

Radlett Lodge School

Harper Lane, Radlett, WD7 9HW

Inspection dates 6–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Pupils make excellent progress during their time at the school because of school and residential staff's exceptional understanding of how best to support their learning and personal development; their early mathematics and English skills improve very well indeed.
- Pupils of all ages make outstanding progress in their communication skills and in their interest in what others have to say. The youngest children in the Foundation Stage make remarkable progress in a very short time so that they make simple choices and share books.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers tailor lessons very carefully to the next things pupils need to learn and capture pupils' interest; these results in them increasing their cooperation and involvement in learning.
- Students in Post 16 are prepared very well indeed for the next steps in their education and lives. The qualifications they take and the activities they do promote their key skills, independence and confidence extremely well.
- Leadership and management of all aspects of the school's work are outstanding. The headteacher and the leadership team are constantly seeking ways of improving the pupils' achievements even more. She is very well supported by trustees who have the highest ambition for every pupil that attends the school.
- The residential provision is outstanding in all aspects of its work. Residential staff and school staff work together exceptionally well so that pupils' learning and behaviour are supported consistently, their progress, independence and self esteem is maximised and their safety paramount throughout.

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

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at half a day’s notice by an additional inspector and a social care inspector.
- Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by nine different teachers, of which six were joint observed with the school’s headteacher. They visited the residential accommodation at breakfast, lunchtime and during the evenings observing all aspects of the school’s life.
- Discussions were held with a range of school and residential staff, members of the proprietorial body and advisers, parents and carers and pupils themselves.
- The inspectors checked a range of documentation, including schemes of work and the safeguarding procedures and policies.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted’s Parent View to be reported on but inspectors took account of evidence from parents and carers and the school’s own survey.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tola Akinde-Hummel

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Radlett Lodge is an independent residential special school for up to 55 boys and girls, aged four to 19 years. It opened in 1974 and is run by the National Autistic Society. Pupils who attend the school are drawn from London boroughs and from as far afield as Wiltshire and Thurrock.
- The school is located on the outskirts of Radlett in Hertfordshire and provides weekly and termly residential accommodation for up to 14 pupils at a time. These places are used mainly by its own pupils, but the school also provides short term respite care for individual pupils from other schools.
- The large majority of pupils are boys. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and their fees are paid by their local authorities. All have autistic spectrum disorders together with complex learning, emotional and behavioural needs.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage department was reopened in September 2012 and a new Post 16 department was also opened in September 2011.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the ways in which it sets targets for individual pupils and groups and in particular the targets for pupils at the end of each key stage.
- Continue to explore ways in which the accommodation can be further developed to allow more space for learning.
- Implement more regular team and staff meetings for residential waking night and day staff and more consistent use of the debriefing book to enable better tracking of any issues raised including actions taken.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students' achievements are outstanding because teachers find ways of making the learning both meaningful and memorable for pupils so that all pupils make extremely good progress from their starting points. Even those who find listening to others and working with them difficult try very hard to join in and to do the work their teachers have devised for them.

Pupils may enter the school at any point during their education, usually with achievements that are very low in comparison to others of their age, because of their particular learning needs. From the moment they arrive they know that they are valued and they very quickly learn to trust staff. This means that their learning is accelerated because they are prepared to have a go at new things, even when they might arouse their anxiety. Pupils are delighted when they succeed, whether it is in solving a mathematics problem, making chilli con carne or reading out loud in class.

All pupils achieve a range of qualifications by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form, at Entry Level or a Foundation level qualification. A very high proportion exceeds their targets in their English, mathematics and in other subjects, including their life skills work. In addition, because the school makes great use of technology to help pupils to express themselves, many use tablet computers very well indeed. As a result, they communicate their needs, find out things and write exceptionally well. One student, for example, composed a short film entitled *Teenagers with Autism*, combining film, animation and text in a remarkable way.

Pupils of all ages and background, including those with the most complex learning needs, make outstanding progress particularly in their language and communication skills and in their personal and social development. They make particularly good progress in their ability to recognise symbols or to read simple words, phrases, instructions or books because they are given many opportunities to try out these skills. For example pupils of all ages apply their developing mathematics and literacy skills in the community on frequent outings to shops, parks and museums. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress in their personal development and language and literacy skills. This is because staff are so skilled at seizing on any tiny communication they make and developing it further. They make similarly excellent progress in their physical skills and in their early counting, and managing their toileting needs.

Parents and carers are delighted with their children's progress. Post 16 students are too. They are delighted to read their books, read out their cafe menus or show their short films.

Residential pupils are very well supported through outings and clubs or activities in the home towards their academic progress. This is because staff understand exactly what pupils' targets are and how they are best helped.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and their personal development are outstanding because their personal needs are managed so well. An exceptional personal, social, emotional and health education programme is rightly focused on providing pupils with as much choice and independence as possible.

Students in Post 16 are rightly very proud of the ways in which they learn to cook a range of simple dishes and use kitchen tools safely and with great care. They greet their cafe guests with enthusiasm, welcoming visitors and proud to show off the different things they have made.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress in their willingness to join in activities and to conform to class routines. Staff have the highest expectations of children and

they respond. All pupils are helped to become involved in school life and in the broader community, because of the many interesting things that pupils do together in school, in the residence and in the outside community. This helps them to transfer their new skills and behaviour into all aspects of their life and not to be so anxious in new situations.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils become much more self aware and begin to take other's needs into account, showing concern when someone is hurt or not well for example, by asking if they want to sit down. They learn to manage their own behaviour much more effectively, communicating using words or symbols about how they feel and asking to go to the 'chill out' room when they are feeling stressed. The many outings they make and interesting activities in school and in the community develop their moral and cultural development very well, through themed days and visits. The school celebrates the uniqueness and difference of every pupil through its personal approach and pupils learn remarkably well to value and tolerate difference. In *Teenagers with Autism* one writes, 'I came to Radlett Lodge school. I learned about having friends andlove.'

The school works very hard to find the ways in which everyone can express their views and choices. The student council is used very well indeed to help pupils to contribute their ideas as to how the school could be even better. Initiatives such as the Young Campaigners support students' understanding of citizenship and the different institutions of modern Britain and how to influence them. Business and enterprise activities such as in the 'Cafe' and the making of bracelets and cards for sale enable Post 16 students to practise skills for life after school. The college courses they partake in also contribute greatly to personal development and academic progress.

Pupils say they love their school and their attendance is good; it is sometimes exceptional if absence due to medical needs and anxieties are taken into account. They are very clear that everyone is kind to each other and that if there were problems staff would sort things out. They make huge strides in managing their anxieties and taking responsibility for their behaviour; this is because the school and residence are so good at helping them to do so. They have really positive attitudes to learning.

The clinical psychologist and behaviour coordinators work with students and all staff including the residential staff to help them understand and manage behaviour. Assessment, the sophisticated use of monitoring and analysis of behaviour informs the school of how best to support students. The exceptional behaviour support plans are rigorously followed. These individualised plans help unlock pupils' barriers to learning, and assist staff to manage particular behaviours. They give students a greater understanding of their autism, how to manage it and to keep themselves and others safe.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

Teaching is outstanding because staff are expert in supporting the learning of pupils who have autism. Excellent behaviour management and detailed attention to staff training mean that everyone who meets a particular pupil, whether in the residence or in the classroom know exactly what is being targeted for that pupil and what will help them. Teachers and teaching assistants work together highly effectively as teams so that not a minute for learning is wasted. Even when pupils are distressed, because of their anxieties, the excellent support they receive means they never interfere with the learning of others.

Programmes are highly individual but designed in such a way that pupils are enabled to increasingly learn alongside and communicate with each other. Excellent working with speech and language therapists and joint teaching of groups means that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make remarkable progress in their understanding and in their communication, language and literacy skills. They make similarly outstanding progress in their mathematical development because of the very practical ways in which their teachers use numbers and counting in games and

songs and every day routines.

Teachers are highly skilled at observing pupils' progress and noting this down. This all contributes to highly effective monitoring and assessment of pupils of all ages and targets being reset for them.

All staff expect a great deal from pupils. They make very clear to pupils what they are to do and learn and why. This, and the excellent relationships adults establish with pupils, really helps pupils to try their best and also raises their self esteem as they realise they have achieved their goals.

Teachers and residential staff show huge respect for the pupils in their care and take great pleasure in their achievements. They work together very closely to ensure that learning continues in the residence and that residential staff feedback their assessments to teachers. Parents and carers have great confidence in their child's teachers and the residential staff. They feel they are very well supported to help their children to learn even more at home.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum is outstanding because it is so well planned to help pupils, including those with the most complex needs, to learn in small steps but also to manage their autism. It is a highly relevant curriculum which challenges pupils not only to achieve but also to play an active part in the school life and local community. For example, visits to places of worship of different faiths help pupils to understand difference but also help them to be out together in groups and in new environments, something many find challenging.

The school and residential provision provide a 'low arousal environment' which does not over stimulate pupils. It, therefore, leaves them free to focus on building relationships with each other, learning about subjects and meeting the challenges their teacher has for them. There is an appropriate emphasis on communication and personal development and 'thinking for yourself' that underpins all subjects taught.

Residential students enjoy a wide variety of activities and trips that promote independence, physical and emotional resilience and social inclusion. One student said, 'I like doing my own cooking and I will be going to college'. Residential students learn how to get on with each other and the camaraderie and empathy among them is clearly evident.

Post 16 students are similarly very well prepared for next steps through their life skills programme and the different activities they undertake at college.

Throughout the school there is a determination that pupils will achieve the highest possible levels in English and mathematics and support for reading and writing is given a high priority, including the use of symbols and technology which engage them well and spur them to try even harder. Parents and carers are kept fully involved about what their child is studying and praise the support they get for following this through at home.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Pupils' health, welfare, and safety underpin everything that the school does. Great care is taken of pupils, for instance, on outings teachers consider how each pupil might respond to the visit and staffing is carefully adjusted to take account of this. Pupils' behaviour is managed exceptionally well and underpinned by a clear policy and procedures. Bullying is not tolerated and the school has good ways of dealing with any rare behaviour of this kind.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe in the residence and in the school are outstanding. Staff, pupils and parents and carers can be confident that any concerns will be acted upon. The

designated senior person for child protection is appropriately trained and takes full responsibility for all referrals and any subsequent action. In addition, all staff are well trained by the designated senior person.

Recruitment procedures are robust and senior staff explore gaps in employment fully, check information contained on disclosure and barring records and scrutinise references thoroughly. There is excellent monitoring of attendance and assistance to get pupils back into school. Pupil risk assessments are comprehensive and consider all the needs and challenges students face.

The school premises are properly maintained and checked to minimise any risks to pupils' health and safety. There is very good levels of security in the school and residential provision. The residential provision provides sufficient members of qualified and experienced staff. Staff value the support they receive from the managers and seniors in the team and from each other on shift. All national minimum standards for the residential provision are fully met, as are all regulations for independent schools.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Leadership and management of the school and residence are excellent because the school is so successful in enabling pupils to do their very best. This is because leaders, including trustees, share an uncompromising vision which sets pupils and their families needs at the heart of everything they do. They are determined that pupils will achieve whatever they are capable of and adjust provision repeatedly to enable this.

Excellent attention is paid to staff training so that new staff quickly become more expert in both their subjects and how to manage pupils needs related to their autism. Trustees monitor the school's work effectively and provide support for improvement. This is evident in the great strides that have been made in the ways in which the school collects information on pupils' achievements and analyses them since the last inspection. These are now compared carefully with national data, although the school is also planning to take this even further by linking end of key stage targets to this. These comparisons have led to the school checking even more regularly on pupils' achievements and thus adapting targets more regularly so that a higher percentage of pupils now exceed their expected levels each year.

This is a school that is constantly seeking to achieve more and leaders regularly contribute to national initiatives. It knows its strengths and the areas it needs to improve extremely well. Trustees are rightly considering how to expand and improve the small, but adequate, accommodation, which is now full, so that pupils have even more on site activities and space available to them and more pupils can be accommodated.

The trustees ensure that all national minimum standards for residential schools and regulations for independent schools are met, including those relating to information for parents and carers, accommodation and complaints.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Outstanding

What inspection judgements mean

School and residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education and care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education and care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education and care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	117646
Social care unique reference number	SC019505
Inspection number	397761
DfE registration number	919/6215

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	4-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	14
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Carol Homden
Headteacher	Jo Galloway
Date of previous school inspection	January 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37628.82
Annual fees (boarders)	£65162.70 - £125925.12
Telephone number	01923 854922
Fax number	09123 859922
Email address	tamsinadams@nas.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

