

Inspection of Radlett Lodge School

Harper Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 9HW

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years **Insufficient evidence**

Sixth-form provision **Insufficient evidence**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and achieve well. They benefit from a curriculum and learning that are carefully tailored to their individual needs. Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities that help them to develop their knowledge of the wider world. Pupils learn strategies that help them to socialise. They practise these strategies when they go shopping and visit the local café. Pupils are friendly and polite. They listen carefully and think about what others have to say. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and for life beyond school.

Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and positive. Pupils learn to communicate their needs clearly. They know that staff will always follow up any worries they may have. Pupils respond well to staff's high expectations and calm approach and understand the situations that may trigger their anxiety. Consequently, pupils learn to manage their behaviour when they become anxious or upset. Pupils feel reassured and safe when they are in school, including from bullying.

Parents and carers appreciate the regular communication between school and home that helps families and staff to work together in pupils' best interests. They value staff's commitment to supporting pupils' well-being and helping them develop independence.

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

Leaders have carefully considered the knowledge that pupils need to learn across a broad range of subjects. The curriculum and teaching support pupils well to develop their confidence and independence. The curriculum is ambitious. Individual learning plans take account of pupils' personal, social and emotional needs, as well as their academic progress. Pupils achieve well against their starting points. Some staff are more confident than others in using what they know about each pupil to adapt the learning to meet pupils' needs. This means that sometimes, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders acknowledge that staff need further training to become confident in adapting their teaching to help pupils to make the best possible progress over time.

Leaders prioritise reading and have adopted a systematic programme to teach phonics. Staff have received the training they need to teach phonics confidently. Leaders ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to practise reading. Staff support pupils well to make sense of the written word in the environment and in the books they read. Staff help pupils who are fluent readers to deepen their understanding of texts. Pupils read books that are well matched to their reading confidence and interests.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Staff work sensitively with families to help pupils develop their understanding of healthy relationships and the changes that take place during puberty. Pupils learn what to expect, and what is expected of them, in different situations. Pupils regularly access

learning outdoors and physical exercise. Leaders have established an appropriate careers programme. Leaders work closely with pupils, students, families and local authorities to identify next steps in education and/or training and supported independent living.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) executive team holds leaders effectively to account for their work to safeguard pupils and for the quality of education the school provides. The NAS also oversees the health, safety and maintenance of the school site. Leaders work effectively with the NAS executive to ensure that statutory duties are met. This includes meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Members of the local governing body have a range of relevant skills and experience to contribute to the governance of the school. Since the previous inspection, the local governing body has organised how it works with school leaders. The local governing body meets regularly with leaders. Together, its members review the arrangements that are in place for safeguarding, the quality of education and leaders' work to continue to improve the school. It is not clear, however, how the role of the local governing body contributes to the wider governance of the school. The NAS is currently working to address this.

Staff are committed to their work. There is a strong team ethos and staff work well to support individual pupils' needs. However, communication across the school is not always clear. Sometimes, staff do not receive important information in a timely way. Leaders are approachable. They take seriously staff workload and well-being. However, leaders do not routinely seek feedback from staff on changes they are making in the school and how these impact on staff and their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well informed and know how to identify the signs of potential abuse. Staff receive regular training. They understand the school's safeguarding policies and processes for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Leaders regularly review individual risk assessments and plans to ensure that the appropriate measures are in place to safeguard all members of the school community. Leaders work closely with local authorities and other agencies, so that pupils and families access the support they need. Pupils learn to keep themselves and others safe when online and in the wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some staff do not have the pedagogical knowledge and experience to implement the curriculum as leaders intend. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all areas of their learning. Leaders should provide training and guidance, so that staff develop their understanding of effective pedagogy.

Equally, staff should be trained in the approaches they should use to adapt the curriculum, so that in lessons all pupils achieve consistently well.

- Staff do not always have access to the organisational information they need in a timely and efficient way. This means that some staff do not feel well informed about what is happening in school and how this may impact on their role. School leaders do not routinely seek feedback from staff. Leaders should review their systems for communication and feedback, so that all staff access the information they need to carry out their roles effectively. Leaders should ensure that staff have regular opportunities to share their views and contribute to the development of the school.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the roles and responsibilities in relation to the governance of the school are clear and understood. This limits the contribution that the local governing body is able to make. The proprietor should ensure that governors and trustees at all levels understand the purpose of their role, so that the school can benefit from the knowledge, experience and willingness of members of the local governing body. The proprietor should ensure that there is a clearly understood governance structure in place to challenge and support leaders, and hold leaders to account effectively for the quality of education and the safeguarding of pupils at the school.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

School details

Unique reference number	117646
DfE registration number	919/6215
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10258784
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The National Autistic Society
Chair	Stephen Ladyman
Headteacher	Geraldine Mendonça
Annual fees (day pupils)	£87,224.36
Telephone number	01923 854922
Website	www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/radlett-lodge.aspx
Email address	hilary.myburgh@nas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 January 2020

Information about this school

- The NAS runs the school, which opened in 1974.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit 60 pupils.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no children currently on the school roll in the early years foundation stage. There were fewer than five students on roll in the sixth form.
- 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 education, health and care plan. Nine local authorities fund pupils' placements at the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- There is a local governing body.
- The school was previously inspected in January 2020. At this time, the school was judged as good and all of the independent school standards were met.
- The inspection history of the school is as follows:
 - 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 as 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 as 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.
 - In January 2017, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection, integrated with an inspection of the residential provision. The school was judged as good and all of the independent school standards were met.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This inspection was an unannounced standard inspection brought forward within the inspection cycle at the request of the DfE. The reason for this was to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school as concerns had been raised about the effectiveness of leadership and management in this area. An emergency inspection of the residential special school also took place while the school was being inspected.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the deputy principal and assistant principals, the designated safeguarding lead and the school hub development coordinator, who has oversight of the school's risk assessments. The lead inspector held remote meetings with the NAS director of education and children's services, the chair of the education quality development committee and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (including communication and early reading), mathematics, science ('My World') and personal, health and economic education, which included relationships and sex education.
- Inspectors looked at the policies and procedures that are in place to safeguard pupils. They reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record of pre-employment checks, risk assessments, records of training and the systems used to report safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up. Inspectors also reviewed records of behaviour incidents. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff, and considered feedback from parents and carers with respect to safeguarding.
- The lead inspector had tours of the school with the principal and with the site supervisor to gain an understanding of how leaders organised the provision to meet pupils' learning and welfare needs, and to check that all the independent school standards relating to premises were met.
- Inspectors reviewed the information available on the school website and considered a range of documentation to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the feedback from four parents and carers submitted to Ofsted Parent View, which included three free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed the 13 responses to the staff survey. Pupils spoke with inspectors during the inspection.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Fielding

His Majesty's Inspector

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