacy are maintained. Peer interactions are being developed and signify progress. This is an achievement for children and young people whose complexities make social interaction very difficult.

The accommodation is furnished to provide a low arousal environment throughout. Soft furnishings are durable and minimal. Sensory resources and accessible outdoor provision provide a sensory and tactile environment. The accommodation is homely and comfortable. However, there are areas that require refurbishment.

The school has responded to children and young people's views and this has led to increased variety in activity provision. Children and young people requested roller skating and Top golf, which are now provided. Pop dance and trampolining builds children and young people's confidence, combining fun with exercise. Children and young people thoroughly enjoy these activities, participating with energy and enthusiasm.

Medication is administered carefully and routinely by trained staff. Storage of controlled medication is safe and meets guidelines. Children and young people are confident and secure in their individual routines. They have a strong rapport with staff, minimising the daily routines of taking essential medication.

Parental feedback is mainly very good. Some parents have worked very hard to find a provision that they feel suits the needs of their child. Parents visit weekly, taking evening meals in the residential provision. They receive regular updates and are informed of any incidents. Specific focused workshops link parents to information and support, providing a forum in which parents can meet and share their experiences. Parents cite this as

extremely supportive and beneficial.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Children and young people present as relaxed and comfortable in the residential provision. They use the physical environment and move around freely with unobtrusive supervision from staff.

There are no incidents of bullying. Bullying is given a high profile and staff remain vigilant. Levels of high supervision minimise potential difficulties. These are identified for individuals, and staff are preventive in their use of risk assessment of children and young people, to minimise tensions and triggers for the children and young people.

The designated safeguarding person is trained and has a detailed knowledge of safeguarding procedures. The designated officer is consulted in regards to allegations, and works well with the school. Child protection training is provided annually. Safeguarding is embedded throughout the school staff team. Staff are fully aware of their individual role and responsibility to raise concerns, report disclosures or to whistle-blow. This protects children and young people from potential harm or unsafe practice.

Constant staff supervision and an enclosed site with electronic gates keep children and young people safe. Severe learning difficulties mean that most children and young people are highly vulnerable to all environmental dangers. Doors to residential areas are alarmed, immediately alerting staff if anyone leaves. There are no instances of children or young people being missing from the school or the site.

Regular fire drills at different times of the day and evening mean that children and young people are not perturbed or upset by the fire alarm. These practice drills are structured and made fun. Pictorial prompts guide children and young people to comply with the regular evacuations. Guidance is recorded in personal evacuation plans. Service appliance checks and regular risk assessment of the premises ensure that the environment is safely maintained and free from hazards. These practice drills and regular check reduce hazards to children and young people.

Behavioural support is consistent and targeted to the child or young person's particular challenges. A multi-disciplinary approach provides specialised support that is assessed for positive impact. Measuring and monitoring of behaviour management plans work extremely well. This is guided by the behaviour support team and supported by professional therapists and has resulted in children and young people who can manage a number of situations with control.

Staff use the least restrictive approach in physical intervention. There have been a number of these in the last year, but most of these amount to guides and environmental blocks to prevent self-injury or injury to staff. These would include keeping children and young people separate and out of one another's rooms. Due to children and young people's difficulties, staff may physically intervene to prevent children and young people swallowing items. Records are robust and demonstrate that these meet the criteria and are proportionate.

Recruitment procedures work systematically. Personnel files are meticulous and reflect safe recruitment guidance. This ensures that adults are thoroughly checked prior to

working at the school.

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

The strong, established senior management team is an important strength of this service. The residential head of care and residential services manager are intrinsic parts of the senior leadership team. They provide a structure that promotes task responsibility and accountability.

Expectations and aspirations are high for children and young people. The residential provision has maintained an outstanding provision for a consistent period. This is characterised by a continued drive forward. Change is embraced, the school has expanded and evolved to meet the changing needs of service users.

The school has received a commendation from the autism accreditation concerning the consistent understanding of autism.

Continuity and consistency of an established senior team have been important in the success of the residential provision. Retention of staff has proved difficult following organisational contractual changes that the principal has challenged. This resulted in a review and change in pay and benefits, and a number of new appointments. While agency and bank staff are used regularly, this has been planned with minimal disruption to children and young people. Weekends are also fully staffed in the expansion and wider scope of residential provision. The weekend staff include a complement of therapists, the head of care and the senior leadership team. This provides knowledge of shift working and robust monitoring of staff practice.

Staff are positively engaged, motivated and dedicated to their roles. Supervision and regular training ensure that staff are equipped and guided in their roles. A united and experienced core team ensure that potential conflict is minimised and that children and young people feel safe and secure. Parents describe the provision and care as, 'Home from home'.

Feedback sought during the inspection was mainly very positive. Parents are made to feel welcome. One parent said, 'They have treated him as an individual and made provision for all his needs. He had periods at home convalescing, when they brought peers to visit him.' This demonstrates that staff go above and beyond to reduce the barriers faced by children and young people. They work tirelessly to promote consistency, continuous care and stability. This has resulted in exceptionally settled and successful long-term placements. Parents' main concern is finding further educational placements that will match the quality that the school provide. One parent said, 'This is a fantastic school, no one can live up to this. The school is fantastic. They can really specialise in what he needs.'

The majority of feedback is exceptionally positive. However, although a recent concern highlighted by a parent was responded to quickly, it was not recorded as such, and this does not provide a clear complaint record. There was no impact on children and young people's care, as immediate action was taken to address the concern raised.

Monitoring includes internal reviews against the national minimum standards.

Independent monitoring visits take place regularly and include recommendations to

improve practice. The school strives to improve continually the provision for children and young people.

Overall, the school has met all the national minimum standards and continues to celebrate its outstanding practice.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding, and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services, which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	117646
Social care unique reference number	SC019505
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	13
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to 19
Headteacher	Miss Jo Galloway
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/02/2015
Telephone number	01923 854922
Email address	radlett.lodge@nas.org.uk

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