

# Radlett Lodge School

Harper Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 9HW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Radlett Lodge School is run by the National Autistic Society. There are currently 52 pupils aged 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 seven residential pupils. The children have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.

The residential provision was last inspected in June 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 16 January 2020

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 12 June 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The children enjoy staying in the residential provision and they benefit from the structure and the routine that this provides. The children engage with the school's multi-disciplinary team, which also supports the staff. The team identifies the children's sensory needs, preferred communication systems and emotional needs. The residential staff work effectively with the education and health staff and this enables the children to improve in their education, health, speech and communication, social interactions and self-care skills.

The children benefit from supportive and trusting relationships with the staff, who are responsive to their unique needs. The children learn new skills and develop their independence. One parent said, about their child, 'He is thriving. He is more independent and will do little chores that I also incorporate at home.' Another parent said, about the staff, 'They are really meeting [my child's] needs. He is very settled. He is happy and full of smiles.'

The staff recognise the children's achievements and record the children's 'magic moments'. Records, photographs and progress statements show that the children benefit from a range of positive experiences.

The children participate in a wide range of activities that are supported and encouraged by the staff. Despite this, community activities are not regularly offered, due to a lack of staff who can drive, which reduces the children's choice and opportunity.

Most of the children benefit from a nutritious and healthy diet. The staff cater for some dietary requirements. However, there is a lack of choice for some children in response to their cultural diets.

The accommodation is clean and safe, and the staff consult with the children regarding the personalisation of their bedrooms. However, the dining room is not a comfortable place for the children to eat because the layout and structure of the room leads to high levels of noise. This can unsettle some children who have a low tolerance to noise.

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

The staff immediately raise child protection and staff practice concerns with the senior management team. These concerns are quickly shared with safeguarding professionals. The staff are transparent and reflective in their reporting and recording. They identify when lessons from incidents can reduce the risk of any recurrence.

Informative behaviour support plans, risk assessments and care plans identify the children's strengths and vulnerabilities. These plans support the staff to recognise the children's anxieties and develop strategies to minimise behavioural difficulties. The staff help the children to manage transitions while reducing their anxiety about change. This results in children growing in confidence and patience and developing self-regulation techniques.

The children do not go missing from the school, due to the levels of staff supervision. The staff rarely use physical interventions. Good reflection and analysis identify any emerging trends and patterns. This enables the staff to make changes to behaviour support plans to reduce the children's potential triggers.

The staff use effective referral systems when they have concerns, either regarding a child's safety or when an additional resource is required. The senior leadership team quickly reviews any concerns and takes the required action. Therefore, there is no delay in the actions that the staff take to safeguard the children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The head of care has the relevant experience for her managerial role. She is suitably qualified to level 5. She works with the new school principal, and together they have ensured that the children continue to have positive experiences.

Since the last inspection, the staff team has experienced some challenging times and, consequently, retention of staff is poor. A number of staff have left, and the managers have reduced the number of children who stay, to reflect this. This has ensured that the children receive safe levels of care. The core care staff are supported by education, bank and agency staff. However, there are shifts that are not evenly balanced with experienced staff, and further staff are required.

There are some staff who have not achieved a suitable level 3 qualification within the required timescales. There are also staff who have not undertaken all of their training and some staff who are on induction training. This fails to ensure that children consistently receive care from a trained, competent staff team.

The children's records are not all up to date. Therefore, there is a potential that the staff may not have all the required current information.

Feedback from the children's families is generally positive. The families value the residential provision. One parent said, 'It is a really good team. The staff listen to me, and answer my concerns. I really value what they are doing.' Another parent said, 'He [the child] is definitely at a school that meets his needs. The staff listen and want to know my views. It is really good.'

## **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 standards for residential special schools:

- 15.1 There is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school.
- 19.1 Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school.
- 19.2 All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment.
- 22.1 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), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all the children have meal options that meet their cultural dietary needs.
- Provide the children with more opportunities to access activities in the local community.
- Ensure that, when possible, action is taken to reduce the noise in the dining room.

## **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:** Ms Geraldine Mendonça

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01923 854 922

**Email address:** radlett.lodge@nas.org.uk

## **Inspector**

Natalie Burton, social care inspector

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