

Radlett Lodge School

Harper Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 9HW

Inspection dates

24–26 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and trustees continue to develop the excellent practice at the school and ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- High expectations of pupils are the norm and staff embrace every challenge.
- The school's record of developing pupils' communication skills is outstanding. Pupils who could not speak when they started school can now express choice, convey their feelings and explain what they mean.
- The principal has created a culture that enables staff to excel. One teacher said, 'The school is constantly evolving its already best practice and continually looking for ways to better itself further.'
- The collaborative approach to learning, with input from a wide range of professionals, enables all staff to gain a deep understanding of pupils' needs.
- Teachers use a variety of resources and approaches highly effectively to help pupils make rapid gains in their academic and social development.
- The care and welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Staff help pupils to work through their problems and support them to take their next steps both socially and academically.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are polite and welcome visitors warmly. Pupils are respectful and accept one another's differences.
- The individual timetables and support programmes for post-16 students help them to make rapid progress. They develop the skills necessary to help them to succeed in the outside world.
- The outstanding practice seen in the teaching of the curriculum is not accurately reflected in schemes of work.
- The school has the trust of parents. They feel supported so that they can build on the progress their children make at school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the schemes of work accurately inform, improve and reflect the curriculum on offer, including the provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The highly effective leadership team has created a culture of ambition and high expectation so that staff, as a whole, form a cohesive and highly effective team. The school expects a lot from its staff, pupils and parents, and provides the support, care and encouragement to help them succeed. The views of parents and staff from the questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive.
- Senior leaders' systematic monitoring has made sure that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders are highly visible throughout the school in order to provide support and see what they can change to become even better. Everyone connected with the school understands that pupils' success is dependent on everyone working together. The development of the multidisciplinary team has enhanced the provision for pupils, enabling them to make rapid gains against the targets in their individual education plans.
- The principal has developed the leadership capacity of the school highly effectively. Leadership is now shared widely, and the focus on 'home grown' staff provides significant opportunities for career advancement. This creative approach helps overcome some of the difficulties faced in recruiting and retaining staff, and gives pupils essential continuity.
- The school provides high-quality training for all staff. The comprehensive induction programme prepares staff extremely well for their roles. Staff feel valued and say that training is helpful and that 'it makes you feel appreciated and good about what you are doing.'
- Senior leaders use a variety of approaches to assess how well pupils learn and develop. They use this information highly effectively to help pupils achieve even more. Pupils' social, emotional and physical development is tracked, as well as their academic progress, which gives an even clearer picture of how well pupils make progress from their starting points.
- The development of pupils' effective communication skills permeates the entire curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with other pupils are woven skilfully into lessons. One parent stated that their proudest moment was when their 'child could tell me if he is not feeling well and why things have happened.'
- An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, combined with an increased focus on forging community links, prepare pupils exceptionally well for life beyond Radlett Lodge. The opportunities to play golf, rugby, go swimming, have visits arranged to go to parks, the zoo and the fire station are memorable and momentous moments for the pupils.
- The school provides outstanding opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values. Pupils demonstrated their ability to help others recently when they ran a mile and raised money for Sport Relief. The 'Allotment to Market Stall' helped to develop business, enterprise and social skills. As a parent said, the school goes 'out of its way to bring children on. It tries very hard to help children make sense of the world as best they can.'
- Parents receive training on how to support their children to sustain the impressive progress they have made. Inspectors observed staff providing training for parents on the

most effective way to read to their children. One parent said, 'The school always asks parents what they would like to discuss and know about.'

- Parents said that the level of communication is 'fantastic'. The school has established 'The Hub' to help parents to access support, share effective strategies to support their children and discuss issues with professionals. The Hub, alongside the frequent phone calls home, the home-school diary and the weekly newsletter, helps the school to keep parents fully involved. Regular team meetings give parents the opportunity to ask for more support for their children if they feel it is needed. This helps each student to leave with, on average, between eight and 12 accredited qualifications.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. All parents who expressed a view would recommend the school to another parent. On Parent View, every parent either agreed or strongly agreed that their children were well cared for, well behaved and made good progress. One parent stated that 'The school is amazing. I never thought my child would be in school, never mind one that can meet his needs.'

Governance

- The link trustee and the executive director of education visit regularly and work closely with senior leaders, so that the board of trustees is provided with frequent and detailed reports.
- The trustees receive support from school improvement advisers. Minutes and documents show that the school is challenged to maintain its high standards, for example on pupils' progress and ensuring that resources are used efficiently.
- The board of trustees has an accurate view of the school's strengths. It is perceptive, logical and the judgements made are based on sound evidence.
- The board of trustees is rightly proud of the school's caring and nurturing environment and its many achievements. Trustees support the principal in her efforts to develop the school further, and there are plans in place for a new building programme to enhance the specialist provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are robust systems in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders focus on the critical importance of helping pupils to communicate, which is a powerful tool in maintaining the safety and welfare of the pupils.
- Leaders have built safeguarding into the curriculum well. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to stay safe.
- The strong communication links that exist between different teams of staff add an important layer of protection to safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders carry out health and safety checks regularly and act upon any concerns raised. The school carries out detailed risk assessments on each pupil and on all trips out of school.
- The safeguarding policy is available on the website and reflects the latest updates in the statutory guidance.

- Staff receive regular updates about the latest statutory guidance and are trained to spot any potential safeguarding concerns. They know what to do and who to speak to should they have concerns. The school also trains parents so that they can help keep their children safe.
- The school works very closely with new parents and other professionals to make sure that pupils joining the school are kept safe. New arrivals undergo a 12-week induction programme to help them relax and get used to their new school. Staff visit pupils' homes and rapidly build effective relationships.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Staff take great care in assessing pupils so that they can pinpoint the care and support pupils need. The impact of teaching on pupils' lives, and that of their families, is transformational.
- Teachers structure lessons carefully. Teaching involves strong visual and practical activities to capture pupils' attention and reduce their anxiety. As a result, pupils are able to maintain their focus before moving to individual or group tasks where they can show how much they have learned.
- Staff know their pupils extremely well. Teachers use many different methods to help pupils communicate and understand, such as pictures, sign language, communication cue cards and the use of information and communication technology, all of which are highly effective to help pupils learn.
- Teachers plan work that closely matches pupils' needs. In a history lesson looking at the history of cars, one pupil was identifying types of transport with wheels, another pupil was looking at different modes of transport, while a third was explaining how cars have changed over time. This activity made sure that all pupils, including the most able, could make sufficient progress against their challenging targets.
- The excellent evaluations from the occupational and speech and language therapists result in a detailed analysis of each pupil's needs. Teachers and support staff understand how to implement the clear plans provided and deliver the programmes well.
- The relationships that exist between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. The sensitive approach used by staff to help pupils improve their behaviour is highly impressive. Pupils develop their ability to work with others, learn the difference between right and wrong and stay on task. In fact, the schemes of work and lesson plans do not accurately capture the high-quality curriculum that inspectors saw in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how well the school supports them. One said, 'They help me to work and make progress. I can now get involved without being scared.' Another pupil said, 'When I came here I was very quiet; I wouldn't talk to anyone. Now I can socialise with people and work as part of a group. They help me to work and make progress.'

- The thought and effort that goes into helping pupils settle and feel comfortable is remarkable. Very quickly, the school makes pupils feel safe, confident and ready to learn.
- The friendly, family feel of the school is evident. The school has instilled in its pupils a real sense of belonging, and an acceptance and understanding of others' behaviours.
- The school provides a caring and nurturing environment that helps pupils with complex needs to re-engage with learning. It gives them a good chance to succeed in life.
- Leaders are highly proactive in their work to extend links with other providers and the wider community. Pupils have many opportunities to sample experiences that prepare them for life in the outside world. The preparatory work and planning that takes place beforehand leads to highly successful outcomes.
- Pupils receive independent and relevant careers advice. One pupil presented inspectors with the ice cream he had just made, while telling them about the support he had received in his application to become a computer games tester.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they are concerned about anything.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and proud of their school. Some of them were anxious about the inspection because they wanted to show how well the school helps them.
- Staff know what makes pupils feel anxious and how to minimise any worries. They successfully promote positive behaviour.
- The relationships that exist between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. The sensitive approach in which staff help pupils to improve their behaviour and stay on task is highly impressive.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance very closely, and the overall rate is well above the national average. There are a few cases where, due to a high level of medical need, pupils' attendance at school is below average. This has a disproportionate effect on the overall attendance figure.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. One pupil said, 'I used to be isolated and run around a lot. I had issues with teachers and never wanted to return to class, so I never engaged with my studies. Now I'm quite good, I'm getting on with people, but I need to keep working on my social skills.'
- Pupils make rapid, sustained and outstanding progress because staff carry out a detailed assessment of what pupils can do when they arrive at the school and then match pupils' needs with a range of support from highly effective staff. As one parent said, 'The school looks at each individual child to meet their needs. This is the first school that has done this for my child.'
- The most able pupils make impressive gains in their learning because staff set work that is sufficiently demanding.

- On arrival, many pupils are unable to speak, and many exhibit challenging behaviour and have a history of multiple exclusions from previous schools. The school quickly helps pupils to develop at least one form of effective communication that will meet their needs. This is the cornerstone of pupils' future development across all areas, which then allows them to make excellent progress both socially and academically.
- The school records 'Magic Moments' to capture some of the wider achievements of its pupils, such as joining another pupil at the lunch table for the first time.
- Leaders track pupils' progress continually against key developmental points. If pupils are falling behind, staff and therapists provide additional one-to-one interventions or paired work with another pupil, which work well to help pupils catch up.
- As well as building self-esteem, confidence and communication skills, pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy skills because they are taught well and staff ensure that all pupils follow appropriate courses.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- Outcomes for students in the school's sixth form are highly impressive. The post-16 leader ensures that students are provided with excellent opportunities to help them overcome their complex barriers to learning.
- The extensive 'person-centred planning' allows all students to follow personalised learning programmes. This approach enables students to develop their literacy, numeracy and personal development skills well, in addition to learning about health, friends, independence and the community. The programmes build on pupils' achievements at key stage 4 and prepare them well for life after Radlett Lodge.
- All students complete appropriate work-related learning, work experience and business enterprise activities, which help them develop a better understanding of the outside world. Improving their links with the wider community helps familiarise students with what most would consider everyday tasks. However, for these students these represent significant advancements in their social and personal development.
- The independent careers adviser gives students appropriate advice in terms of next steps. Of the students who left last year, all achieved 'Towards Independence' certificates. The school provides individual support to help students progress to courses or other programmes that meet their needs well.
- Teaching in the sixth form is of the same high quality as elsewhere in the school. Teachers plan lessons very carefully. They choose activities, such as role play, that meet the needs of each student extremely well. Teachers' use of practical sessions with high visual content is highly effective in helping students to remember and learn skills far more quickly. As one student said, 'They know what keeps me interested.'
- The students in the sixth form behave exceptionally well. They are polite, happy to meet visitors and willingly give up their time to speak to inspectors. Students appreciate what the school has done for them. They mention the support they receive, the opportunities they have to mix with friends and the experiences of outside life as particular highlights.
- Students in the sixth form say that the school works hard to help them stay safe. They know who to talk to if they feel nervous or if they have concerns. They highlight the

strong relationships between students and staff as a key factor in keeping them safe and happy in school.

- Leaders understand the importance of their role, and carefully monitor what they do. As a result, the school helps the students to progress to specialist colleges or adult care services, as appropriate to their needs as adults and learners.

School details

Unique reference number	117646
DfE registration number	919/6215
Inspection number	10008866

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The National Autistic Society
Chair	Pamela Reitemeier
Headteacher	Jo Galloway
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,650.67
Telephone number	01923 854922
Website	www.nas.org.uk
Email address	jo.galloway@nas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–8 March 2013

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has increased its capacity to 60 pupils, but providing placements for this number of pupils is dependent on a new building programme.
- The National Autistic Society runs the school, which was opened in 1974.
- All pupils have a diagnosis of autism. Pupils have communication difficulties and some have complex medical needs. The vast majority of pupils are boys.

- All of the pupils have statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans. Fourteen local authorities fund pupils' placements at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in the early years foundation stage.
- Radlett Lodge adopts a multidisciplinary approach, whereby a team of staff collaborate to meet the individual needs of each pupil. Each class team includes teachers, learning support assistants, care staff, behaviour coordinators, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists.
- The school was last inspected in March 2013. At this time, the school was judged as outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, often jointly with senior leaders. In one class, the inspector heard some pupils read. Inspectors looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with local authority placement officers, a virtual headteacher, the executive director of education and an external adviser that works with the school.
- The lead inspector toured the school and looked at the school's single central record of employment checks.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, therapists, pupils and staff. The lead inspector met with the link trustee. Forty-three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were considered.
- There were 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector met with a group of parents to ask them about their opinions of the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, policies, information about the curriculum, safeguarding documents and information provided to trustees about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school.
- There are no reception-aged children in school and therefore this inspection report does not include a section on the quality of the early years provision.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop

Ofsted Inspector

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