

Radlett Lodge Schools

Harper Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 9HW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is run by the National Autistic Society. There are currently 50 pupils aged from four to 19 on roll. The residential building is situated next to the school. Twelve pupils can reside either on a weekly, termly or flexible basis. There are currently 11 residential pupils including flexi boarding. The children have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.

The head of the residential provision has been in post since January 2013 and has the relevant qualifications to manage the service.

The inspector only inspected the residential provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 14 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The staff provide children with consistent, nurturing and individualised care. They give children time to express themselves and to communicate using their preferred methods. Children have built strong, safe relationships with staff who are enthusiastic and passionate about helping them to reach their full potential.

The senior leadership team and residential staff have worked hard to ensure that the school and residential provision have stayed open during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been achieved through extra daily cleaning and fogging during the holidays. A parent said that the continued support during the pandemic has been a lifeline for her and her son.

Staff are ambitious for children. They work effectively with parents and school staff to set achievable and regularly reviewed targets for the children. A parent said that her child's independence skills have greatly improved. She said that her child is doing things that she did not think he would ever do. The parent is clear that this is because of the staff's continual work with him.

Staff have devised a book of brilliance which they use to celebrate children's achievements. These highly visual books contain the children's targets and 'magic moments' certificates of achievement. However, staff do not always update the books, which means that children do not have an up-to-date record of their progress.

The staff have excellent knowledge of children's individual communication needs. Symbols for children to take to staff are placed around the residential provision. Staff carry, on a keyring, symbols that they use to help them to establish children's immediate wants or needs.

The children have weekly individual key-work sessions using the child's preferred method of communication. Staff use these sessions to gather children's views on food, equipment for the residential provision and activities, and to understand if the children are worried about anything.

A member of staff has developed links with a local school. Children use the swimming pool at the local school during the week and in the school holidays. The children have the pool solely for their use at these times. This supports children to have a quiet experience without the triggers and overloading of stimulation that are present at a public pool. During the inspection, children were observed enjoying their time at the pool with staff.

The residential provision is well maintained. Children's bedrooms are personalised and individual, and staff support the children to choose colours and posters. Children are encouraged to bring personal items from home and leave them in their bedrooms. This gives them a sense of belonging and comfort.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large playground and a quiet garden were installed. This meant that, although children were unable to go out into the community, there were plenty of in-house and on-site activities to keep them busy.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The children have one-to-one support from staff who are attentive and spend quality time with them. Highly effective planning to manage children's triggers and sensory needs, along with staff's knowledge of the children, helps to ensure that children are kept safe and feel safe.

Staff were observed supporting a child who was upset and emotional. The teamwork between the staff was evident. While the child was being supported, the staff working with the other children ensured that those children were in a safe space. Staff work calmly and provide reassurance so that children who are distressed feel safe and the impact on other children is minimised.

Careful and effective monitoring of behaviours and sharing good practice between the school staff and residential staff ensure that children are supported well between the school day and their residential time. Records which go between school staff and residential staff enable all staff working with the children to identify potential behavioural triggers and take steps to prevent situations from escalating.

Staff are guided by effective risk assessments. They encourage children to develop their independence through taking developmentally appropriate risks in a well-managed way.

All staff have up-to-date safeguarding training and good knowledge of how to report concerns. All staff spoken with can name the designated safeguarding leads for the school and the residential provision. Safeguarding incidents are managed well by the designated safeguarding leads. They inform the relevant people and follow any recommended actions. Parents say that their children are safe because the staff know the children's vulnerabilities well.

Safe recruitment processes mean that checks are carried out and verified. References for staff who have worked overseas are obtained. However, in one instance, a confirmation of good conduct has not been obtained to ensure that full information was available before a staff member began work.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care and deputy head of care have the relevant experience and qualifications to manage the service. Since the last inspection, the residential provision has recruited several new staff to work with the children.

The head of care and the school principal meet regularly to discuss children's progress. They share their ambitions for the children with the school staff and residential staff. This encourages a culture of high aspiration for children.

Feedback from parents and professionals is good. A parent said that her child's progress is exceptional and that the school and residential provision have opened a 'whole new world' for him. Professionals say that communication is good, and they are kept up to date with children's progress and any concerns.

The staff access the training that they need to work effectively with the children and meet their needs. The residential staff have, or are in the process of working towards, a relevant level 3 qualification.

Senior leaders know the strengths and areas for development of the school and the residential provision. Children are clearly at the centre of practice. The staff have a sense of pride when talking about the children and want them to have the best possible experiences and opportunities to develop socially.

The staff benefit from regular supervision and staff meetings. They say that they find these supportive and an opportunity to talk about children and share good practice. Staff receive an induction which they say gives them an understanding of working with the children and provides them with relevant training. However, induction records are not updated by managers promptly. Therefore, staff's progress in their induction and the timescales for achieving targets are not clear.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child). ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 22.1)

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff regularly review and monitor the children's files and records. This is to confirm that all outstanding work is completed and that the records contain correct information.
- The registered person should ensure that staff to whom it is applicable have overseas checks as part of the recruitment process.
- The registered person should ensure that staff inductions are signed off within the required timescales to make clear individual staff's progress with their induction.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC019505

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Geraldine Mendonça

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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