

Oak Lodge School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Muhammed Harunur Rashid
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Oak Lodge School for the Deaf, 101 Nightingale Lane, LONDON, SW12 8NA
Telephone number	020 8673 3453
Email	info@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk
Registered person	Wandsworth Borough Council
Head/ Principal	Vicky Ferguson
Nominated person	Roger Legate
Date of last inspection	02/02/2010

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Oak Lodge School is owned and managed by the London Borough of Wandsworth. It is a specialist resource which provides education to 90 deaf pupils aged 11-19 years of age, with residential places for 18 pupils. They can reside at the school for up to four nights a week during term time. The residential unit is located within the school building and includes a large lounge, kitchen/diner, a games room and quiet room. Boys' and girls' bedrooms are on separate floors. The residential unit is managed by a head of care and there are four additional full time members of staff. Nine young people were resident during the inspection and contributed in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The quality of the residential provision at Oak Lodge is good with some outstanding features. Pupil's welfare is enhanced by the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Pupils are encouraged to maintain a healthy life style. They live in a safe environment. Their educational attainments are promoted. The school works closely with a wide range of outside agencies in order to meet the full range of pupils needs. There are good opportunities for staff training in a number of areas such as safeguarding, deaf awareness and British Sign Language. Staffing levels are appropriate and pupils receive a good standard of care. Individual needs are recognised and plans are in place to address them. Staff are well supported by the principal who is committed to promoting the welfare of pupils and focusing on improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were made at the last inspection dated 2 February 2010, one of which has been met in full and two others progressed well. The closed circuit television camera within the residential accommodation has been removed. The school has made improvement in the areas of carrying out all the necessary references and checks when recruiting staff, however, a new omission has been identified. The school is working towards implementing its plans to consult with pupils and their families in order to provide more choices of meals and continue to encourage pupils to participate in the preparation of cooking meals. A complete refurbishment works in the girl's accommodation took place and the school is in the process of carrying out the refurbishment works in the boy's floor.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Residential pupil's health care needs are well identified and individual health plans are in place to meet these assessed needs. The policies and procedures on promoting pupil's health and training support staff to meet pupil's health care needs in full. Daily circle time address a variety of issues including healthy living, sexual health, drugs and alcohol. Staff are trained in this area and are able to support pupil's development and knowledge of these areas. Staff encourage pupils to take personal responsibilities for their own audiology needs and have access to audiology equipment within the unit. Pupils and care staff have a regular access to the school nurse for advice and support with any health issues.

There are effective systems in place for storing, administering, recording and monitoring pupil's medication. All residential staff have attended medication administration training and two staff always sign on the medication administration record sheets which helps to avoid any mistakes. Medication is stored safely in a locked cabinet in the boarding house. Staff have attended first aid training and first aid boxes are provided in the house.

Pupils are provided with varied, balanced and healthy meals. The school ensures that pupil's dietary requirements are met in accordance with their religious, cultural and health needs. Staff are aware of dietary needs of pupil. Staff and pupils eat together in the dining room. Dining rooms are suitable for the numbers and needs of pupils and staff dining in them. The school is working towards implementing its plans to consult with pupils and their families in order to provide more choices of meals and continues to encourage pupils to participate in the preparation of cooking meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupil's privacy and confidentiality is well promoted by the policy and practice of care staff. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible, for example in relation to their personal care. The closed circuit television camera has been removed from the boy's corridor to promote greater privacy. Pupils' records are kept safely and securely in the boarding house.

There is a comprehensive complaints procedure in a suitable format for pupils and this is displayed. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by pupils and others. Pupils know what to do should they have a complaint and follow agreed procedures. However, there have not been any formal complaints since the last inspection.

Pupils are well protected by the school's child protection systems, providing a safe

and secure environment for them. A comprehensive child protection policy and procedure is in place and this is kept under constant review. All staff, including volunteers, receive yearly child protection training to develop their knowledge and skills in this area. The school has built good links with the London Borough of Wandsworth safeguarding team and call them if they have any concerns. There is a whistleblowing policy in place.

The school has an anti-bullying policy. Staff monitor relationships between pupils closely and there is excellent communication between the school and boarding house so that if there are any concerns these are addressed promptly.

The incidents of pupils going missing from the boarding house are very infrequent due to the high level of supervision in place. However, an appropriate policy and procedure is in place for dealing with such incidents.

Young people who exhibit challenging behaviour are supported through positive reinforcement to make changes. There is a behaviour management policy for the school that incorporates education and the residential provision. Some of the pupils have behaviour management plans and risk assessments in place and this includes specific information relevant to the residential setting. Behaviour management support plans are reviewed regularly or as needed if needs change. The emphasis is on prevention of unacceptable behaviour and the school has incentive and reward schemes which also encourage positive behaviour.

Comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures are in place and there is a general policy in the staff handbook regarding responsibilities and duties. Staff have attended health and safety training. They take appropriate steps to keep pupils, visitors and themselves safe from risk of fire and other hazards. There is a comprehensive risk assessments of the premises. Staff carry out regular fire alarm testing and fire drills. Current gas and electric test certificates are available for inspection.

The school has a robust recruitment policy and procedure in place to protect pupils. The school ensures that all necessary information is obtained prior to staff commencing work. Staff files examined included photocopies of their passports, two written reference letters and an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure. However, evidence shows that on one occasion the school did not contact a referee to verify the reference letter.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for pupils. Residential staff provide pupils with excellent support in their education. Staff work in partnership with the school in order to monitor and support pupil's education and welfare. Residential placements are designed as an integral part of the specific

educational and social programme, which takes into account of pupil's disabilities. All pupils have an individual education plans and these are regularly reviewed. Pupils have individual homework diaries in which they record homework tasks. This means staff are able to monitor deadlines and offer support where required. Pupils are able to complete their work in their own rooms or in the dining room, seeking peer support if appropriate.

Residential pupils have access to a wide range and choice of activities. Regular activities include swimming, arts and crafts, youth club, shopping, pool, table football, football, gym games, badminton, cooking, theatre and cinema trips, visits to museums, trips to restaurants, picnics in the park, theme nights, trips to the beach and visits to other schools. All of these activities are actively encouraged. When planning these activities a number of factors are taken into consideration including pupil's requests, staffing ratios and any pupils with additional needs.

Residential pupils are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes. A key worker is assigned for each pupil. Pupils can approach any members of staff and they are listened to. Staff are able to communicate with pupils using various communication methods, for example, British Sign Language. Excellent support is provided to pupils with identity issues arising from their deafness and other disabilities. Support to pupils with their racial, cultural and religious identities is also provided as part of school programmes and in daily 'circle time' discussions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements for consulting young people and their families. Pupils are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Staff support pupils in developing their communication skills and they are able to communicate with pupils through various methods. Pupils are able to express their views well and they are supported by an excellent interpreter employed by the school. Pupils contribute views about their education, welfare and their future through key work and pastoral sessions. The school council membership is representative of the wider school population and is an excellent example of the inclusive way in which the school is operates.

There are clear policies in place for both admissions and leaving care. The school sends the welcome pack to pupils and their family members prior to the visit to the school. Pupil's family members are encouraged to visit the residential house and the arrangements for a placement are made taking into account the individual needs of the pupils and what will work best for them.

The school supports the waking day curriculum and each pupil has a care plan which includes SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed) targets. Aims are created on a half termly basis and pupils develop a variety of skills with the opportunity to gain rewards at the end of the term. There is an emphasis on the

development of social and interaction skills, through community living and activities.

The residential house has an open door policy for families. Pupils are able to contact parents when they wish and can invite them to visit the home. Parents are kept informed of welfare concerns and about the progress of their children. In each half term, the residential parent's evening gives everyone the opportunity to enjoy a social evening to discuss the pupil's welfare, and improve parent's sign language skills by offering sign language classes and games, run by the pupils and staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The communal rooms in the residential unit are comfortable, sufficiently spacious and well decorated and furnished. A spacious and well equipped kitchen/diner is provided. Since the last inspection the girl's floor has been completely refurbished, providing new furniture and carpets in all bedrooms. Bedrooms are personalised and pupils who come for respite use the same room each time. Pupils advised the inspector that they had participated in the planning for their new accommodation, designing their bedrooms and communal areas. The school is now in the process of carrying out a complete refurbishment of the boy's floor. The plan also includes the creation of an independent living unit for older pupils.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The updated Statement of Purpose includes all the necessary information. It describes the school's care principles and practice for residential pupils. The welcome guide for pupils has been developed in an appropriate format. This provides them with information about the facilities available to them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good through the contribution the school makes towards meeting pupil's diverse care and learning needs. There is an equal opportunities and racial equality policy in place. Staff make every effort to ensure that the individual needs of pupils, parents and staff are met within a multicultural and multi-faith environment. To ensure equal access to communication the school employs interpreters who work with staff and pupils.

Sufficient numbers of staff are on duty at all times to meet pupil's complex assessed needs. Pupils are supported by a dedicated and stable staff team. The staff team understand their roles and responsibilities and take a special interest in the pupil's welfare. Excellent relationships exist between pupils and staff.

Staff training is supported by the school. An annual programme covers a wide range of training which staff are expected to undertake in order to meet pupil's needs

effectively. Care staff are trained in safeguarding, communication techniques, deaf awareness, British Sign Language health and safety, first aid, managing challenging behaviour and a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. All staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals from their line manager.

There is an internal self evaluation that helps to enhance the quality of care for pupils. Pupils are able to see governors and the independent consultant and express their views and opinions about life at school. The monitoring visits are carried out half termly by an independent consultant and she produce detailed reports on the conduct of the school. However, the reports do not address fully the areas listed in the national minimum standards 33.3.

The principal, the head of school, the head of care and the staff team have a focus on continually improving the residential care experience and meeting the learning needs of pupils.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that the school contact each referee to verify the reference letter (NMS 27.2)
- ensure that national minimum standards 33 visit reports fully address all areas listed in the standard. (NMS 33.3.)