

# Inspection of Radlett Lodge School

Harper Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 9HW

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Inspection dates: 14–16 January 2020

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There is a distinct sense of community in the school. We found that the school celebrates the achievements of its pupils. What some might see as a tiny step for pupils can be the greatest of challenges. Pupils follow set routines and behave well. They listen carefully to adults and follow their instructions. They know who to talk to if worried. Bullying and discrimination between pupils are rare. Pupils told us that they feel safe and well cared for by staff. Bullying is not tolerated, and pupils are confident that staff would deal with it quickly if it happened.

Pupils learn to be independent and succeed well. Parents and carers say that the school has high expectations of their child and that their child is happy and safe. We agree. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The curriculum is well designed to help pupils learn new knowledge in small steps and to manage their behaviour and learning well. Teachers plan work that closely matches pupils' needs. Not all subjects are sequenced in a logical way. In science and in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, there is work to do to make sure that different topics are taught in the correct order.

Adults use and review pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans successfully. They know each pupil as an individual and understand pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Leaders work with the transdisciplinary team to explore each pupil's educational journey and adjust provision frequently so that pupils can achieve what they are capable of.

Leaders have put reading and communication at the core of pupils' learning. They permeate the entire curriculum. Pupils at the early stages of reading and speaking have a range of activities to help them communicate through pictures, symbols and words. Pupils learn to read successfully, focusing on useful words and phrases. Pupils build up a sight vocabulary of food items, names, places and day-to-day activities. Pupils read using a range of symbols and texts, for information and pleasure. Real-life situations help support reading, for example labels or instructions in a cookery session and following a shopping list. Every pupil has access to a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction reading books. Older pupils enjoy reading newspaper articles on a daily basis. They can explain the text to adults.

Pupils experience an environment that helps them stay calm and focused. The environment helps pupils to focus on building relationships with each other and learn new knowledge. Staff are diligent in helping pupils to learn simple behaviour rules, which helps pupils to get enjoyment from learning. Pupils' cultural differences and backgrounds are celebrated and shared, for example in celebrating different religions.

Leaders know the early years children extremely well. It is clear that staff have developed the children's self-confidence. They are ready to learn. Leaders are passionate about developing this phase. The plans leaders have in place show they have a detailed understanding of how to provide for the full breadth of the early years curriculum. Plans are adapted, based on the current and developing needs of each child.

Students are doing well in the sixth form. Teachers think carefully about what order they will teach individual pieces of work. This helps students to understand what they are being taught. Students complete work experience and business enterprise activities. This helps them to gain a helpful understanding about the world they live in. Students help run a post-16 cafe and use community sport and leisure facilities, which supports their personal and social development. Students are proud of the 'best allotment' awards they have been presented with from the parish council. A range of useful independent advice helps students to make choices about their future.

The school has been through a period of leadership and staffing turbulence over the last couple of years. It is now improving once again. The school had an interim principal. The turbulence made the school community restless and staff morale was low. This is in contrast to now. Secure, effective leadership is evident and staff morale has improved.

Staff are proud to work at the school and work well as a team. Subject leaders speak positively about the support they receive from senior leaders. Further training is needed to develop their leadership skills as new curriculum approaches have just been introduced. In recent years, there has been a high turnover of learning support assistants. This impacts on children's routines and their achievement.

The new principal has high expectations. Leaders, including trustees, place pupils' needs at the heart of everything they do. There is a newly established governing body consisting of skilled individuals. There is more work to do before it achieves its full potential.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out all the necessary checks on adults before they begin to work at the school. All staff attend regular safeguarding training. They know what to do if they have concerns about pupils. They record all concerns comprehensively and store this information securely. Leaders work well with other agencies so that pupils get the support they need to keep them safe and well. Pupils learn about the risks they may face beyond the school gate, such as relationship and consent, and staying safe on social media.

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

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In subjects such as science and PSHE education, plans are less well established than in others. The plans do not allow pupils to build on what they have learned before. Subject leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in their area of responsibility is clear and progressive. This is to ensure that there is a coherent approach to teaching for all subjects across the key stages.
- Subject leaders lack experience and are not yet self-sufficient. They have not developed the skills they need to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility for the new curriculum. Senior leaders need to develop subject leaders' skills in order to sustain school-wide curriculum improvement.
- The roles and responsibilities of members of the local governing body are not clearly defined. The lack of clarity hampers governors' ability to challenge leaders rigorously. The proprietor needs to fully evaluate the skills that governors have and provide the support for them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- There is a high turnover of learning support assistants. They do not always feel valued for the contribution they make. Pupils have not received consistent support with their learning. Leaders need to tailor support to the staff in order to ensure stability within the team.

### How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117646
<b>DfE registration number</b>	919/6215
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10113583
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	52
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	14
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	The National Autistic Society
<b>Chair</b>	Pamela Reitemeier
<b>Headteacher</b>	Geraldine Mendonça
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£54,456.23
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 854 922
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/radlett-lodge.aspx">www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/radlett-lodge.aspx</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:radlett.lodge@nas.org.uk">radlett.lodge@nas.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24–26 January 2017

## Information about this school

- The National Autistic Society (NAS) runs the school, which was opened in 1974.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education to admit 60 pupils.

- All pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Pupils have communication difficulties, and some have complex medical needs. The vast majority of pupils are boys.
- Each pupil has an EHC plan. Ten local authorities fund pupils' placements at the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- Since the previous standard inspection, a governing body has been added. Its roles and responsibilities were ratified on 2 September 2019.
- The school has recently admitted children in the early years.
- The school was previously inspected in January 2017. At this time, the school was judged as outstanding and all of the independent school standards were met.
- An inspection of the residential provision took place at the same time as this standard inspection of the school. A separate inspection report for the residential provision can be found on Ofsted's website.
- Inspection history:
  - in 1996, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. Inadequacies were found in the quality of the accommodation
  - in May 2001, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection of the school. The quality of education was judged very effective
  - in January 2007, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The quality of education was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were met
  - in December 2009, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection, integrated with an inspection of the residential provision. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged outstanding and all of the independent school standards were met
  - in March 2013, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection, integrated with an inspection of the residential provision. The school was judged as outstanding and all of the independent school standards were met.

## **Information about this inspection**

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We had a tour of the school with the principal to check that all the independent school standards relating to the premises were met.

- We scrutinised the school's single central record of employment checks.
- We did deep dives in reading, mathematics, PSHE education and science. We spoke with subject leaders, teachers, pupils and students about their work and about other aspects of life in the school.
- We met with senior leaders, subject leaders, therapists, pupils and staff. We met with the director of education and the deputy director of education from the NAS, and the chair of the governing body.
- We considered pupils' behaviour and welfare at different times of the school day. We observed playtime and lunchtime. We spoke to pupils about their school.
- We considered email responses from local authorities about their views of the school.
- We considered 36 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- We considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We considered the comments made in 11 free-text responses.
- There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- We examined a wide range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, policies, information about the curriculum, safeguarding documents, information provided to trustees and information about the behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school.
- No judgement has been made on this occasion for the quality of the early years provision. There is insufficient evidence to make the judgement because children have only recently been admitted to the early years provision.
- An inspection of the residential provision took place at the same time as this standard inspection of the school. The residential provision was judged as good. A separate inspection report for the residential provision can be found on Ofsted's website.

## **Inspection team**

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector    Her Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Pardy    Ofsted Inspector

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