

Oak Lodge School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection 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, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Oak Lodge School is a residential special school based in South London and is owned and managed by the London Borough of Wandsworth. The school was last inspected in January 2012 and the residential provision of the school is situated on site. It is a specialist resource which provides education up to for 90 plus students aged 10-19 years with residential places for 14 students.

Students may 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. Five young people were resident during the inspection and contributed in the inspection process.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness is good with outstanding features in outcomes for boarders and quality of care. The quality of pastoral support for residential students is good, this includes how new boarders are inducted. The link between pastoral and academic staff in supporting students is also good. Residential students make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. They are able to enjoy a wide range of opportunities to learn life and social skills, which significantly increase their feelings of who they are and their confidence. The experience of boarding has enhanced residential students' personal, social, cultural and educational development. Relationships with staff are maintained at a good level. Residential students are prepared well for adult life.
- There is a consistently good quality of care which meets the needs of each student. The varied programme of activities and events meets the needs and interests of all boarders whether they are there the full or part of a week. Residential students benefit from a well-planned introduction to the school. Consultation with existing schools, family members, carers and the prospective pupils ensures all areas are comprehensively explored. There is a good standard of care overall and residential students they receive effective support which is suited to their individual needs. This is enhanced by the comfortable and homely accommodation which has been recently upgraded.
- The boarding facilities are well organised and run for the benefit of the students. The provision of care is always managed in the best interest of the child. Communication with the parents/carers/placing authorities is clear and regular.
- The views of students and other interested parties are positively sought. There is a clear process by which students can contribute their views and see how they

have made a difference in improving their boarding experiences, not for themselves but for all within the school.

- The leadership and management of the residential provision are strong. The aims and objectives are well understood by all. Students are well supported and cared for, and any weaknesses are identified and action is taken to improve the service being provided. The school has a clear evaluation of its performance. Improvements are well planned and implemented and benefit of all students.
- The residential students are safe within the boarding provision. There are clear safeguarding procedures in place and staff training is reviewed regularly by the designated child protection officer. Residential students spoken to commented on how safe they feel and how homely the boarding accommodation is. They also stated that they feel very supported by the care staff who understand their needs and abilities.
- Two national minimum standards have not been met at the time of this inspection and three areas for further improvements have been made. This impact has changed the overall judgement from outstanding to good. The areas for improvement relate to staff training, policies and procedures and the school reviewing the fire risk assessment in relation to the boarding provision. Although, improvement needed to be made, this does not diminish the overall good quality of care that the residential students experience but, the improvement will enhance and protect the children fully.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Students receive outstanding levels of care, support and guidance. An excellent approach ensures their individual needs are firmly at the centre of the school. A holistic ethos is evident with staff caring and educating students in a manner that promotes the notion of shared aims and goals. Students are supported to develop safe and meaningful relationships with staff and their peers and to make progress in their learning and personal development. The school harbours a sense of community where mutual respect is promoted as part of day-to-day life. Students commented on how they receive support in all aspects of their care whilst at the school, which they like.

Students contribute to the way the school is run. Residential students have 'circle time' meetings; this enables them to make decisions on future activities and how the boarding is generally managed. Students are able to be part of the school council which also makes suggestions on what can be improved and how. Annually students are given a voice through the school's survey and one of the questions raised this year related to the school uniform. This was reviewed by the school's governors and the outcome was that the school uniform was revised through the suggestions made.

Students stated and it was evident that they enjoyed going to the school and loved being with their peers. The residential students liked the idea of having a key worker

and commented that they feel that the keyworkers "are there for them" This was one of the positive things young people spoke about that enhanced their life at the school, as well as seeing and being with their peers. Connections between life within school, and in the wider community are encouraged. Activities such as competing in 'race for life' and other charity events, allowed students the opportunity to not only consider their needs, but also the needs of others.

The health needs of students are promoted to an excellent standard. Students feel looked after and cared for when they are ill. The holistic approach of the school incorporates specialist input through a multi-disciplinary team including the National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, speech therapy and the nurse. Other therapists can be sought when the need arises. The routines and support students receive from the staff also enable them to feel safe and closely supported. Students are able to choose their main meals in advance and they enjoy the standard of food on offer. A balanced approach ensures students are encouraged to eat healthily while their individual needs are catered for. Meals provided by the boarding are very different from school. Students are given the opportunity to plan, budget, shop and prepare their meals; these skills prepares them for life and taking that big steps towards adulthood and being totally independent.

Care planning is excellent with students receiving clear advice and guidance to assist them to prepare for life after leaving the school. The school works hard to identify the right community based resources for students once they leave. Close working links are maintained between other schools, colleges and potential employers to identify the most appropriate levels of support and in turn help to reduce levels of anxiety or uncertainty.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of pastoral support for boarders is outstanding. There is a robust induction programme for new boarders. The process includes parents and carers, as they also feel anxious about the new beginnings for their child and themselves. The induction is child centred ensuring that their needs are assessed and understood by all supporting the student. The impact of this is that students settle well into school and boarding life and feel safe as the links between pastoral and academic life is seamless. Parents are encouraged to attend sign language courses to aid them with their communication needs.

The quality and appropriateness of care plans for individuals are effectively implemented. Students are encouraged to develop and practise daily life and independence skills. They are supported to learn new skills such as cooking, laundry, personal organisation, using public transport, budgeting, table skills and care of themselves and their environment. Within this wide scope, individual students are encouraged to explore their own unique areas of need and care plans are used to set realistic targets and goals. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and when changes occur, to ensure that the assessment of risk remains safe for the student.

Students are guided and prepared to know when things may not meet their expectation and how to move on positively and safely. This enables them to be better equipped with countless life learning skills and clear strategies of when a crisis may occur.

Students experience a wide range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Students spoken to all said that ice skating and swimming were the best activities. All activities are risk assessed and reviewed such as swimming, any group events, charity runs, parties and individuals' personal hobbies. Staff are excellent role models and actively encourage tolerance, acceptance and the celebration of the wide diversity which exists in the school.

The medical needs of students are well known, planned for and met. A dedicated nurse is available two days a week on site and there is access to a local general practitioner if needed as all residential students are registered with their own doctors. The medication procedures are robust and reviewed regularly by the head of care. If there are any discrepancies, they are managed appropriately to safeguard the child. A review of the medication is that now two staff administer and sign. The quality and effectiveness of the school's arrangements for promoting and caring for boarders' health and well-being, including their mental health is excellent. There are good links with deaf CAMHS and other deaf professional agencies. The majority of the care staff are trained in the safe handling of medicines and first aid.

The boarding accommodation is of a high standard, being comfortable and well maintained. Students are able to personalise their own rooms which clearly helps them to create a more homely feel. The boarding accommodation has been upgraded since the last inspection the areas has been completely refurbished. There are separate accommodations for the boys and girls spread over two floors. The majority of bedrooms are single, but, where students share, no more than two student share at any time and these rooms are adequately spaced. Students are able to personalise their rooms with pictures and other personal items to make it homely. The premises and facilities are maintained well and are safe.

Students are encouraged to maintain contact with their family members, carers and friends. Staff encourage students to maintain contact also where possible. Students are able to communicate through emails, Skype and texting on their mobile phones and this is closely monitored by the school.

Residential pupils' safety

The outcome for residential students' safety is good. Fire safety is promoted throughout the school and the boarding accommodation is fitted with adaptations to meet the needs of the students such as flashing lights and vibrating equipment to alert students in the event of a fire or fire drills. Formal fire evacuation drills are regularly undertaken involving students and staff with detailed records held. Residential students stated that "the last fire evacuation took place in the morning

when it was cold". However, the fire evacuation procedure requires further review to ensure all staff are aware of the procedure.

The school ensure that health and safety checks are undertaken and are regularly reviewed in order to promote the safety of students.

The uses of physical intervention is rarely used, however, the training needs for staff have not been consistently updated to ensure staff are competent to support a child who may challenge. The school does undertake some form of de-escalation training, but on the day no evidence of this was seen on the staff files.

There are clear procedures in place for the safe recruitment and monitoring of staff and volunteers working with children. The school follows the guidance of the local authority. Staff display a sound understanding of child protection matters. They receive appropriate guidance and training and are guided by internal mechanisms and systems which are understood by all staff across every level. Incident and concerns forms are accurately and swiftly completed and passed to the correct department. There is a dedicated child protection officer. There are regular child welfare meetings and when issues arise they are addressed swiftly and in line with current child protection procedures. The child protection policies and procedures document is comprehensive; however, some part of this document has not been reviewed for some time. Therefore, may have out of date legislation guidance.

The school has recently completed anti-bullying week, and this was enhanced by a video which can be viewed on the school's website and students marking the week with a ceremony of letting off balloons. The week event is always deemed a success for the students. The school procedures are in line with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols. (RMFHC).

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the school is good. The senior management structure ensures all parties understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The management team have clear standards of practice which they themselves demonstrate by example. Staff are supported in their roles. The school has in place a statement of purpose which provides clear aims and objectives and this is linked to the prospectus for the school which can be accessed by the website. A development plan is also in place which incorporates residential provision and highlights the school areas for improvement and successes. The independent visitor is new and has completed one monitoring visit since being in post. Their picture is displayed on the noticeboard, to enable students to recognise the person and to know why they may be on site.

A sufficient number of staff are deployed both night and day to ensure students receive consistent care and support. There is a head of care that is forward thinking and has provided staff with additional areas for personal development opportunities

through various inset days training. The majority of staff attend these workshops, but those who undertake night duties miss out due to their work patterns. Other training such as fire awareness and physical intervention have not been consistently updated or reviewed.

Newly appointed staff are inducted alongside more established staff to ensure a suitable balance is maintained between learning, development and the needs of the students. Staff receive regular formal supervision; which covers key-working roles. Clear lines of responsibility ensure that performance is evaluated to ensure performance is maintained.

Communication between parents, carers and the school is good. The school also ensures that placing authorities and other relevant agencies are kept up to date with any incidents or potential issues. The school is clearly aware of each student's individual needs and vulnerabilities and is mindful to assess and plan at every stage. The assessment process prior to admission, coupled with the system of on-going reviews, ensures students receive programmes of care which meet their specific needs.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed. (NMS 12.3)
- 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. (NMS 19.1)

What should the school do to improve further?

- review the fire risk assessment for the residential provision to include all aspects of fire safety and evacuation
- consider having in place a health and safety committee to review all areas of safety
- ensure all policies and procedures are reviewed regularly

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.



30/11/2012

Dear Residential Students

Inspection of Oak Lodge School

Thank you for your cooperation during the inspection between Friday 30 November and Tuesday 4 December 2012. Unfortunately, we did not receive any questionnaires from you prior to me visiting, so the inspection was judged mainly on my visit and talking to you and the staff on the days I was on site.

We have judged the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision to be good, with some outstanding features in outcomes for boarders and the quality of care you receive.

During the inspection we found:

That the boarding accommodation now meets a high standard. The refurbishment programme of the boys' accommodation is completed, and this has made a difference to your comfort. The boarding facilities are homely and comfortable and to your liking. Some of you have single rooms and some of you share. Boarding for some of you is home from home.

You have made outstanding progress in relation to your starting points. You are able to enjoy a wide range of opportunities relating to your learning and social skills, and this has boosted your feelings and confidence.

The residential staff care for you in accordance with your understanding and ability. This was evident when I accompanied some of you to the Crystal Palace football club's children's Christmas party. Your relationship with the staff was warm and friendly. Care plans are good and show clearly how you want to be supported.

Your views are listened to, not only by the staff supporting you, but, also by the Governors.

There are some things the school has to put right which will enhance your safety and they are working at this for you.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Malcolm