

Oak Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101094
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	376508
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Blackband

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. 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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Pond
Headteacher	Shanee Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 January 2009
School address	Nightingale Lane London SW12 8NA
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Boarding/Residential provision	Oak Lodge
Social care unique reference number	SC042132
Social care inspector	Sophie Wood

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	12–13 January 2012
Inspection number	376508



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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband

Additional inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional inspector

Sophie Ward

Social Care Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 lessons as well as assemblies and the conduct of pupils in the playground and at lunch. All teachers were observed teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation on the curriculum, planning and all data on the performance of the pupils. They also scrutinised all safeguarding records and policies and procedures on the welfare of the pupils and their communication needs. Inspectors took into account the views of parents and carers expressed in the 25 returned questionnaires as well as those of 20 staff and 58 pupils.

Information about the school

Oak Lodge school provides for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are drawn from 30 local authorities and attend the school because of their hearing and language impairments. Many pupils have additional complex learning needs. There is residential provision for some pupils. There are currently 30 students in the sixth form. There is a wide ethnic mix and boys outnumber girls by two to one, particularly in the upper part of the school. There is an above average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The acting headteacher also manages, 'Deaf First', a service for the local deaf community.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. The majority of pupils make progress which is significantly above national expectations. Their communication through a multi-modal language approach supported by technology specially designed for people with hearing impairments is excellent. Pupils who are new to the school, who may have few communication skills or even knowledge of language, make outstanding progress, so much so that every pupil gains nationally accredited qualifications in Year 11 or in the sixth form. The sixth form is outstanding. Students make excellent progress because of continuing emphasis on their communication and life skills. The quality of residential provision is excellent and surpasses national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Teaching is outstanding. The curriculum is very well designed to match mainstream education, with a high priority given to the pupils' communication throughout the timetable. Lessons are enjoyable and pupils respond with high levels of concentration and motivation. Assessment of pupils' progress is very good and involves discussion with pupils. Consequently, pupils have an excellent understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve. On very few occasions, targets set for pupils are not precise enough and do not help pupils to understand how to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Parents, staff and pupils overwhelmingly confirm this. The school is a happy and harmonious learning environment where pupils help and support each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, due to the ethos of support and the pupils' very good understanding of right and wrong. The promotion of different cultures within this ethnically mixed school adds effectively to the pupils' understanding of diversity.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, led by an inspirational acting headteacher. She is assisted by an enthusiastic senior team and by a well-informed and challenging governing body, who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Together, leaders have created an inclusive school where every pupil is valued highly.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the attainment and progress of pupils by ensuring that teachers always create sharply-focused learning targets so that pupils understand fully how to improve their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress throughout the school, and including sixth-form students, is outstanding. Although attainment remains below the national average, all pupils make at least good progress and many far surpass national targets for progress. Progress in communication is excellent for all pupils. Pupils often enter the school with very little skill in signing or even understanding of the role of language. Their needs are analysed and assessed using exemplary procedures, and specific individual intervention is put in place. As a result, all pupils feel they are making progress and become confident communicators.

The school's ethos of promoting collaboration and communication between pupils has a significant impact on their confidence and progress. For instance, in an outstanding information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, each pupil had the opportunity to explain his or her work to the class and to answer questions based on their conclusions. Their support for each other was remarkable and this motivated the pupils highly as well as promoting their communication and ICT skills. As pupils move up through the school, they gradually take more responsibility for their learning, playing an important role in managing and assessing their own work.

By the sixth form, they are fully prepared to leave and accept the responsibility of managing their own work on further education courses. Pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form successfully gain a range of GCSE, Entry level and Functional Skills qualifications. This opens the door to further study in local colleges. Parents and carers are very happy with how well their children are progressing and this is fully supported by the evidence.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is characterised by the very high level of support given to every pupil. Teachers are highly skilled in adapting their questions to meet the different levels of pupils' understanding. Together with well-trained assistants, they spend time with each individual, discussing and commenting on the pupils' work and helping them improve. Many teachers and assistants are themselves profoundly deaf and this creates empathy between staff and pupils. Teachers model multi-modal communication modes very effectively and adapt the language, complexity and speed of delivery to meet the needs of the pupils. Communication is specifically

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planned into every learning activity and a very high emphasis on collaboration and communication is found in every lesson. This greatly increases the pupils' understanding and skills and ensures they enjoy each lesson. Pupils support each other very well. They acknowledge and welcome each other's preferred mode of communication and this helps them develop tolerance, to respect the rights of others and greatly aids their social confidence. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent. Support staff play an important role in supporting those pupils with additional needs such as autism. This enables these pupils to maintain concentration and take a full part in the lesson. Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school's work and feel that it provides very well for them.

Assessment is a strength of the teaching process. Apart from isolated instances where targets were not sharp enough to explain to pupils how to improve, teachers and pupils work together individually to explain and fully discuss the work and to assess progress. This process, accompanied by helpful marking which gives explicit comments and pointers for improvement, is of immense support to pupils in explaining how to improve. It further motivates them to work hard and adds substantially to their rate of progress. For example, in art and design lessons, the pupils maintain detailed records of their progress which they discuss with the teacher on every occasion. This encompasses drawings, photographs and written comments completed by pupils and staff and which demonstrate the excellent progress the pupils are making. A consequence of this is that a relatively high proportion of pupils achieve GCSE art and design in Year 11. The considerable breadth and balance of the curriculum adds significantly to pupils' experience of school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils' behaviour is excellent. All pupils, including those in the sixth form and those in residential provision, report that they feel totally safe at school. The pupils' behaviour over time has shown very significant improvement. Exclusions and other sanctions have dropped to almost nil. Pupils quickly learn and respond very well to the behaviour strategies used by the school. Relationships with staff are excellent and the pupils are confident and happy to meet visitors to their school. There are very few bullying incidents of any kind and these are dealt with extremely effectively by the school, using positive counselling and through exploring issues thoroughly. Lessons invariably proceed calmly and in a relaxed manner. The pupils' behaviour, courtesy and tolerance of each other are exemplary.

The school ethos fosters a sense of belonging for each pupil. Pupils gain an excellent understanding of the needs of others and are genuinely supportive of other pupils. Older pupils act as prefects who mentor and coach younger pupils. For instance, they sit together in assembly to help keep the younger pupils focused on the teacher or pupil delivering the assembly. Parents and carers overwhelmingly confirm the good behaviour and welcoming happy atmosphere at the school. Attendance is above average and has risen steadily since the previous inspection.

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Leadership and management

The school is led outstandingly well by the acting headteacher. She is profoundly deaf and is a very good role model for the pupils. The headteacher and deputy head have coached and mentored the leadership team who are now extremely effective in monitoring and evaluating each aspect of the pupils' performance and the school's provision. Policies and procedures are very clearly documented and rigorously adhered to. This consistency substantially adds to the high staff morale. All staff are involved in monitoring each aspect of the school's work and in creating detailed action plans to improve performance and provision. These in turn are fed skilfully into the school's overall development planning, resulting in clear targets for improvement which are very regularly monitored, adapted and reviewed. The views of parents and carers and the professional judgements of nationally recognised outside consultants are fully incorporated into planning. Self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and is used effectively to drive improvements.

Teaching standards are monitored consistently. This is accompanied by a detailed programme of performance management of teachers which leads to extensive staff training of a high level. As a result, the standards of teaching continue to rise and underperformance is quickly eradicated. The excellent curriculum is broad and balanced and enables pupils to gain a wide range of accreditation in Year 11 and the sixth form. Teachers and senior staff have revised planning to give an even greater emphasis on communication across all aspects of teaching and learning. The work given to pupils is adapted very successfully to take their differing learning abilities and needs into consideration. The pupils thrive on these activities which challenge them to make even more effort but always with short-term achievable goals. Those pupils with additional needs are very well provided for. They have detailed care and progress plans and they are extremely well supported by specialist teachers of the deaf to help them quickly to learn to communicate. The promotion of equality is outstanding and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There is a detailed programme of personal, health and social education. Pupils care for and support each other; they have a very good understanding of risks both outside the school and through internet chat rooms. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Child protection procedures are very secure throughout the school and the residential provision, and the governing body and representatives of the local authority monitor these closely. Absence is very quickly followed up and has resulted in a steady rise in attendance since the previous inspection.

The governing body provides clear strategic leadership based on a good knowledge of the school. Its members are regular visitors to classrooms and they are kept very well informed of the results of the school's monitoring. As a result, they supply a good level of support to the school and are able to challenge the school to even greater heights. There is a very strong capacity for further improvement. Leaders at

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all levels are acutely aware of the school's strengths and of where provision can still be improved. There is an excellent track record since the previous inspection of improving the pupils' attainment and rates of progress and in offering a wide range of challenging accreditation. Standards of behaviour, attendance, teaching performance and curriculum development have continued to improve. The school has a high reputation for its work in the local authority and wider afield. Oak Lodge is truly at the 'cutting-edge' of education for the deaf.

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Residential provision

Residential pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. They enjoy a wide range of opportunities to learn life and social skills, which significantly increase their feelings of self-worth and confidence. This is achieved through the team's clear understanding of individual and specific care needs which are rigorously assessed and regularly reviewed. Care plans are specifically tailored and take full account of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds and values of individuals. Pupils receive the direction and guidance they need to make informed and appropriate choices in terms of their own social behaviour and conduct. Staff are excellent role models and actively encourage tolerance, acceptance and the celebration of the wide diversity which exists in the school. Pupils enjoy discovering their local and wider community and benefit from engaging in a wide range of individual and group activities.

Residential pupils benefit from a well-planned introduction to the school. Consultation with existing schools, key personnel, family members, carers and the prospective pupils ensures all areas are comprehensively explored. Fears and anxieties are minimised and a thoughtful key worker system quickly establishes trusting and safe relationships with the staff team.

Residential pupils receive care of the highest quality from a committed and well-supported team of care staff. All pupils are highly valued as unique individuals; the work of the care team is respected and supported by teaching colleagues and this factor encourages a seamless transition throughout a pupil's day and evening. They are encouraged to maintain contact with their family members, carers and friends. Parents and carers say they are always made to feel welcome and they enjoy attending review meetings, award ceremonies and special events.

Staff expect pupils to behave appropriately and they place themselves as excellent role models. An educative approach with regards to consequences often results in pupils setting their own sanctions when they perceive their own behaviour to be unacceptable. The health needs of pupils are comprehensively assessed, managed and reviewed. Pupils receive the care and support they need because staff are appropriately trained and effectively supported by a dedicated school nurse and external professional agencies. Excellent opportunities encourage pupils to develop and practise daily life and independence skills.

Robust child protection arrangements serve to provide outstanding safeguarding arrangements. The whole school site offers very good security and pupils say they feel safe at school. There is a rigorous approach to health and safety matters.

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The senior management team places the welfare and protection of the pupils at the very heart of its practice. The impact of this ethos is overwhelmingly positive; residential pupils are empowered and supported to take full advantage of the school's

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outstanding teaching provision because they are thriving within the residential provision. There is a comprehensive and up-to-date Statement of Principles and Practice and a student guide to boarding that clearly identifies the aims and ethos of the school and what pupils and families can expect; this is fully reflected in practice. The school actively upholds equality, celebrates diversity and ensures inclusion through its policies and practice. There is a strong commitment to continued improvement; senior managers and an energetic governing body strive to implement positive changes and refuse to 'stand still'. There is an effective supervision, appraisal and team meeting system which ensures staff are well supported, clearly guided and kept up to date with all developments.

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential pupils' safety	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

16 January 2012

Dear Pupils and students,



Inspection of Oak Lodge School, London SW12 8NA

Thankyou for making us so welcome at your school. Although I do not sign, I had an interpreter with me at all times and I really enjoyed meeting with you. I am very pleased to tell you that Oak Lodge is an outstanding school. Some of the things which are really good are as follows:

- You all make very good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects such as PE, art and design and design and technology.
- You learn to sign and to understand others signing extremely quickly and confidently. This is a very good achievement and will help you greatly when you become adults.
- You behave and look after each other very well. It is a happy school where you all get on together. You told us that you feel very safe and thoroughly enjoy school. This shows in your good attendance.
- Your work is really well adapted to help you learn quickly. The teachers are enthusiastic and spend time with all of you to help you learn better.
- Your headteacher and the staff run the school very well.

To make the school even better, I have asked the teachers always to make very sure that you understand exactly how to improve your work. You can all help by always trying your best and continuing to look after each other.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Blackband
Lead inspector

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