

Oak Lodge School

Oak Lodge School for the Deaf, 101 Nightingale Lane, LONDON, SW12 8NA

Inspection dates	19/11/2013 to 21/11/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The head teacher provides innovative leadership to the whole school, ensuring the successful integration of the residential provision and school, producing a dynamic holistic approach to care. Students grow in confidence, self-esteem and thrive in a fully accessible environment, where people understand their communication needs and can effectively meet them.
- All students benefit from a positive learning environment with a strong focus on emotional development and accredited learning. One parent commented on this approach. 'Here my child is learning, in other schools it was just containment. Here she is happy.'
- The whole school provides a positive environment where all staff can communicate with all students. Building on this the school takes young people out of this protective nurturing environment and teaches them how to confidently and safely engage with the wider world. One parent said, 'They are very good at getting students communicating with each other and in the community.'
- The school identifies areas of concern about students' welfare and acts appropriately to keep young people safe. Safeguarding issues from school, home or the community are picked up at an early stage and appropriately dealt with in partnership with all relevant others. One parent commented, 'Come to this school and your child will thrive.'
- The head teacher and head of care have a good understanding of the strengths of the residential provision and areas requiring development.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The head teacher was contacted on the morning of the inspection and met with the inspectors at midday. Inspectors visited the residential accommodation and met with students. During the inspection meetings were held with; residential staff as a group and individually; students as a group and informally in activities; head teacher; head of care; nurse; child welfare team; deputy head teacher; business manager; four parents. Inspection activity included taking meals with students; participating in parents evening; talking with social workers; discussion with safeguarding team; scrutiny of policies, procedures and records; viewing the school's feedback from students and parents.

Inspection team

Angus Mackay

Lead social care inspector

Pippa Greed

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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 on 30 November 2012. The residential provision of the school is situated on site. It is a specialist resource which currently provides education for 90 students, aged from 10 to 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. Six young people were resident during the inspection and contributed in the inspection process.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Update log books for recording restraints, missing persons and sanctions, in line with updated policies.
- Ensure that controlled drugs are recorded in a separate bound number log book as advised by the Royal Pharmaceutical Guidelines: the handling of medicines in social care.
- Ensure that independent visitors reports routinely report on the checks completed on complaints, missing persons, sanctions and restraints.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of the head of care report to the governors by commenting separately, from the main school report, on residential staff training and patterns identified in young people's behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students make progress in all areas of their development and maintain good attendance at school. One placing authority spoke of several students saying, 'All students make good progress, some have made significant progress in all of their needs.' The students experience an environment where they are not marginalised and enjoy good communication from everybody. Students say that one of the best things about the school is the friendships they make with other deaf students. The excellent communication between students and with staff reduces the frustration they have previously experienced. Consequently students learn how to resolve conflict, frustration and anger positively. This results in there being no restraints and students learn how to maintain friendships.

Students develop their independence skills appropriate to their cognitive and emotional abilities. Students participate in 'free walk' assessments where staff set up opportunities for them to develop social and independence skills. This includes activities such as travelling, ordering food and seeking assistance in public. This programme is supported by sessions on staying safe and stranger danger. As a result students develop their confidence in safely navigating their way around in a hearing world and develop useful life skills, confidence and self-esteem. The residential setting and the school work closely on providing opportunities for students to evidence independence skills necessary for their transition planning. The highly sophisticated planning for independence curriculum is supported by accredited awards, in the residential setting, on complementary areas. The students engage in a wide range of community based activities where they can practice their newly acquired skills. Young people use this integrated programme to develop their ability to care for themselves and learn how to interact positively with others. For example, as part of her programme, one student confidently worked with a member of staff preparing an evening meal for twelve people. The young person confirmed she felt supported by staff and at ease preparing the meal. Young people develop clear, monitored and accredited progress in preparation for independence.

Students enjoy good health and build up an awareness of healthy eating and the benefits of exercise. Students say they can choose their own meals which meet their health and cultural needs. One parent said, 'My child overeats so they are teaching her healthy eating. She likes praise and they are really good at giving this and helping her progress.'

Students enjoy the residential experience and see it as helpful to their development. They are enthusiastic about the activities on offer including ice skating, judo, swimming, paint balling, bowling and meals out. One young person said, 'I enjoy the activities and having fun and a laugh with my friends. We are never bored.'

Students make excellent progress with emotional development and gaining an understanding of how to remain safe and help others. Parents say they are impressed with the emotional curriculum and the assistance this gives their children in developing self-esteem, awareness of others and how to make good decisions. Students engage enthusiastically in innovative interventions to develop self-esteem and social skills. A parent spoke positively of this work, 'I observed a session with an actor supporting her to develop social skills. She worked on how people agree and disagree and give consent. It was really good and helped her in so many ways.' Other parents said of their children, '...he has changed for the better,' and '...she is showing improvement in social skills and confidence.'

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care for students is good with outstanding features. Parents say that the school

work closely with them and the student, prior to admission, developing an initial care plan. The induction process is designed around the needs of each family and specifically the needs of the new student. Parents stressed how well the planning process worked at helping their individual children settle in. One parent commented, 'The plan put together at admission was team work and it has all come together in helping her overcome her attachment issues.'

Staff and students jointly update the excellent placement plans each term, ensuring they are current and dynamic. Students are fully involved in commenting on all areas of their plan and in setting targets and goals. The plans are dynamic, accessible and supported by evidence of achievement and activity. Staff ensure that they can meet all personal, cultural and religious needs of the students prior to admission. Students learn how to take responsibility for themselves and develop life goals, through their total involvement in care planning. One parent said of this, '...she now talks more about life. She has learned a lot. She would never talk about the future now she talks about her aspirations.'

The residential setting is well looked after by staff and valued by the students. Study/bedrooms and bathrooms, in particular, are of a high standard and students say they really like their bedrooms. Students influence the décor and choice of all furnishings in the residential setting. Students talked enthusiastically about their choice of decoration for the recreation area and how they had actually painted it with, '...white paint and funky pictures.' The provision of a well equipped kitchen allows staff to work with young people on the development of life skills and improves the quality of food. One parent commented that her daughter was transferring her learning from the school to her home. 'Her level of responsibility has improved at home. She will now tidy her room and make her own breakfast.'

Staff are innovative in gaining the views of students and involving them in decision making and the development of the residential setting. For example the school has filmed students being asked a range of questions relating to the quality of care, meals, bedroom, key worker and activities. Students express their views via British Sign Language (BSL). This ensures that the views of students are accurately presented to review meetings and their parents. Students confidence, safety and engagement in shaping the setting is enhanced through this process.

Health care is well managed and the nurse is positively and fully integrated into the care planning process. For example the nurse is effectively integrated into safeguarding through the welfare meetings and through shared working. This provides a balanced independent view on any emerging emotional, psychological or physical health needs and how to address them. Staff are trained in safe handling of medication and the nurse assess their competency, ensuring compliance with safe handling of medication. The administration, storage and recording of medication are safe and largely appropriate. Currently controlled drugs are not recorded separately, although they are stored appropriately and are accurately administered. Young people are safely cared for and receive appropriate support when unwell.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The judgement in relation to students' safety is good with outstanding features. The safety of students is of paramount importance to all staff and is an area of strength across all departments in the school.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and are highly aware of indications of potential neglect, abuse, illness or upset. If they have any concerns about a student they record this on a child welfare and protection form, known as a white form. For example if they observe any changes in a student such as variable mood, unkempt appearance, tiredness or attempts to cover arms. These forms are reviewed by relevant staff, including the head teacher and entered in a closely monitored data base. This allows the child welfare team to monitor and analyse emerging trends or patterns

that could indicate students at risk. All concerns are shared with relevant persons and agencies ensuring early interventions to protect and nurture students. One social work team manager commented, 'They are very good at safeguarding, with an excellent awareness of all issues. They are very good at alerting us to issues of neglect or other concerns. They are very aware of children's needs and act as powerful advocates for children.'

The excellent monitoring of concerns, tracked through the weekly child welfare meetings, ensures early interventions with any identified concern; including students' health, safety, bullying, racism and neglect. Analyses of trends and patterns are reported on in the self evaluation form (SEF) and lead to clearly targeted interventions. For instance the school identified a drop in racist bullying but a rise in cyber bullying and targeted interventions around this. Interventions included an anti-bullying week, assemblies, pastoral support, specific sessions within the emotions curriculum, consequences, support, training to residential staff and students. Staff and students confirmed that they enjoyed the training from Deaf Hope in cyber and internet bullying and are applying this in the residential setting, enhancing students' safety. Students say they feel safe in the school and know who to approach for help. One saying, 'I can talk to my keyworker or any member of staff if I am upset. If I have an argument I speak to the head of care and she sorts it out.'

The building is appropriately secure with controlled access and external surveillance and security. Students have freedom of movement around the school and staff use risk assessments creatively; enhancing this safe use of the site, resources and building. Health and safety checks are efficiently and effectively managed. In particular fire safety is effectively embedded in practice with all residential staff having received appropriate training and all students having personal emergency evacuation plans. The school has obtained the highest award in hygiene, within the kitchen, from the environmental health officer. Students enjoy living in a safe well-maintained environment.

The school has a strong focus on the maintenance of good conduct and appropriate behaviour at all times. Students are aware of staff expectations on attendance at school, appropriate relationships with others and compliance with the rules. The quality of relationships; excellent communication; early interventions; have led to there being no physical interventions for several years. However all staff have received appropriate training in restraint and policies have been updated in line with current legislation and practice. Recording books require some adjustment to support the revised policies. Parents stress how many situations their children previously experienced in other schools do not occur here because the excellent communication between staff and students eradicates frustration, anger and isolation. Students make good progress, in managing their own behaviour and developing positive relationships, as a result of their improving communication with others.

Staff recruitment is well managed by appropriately trained staff. Comprehensive checking of applicants and adherence to safer recruitment guidance, ensures that only suitable candidates are appointed. Students are positively involved in staff appointments and their comments on candidates are included in decision making. These measures enhance the safe selection of staff and consequently the security of students.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. The residential provision benefits from highly committed and innovative leadership from the head teacher and head of care. The head of care is fully integrated into the management structure of the school and receives excellent support and high quality supervision from the head teacher. The residential setting is integrated into the whole school development plan, self-evaluation form (SEF) and annual report to governors. In addition the head of boarding supplies a separate report to the

governors outlining progress in this setting. The governors provide good support to the development of the service. Reports from the head teacher are comprehensive and show excellent analysis of information identifying trends and patterns within the whole school. Consequently the reports from the head of care are more basic and lack some of the helpful detail contained in the main report.

The school make good use of the well-constructed independent visitor's reports. The independent visitor is appropriately skilled for the role which enhances the students' confidence in sharing information with him. The reports evidence excellent engagement with the students and provide a clear picture of the residential experience. The reports are accessible to all parties and employ a good use of photographs to support evidence. Students know who the visitor is and his picture is displayed in the residential setting. One student confided, 'he is very friendly and we can ask him about things we want to improve and he does it.' The reports do not always evidence all of the routine checks conducted, such as complaints, missing persons and restraints. This has not impacted negatively on the quality of care or the effectiveness of the reports.

The students benefit from a small but stable staff team. All staff are appropriately qualified, particularly in the use of sign language. The staff team is suitably diverse and experienced to provide good role models to young people. Residential staff receive good support from the head of care. Supervision is of good quality, frequent, structured and developmental for staff. Annual appraisals aid in staff development, identifying training to enhance their direct work with students. The learning and development programme for residential staff is evaluated within the whole school evaluation plan and is not incorporated into the head of care's report. This makes it more difficult to separately identify the effectiveness of training to residential staff, rather than the whole team and to clearly identify any separate priorities for the residential setting. The management team provide support, encouragement and training to all staff to improve their communications skills. Students thrive in an environment where everyone can communicate effectively with them.

The school has successfully addressed previous breaches in national minimum standards and addressed all actions for improvement. The management team demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a high quality service for all students. Staff have completed refresher course in areas including fire safety, first aid and non-violent crises intervention. In addition policies and procedures have been reviewed and those requiring updating have been modified in line with current legislation and best practice. Some supporting recording systems require minor modifications to reflect these positive changes.

The staff team ensure that students are provided with frequent opportunities to influence the running and improvement of the residential setting. Young people confirm that they are listened to and that they not only influence change but sometimes put it into practice. One example is in the recreational areas where students chose colour schemes then decorated these areas themselves.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	101094
Social care unique reference number	SC042132
DfE registration number	212/7068

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.

Type of school	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	16
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	10 to 19
Headteacher	Ms Shanee Buxton
Date of previous boarding inspection	30/11/2012
Telephone number	020 8673 3453
Email address	sbuxton@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

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