

# Oak Lodge School

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

## Inspection dates

14/09/2015 to 16/09/2015

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding 1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- The school has a reflective learning and improvement culture which all staff and children actively participate in. The stated holistic approach to the development of children and young people works supremely well in practice, with education, social care, health and therapeutic services working in a highly collaborative manner.
- Children and young people are making outstanding progress in their: emotional development; communication skills; social engagement; awareness of risks; engagement in education; and development of key life skills. This inclusive environment ensures that the school meets all social, emotional, personal, cultural and religious needs of the children and young people.
- Staff work closely with parents, offering them aid and assistance to improve their communication skills. Where parents use these supports, children and young people make accelerated progress in all areas of their development.
- There is a strong, effective and dynamic safeguarding culture in the whole school which provides a safe, nurturing environment for highly vulnerable children and young people. The gathering, analysis and action with concerns is exemplary, enhancing the safe care of children and young people. Safeguarding links with the local authority are excellent, ensuring that training, policies and practice are current and effective.
- The school has a stable, dynamic and innovative senior management team with a shared vision for the development of the residential provision. Governors positively engage and aid in the continuous drive for excellence.
- The children and young people have a superb practical understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The school has gained healthy school status, a five-star hygiene award and ensures the kitchen also meets environmental, cultural and religious standards.

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the full school premises health and safety risk assessment.
- Submit point in time surveys to Ofsted annually.
- Review the fire risk assessment.

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## Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was at 09:10 on 14 September 2015. An introductory meeting held with the headteacher, acting headteacher and the head of care was at 13:20.

Inspection activities included: tours, meals and meetings with children and young people; and conversations with the local authority designated officer, parents and social workers. Meetings were held with: children and young people; residential staff; local education safeguarding lead; therapeutic team and specialist teachers; welfare team; nurse; chef; and constantly with senior staff. All records were scrutinised including: the single central record; recruitment; safeguarding; self-evaluation; governors and independent person's files; children and young people's files; visitor's reports; medical records; supervision and appraisal; point in time surveys; and all policies and procedures.

## Inspection team

Angus Mackay

Lead social care regulatory inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Oak Lodge School is a London Borough of Wandsworth maintained residential special school for children and young people aged 10 to 19 years. It provides an inclusive multi-modal communication environment for deaf children and young people and those with hearing and language, communication and/or auditory processing difficulties. Many of the children and young people have additional needs, such as emotional and behaviour difficulties, visual impairment and motor difficulties. The school offers up to 110 educational places and up to 16 residential places. The school is a signing community. The residential unit is located within the school building. Children and young people may reside there for up to four nights a week during term time. Ofsted last inspected the residential provision on 25 March 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

The overall experience of children and young people is outstanding

Children and young people assist in creating excellent baselines of their level of emotional understanding. They enthusiastically engage in work allowing them to explore their emotions and develop an understanding of these, their behaviour and their impact on others. They use this to successfully address a range of complex personal issues including attachment issues. One parent says, 'My foster daughter has complicated needs and she does a lot of emotions work and learning from others. They can cater for all of her needs and take a whole-person approach. They are nurturing and welcoming to the children. They are definitely outstanding.'

In a safe environment, children and young people are learning strategies to effectively manage complex emotions. Through this work they are improving their ability to interact with others, understand social cues, and develop empathy and healthy relationships. When things go wrong they now have a range of protective strategies they can use to safely manage these previously impossible situations. They now demonstrate an ability to understand emotions and can comfortably interact with others. Children and young people are broadening their emotional vocabulary which has aided them to make rapid improvements in behaviour. Rather than physically expressing their frustration at others' lack of understanding of how they feel, they can now express these emotions clearly to others. Significantly, it is breaking down barriers children had experienced in the broader world. One parent says, 'At home she is much more social and has improved in every area. Her school work has improved a lot and communication has also improved significantly.'

There is excellent joint working between the school, occupational therapy, speech and language professionals, parents, young people and residential staff. Children and young people are improving their communication skills as a result of this effectively coordinated approach. The residential setting has excellent evidence of parents expanding their ways of communicating with their children and committing to assisting them in practicing new skills. This has shown benefits in children and young people's escalated rates of progress. Parents are very positive about the residential environment which helps their children's progress.

Children and young people are fully engaged in the school's holistic approach to their development of life skills. They do not have things done 'to them' but are fully engaged in developing their programmes of work. The excellent empowerment of children and young people in: self-rating; choosing areas of work; evaluating their progress; and cooperating with others; assists in building their confidence and developing positive self-esteem. Parent workshops have supported them and given parents the confidence to let their children do things at home which improves their progress.

Children and young people effectively use the school to plan for their next move and eventual independence. They are learning how to interact in public places, plan trips and

how to remain safe in the community. Meticulous planning between the children and young people, the therapeutic team, teachers and the residential staff ensures they appropriately manage all risks. Progress is checked and evaluated using AQA awards. Children and young people are learning how to make decisions about their own lives and developing a sense of independence through this work.

AQA work in house enables children to develop a strong understanding of how to look after their own health and an excellent understanding of healthy eating. Some are engaged in managing their own medication and taking more responsibility for decisions about their health plans. Meal times are pleasant, relaxed occasions. Children and young people use meal times to develop social skills and learn social etiquette. One young person explained how he had learned to use a knife and fork and could now go to restaurants.

Feedback from children and young people, parents and social workers is all positive. Children and young people enjoy their time in the residential setting and say they have friends there and trust staff to help and support them. One parent highlighted the difference between this and other settings: 'When she was in a mainstream school she found friendships hard as she was the odd one out and her attendance was poor. Now she is accepting of who she is and is happy to go to school. It has been really beneficial for her. She has friends and is happy. She has made huge improvements in communication with others.' During the inspection children and young people were pleasant and polite to each other, staff and visitors, demonstrating their emerging understanding of empathy, kindness and support. One student was confident enough to ask insightful questions about the inspection and how it affects them. Children and young people make astounding progress in developing social confidence and how to interact with others appropriately.

Children and young people say that the residential setting definitely helps improve their educational progress. They show improved attendance at school. They say that staff assist them with homework but will not do it for them.

### **The quality of care and support**

### **Outstanding**

The quality of care and support is outstanding. Parents say staff are very good and patient. One parent says of her daughter's care, 'I can come in for meals when I ask. Her keyworker is brilliant and provides me with regular updates. Consistency is really important and it helps we all know what is influencing her at any time. It really feels like an extended family.'

Staff caring for children and young people understand their needs and the barriers they have experienced in social situations and communication. Interactions between staff and children are respectful and delivered by staff who can communicate directly with the children and young people. In the residential provision children and young people are able to enjoy social situations and develop friendships without fear of criticism or lack of understanding of their frustrations.

During the intensive preadmission assessment, which involves meticulous planning to meet the needs of any child or young person from admission through to leaving, staff lay the bedrock for success. The admission process mirrors the school's holistic multiagency approach. Staff ensure that they can meet all safeguarding, education, communication, therapeutic and residential needs before agreeing admission. Planning is sensitive, comprehensive and valued by parents and social workers.

There is long term planning for all transitions and, in particular, for movement out of the school environment. The whole team work collectively preparing young people for their move away from the school, again with meticulous, detailed tracked progression. Young people gain AQA awards evidencing their progress in key areas. One social worker says, 'Staff liaised closely with the foster family to prepare him for his independence and help him to get out into the community.'

Health care is excellent and the school fully integrate the nurse into the support network for children, including the weekly safeguarding meetings. The residential provision safely stores and appropriately records medication. The nurse provides a safeguard to this by regularly audits of the storage, recording and disposal of medication. Staff undertake competency assessments in aspects of health care ensuring they continue to maintain high standards. Files are excellently organised and benefit from pictures of each young person, aiding in safe control of the issuing of medication. Young people are encouraged to take an appropriate level of responsibility in the management of their medication, for example, acting as a co-signer for its issue and working towards self-administration and ultimately possession of their medication.

The kitchen has a five-star hygiene award and the school has achieved healthy school status. The meals are balanced, healthy and culturally appropriate. Good planning ensures the school meets all specific needs. For example the chef has shown great initiative in her consultation with a local mosque to allow her to meet religious standards in the preparation of Halal meals. The chef applies this respectful and inclusive approach to all children and young people ensuring that she meets their personal health or religious needs. Children influence the meals through direct feedback to the chef or through the school council. In the residential provision children and young people are enthusiastic about food and healthy eating. They are exceptionally proud of their competency at cooking and describe how it aids in their understanding of each other's backgrounds and of other cultures. One young person proudly discussed his excellent sushi making skills.

Children and young people enjoy a wide range of activities in house and in the community. They gratefully accept opportunities to practice newly acquired skills in shopping, using public transport and communicating with the public. Staff are skilled at aiding children to make choices and plan these activities. Young people are gaining in confidence and progressing socially, emotionally and in their use of innovative communication methods.

Young people actively contribute to their excellent placement plans. They comment on all areas in these plans and help to set targets and goals. Staff meticulously maintain these plans, which provide good evidence of tracked progress in children and young

people. Young people learn to take responsibility for themselves and develop life objectives through their complete involvement in the care planning process.

The house is well maintained, comfortable and has a very homely feel. Children are happy there and in particular love their bedrooms. They are fully involved in changes in the house and again practice influencing others and making choices here. For instance staff recently changed to round tables improving communication at their suggestion. The separation of the house from the school is not very clear and staff are involving children in a discussion about whether this should change. To ensure children and young people's safety when they are living in the residential provision, this area is inaccessible from the main school.

Staff are highly innovative in getting young people to communicate their views and use a variety of methods to record this. This includes detailed photograph logs, role-plays and videos. Staff have used highly innovative techniques to aid students in embedding learning about British culture. For example through their creation of a prefect system and the democratic election of representatives for these roles. Children and young people have taken these responsibilities seriously representing the views of the group by filmed interviews.

#### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Outstanding**

The protection of children and young people is outstanding.

The school has exceptional safeguarding policies, procedures and practice. All staff regularly train in safeguarding and are highly attuned to identifying any signs or symptoms which indicate a change in a child's behaviour. Staff are rigorous in using the reporting system, which the welfare team efficiently and effectively manages. The holistic approach of the school ensures that all departments are involved in managing the outcomes from this.

The school works closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer and educational safeguarding lead in maintaining their high standards. Training is comprehensive, current and appropriately applied in practice. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to apply this training in practice and keep students safe from emerging threats and societal pressures. The use of a new database enhances the tracking and response to any emerging trends in the school such as bullying or isolation. Children trust staff and are confident in sharing issues, difficulties and concerns with them. The high level of communication skill in the school has enabled children with highly complex learning difficulties to make accurate disclosures.

The building is appropriately secure, with controlled access and external surveillance of the residential setting. The residential staff have fully risk assessed the building and activities, enhancing children and young people's safe care. Staff rigorously ensure high standards in fire safety. They manage checks exceptionally well and have excellent recording of drills, evidencing regular evacuations of the building by students and staff. They have efficient recording of health and safety checks with set review times. The



main risk assessment and fire risk assessments are due for review.

Senior managers monitor staff recruitment and all appropriate checks are in place. The comprehensive checking and strict adherence to safer recruitment guidelines ensures that only suitable candidates are appointed. The school completes rigorous checks on any volunteers and requires all staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks every three years. All recruitment panels have at least one member of staff trained in safer recruitment; one governor has current training in safer recruitment. The inclusion of children in the interview process enhances the selection of suitable staff.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Outstanding**

The leadership of the residential setting is outstanding. The residential setting is highly valued by the school and the headteacher ensures its full and effective integration into the senior management team. The headteacher is currently absent but attended during the inspection. The deputy head provides continuity of leadership, sharing the same high aspirations, drive and commitment to improvement as the headteacher. The head of boarding is suitably qualified and experienced and brings a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to her role. The residential setting reports to a subcommittee of the board of governors. The school development plan, self-evaluation and annual report to the governors fully incorporates the residential setting.

The governors maintain an active interest in the residential setting and thoroughly scrutinise reports from the independent visitor. Young people are aware of who the independent visitor is and she provides an additional safeguard for them. The head of care presents a comprehensive report to governors and agrees actions which the chair of governor's monitors. Annually, the senior leadership team and governors evaluate the effectiveness of residential staff training. They also monitor individual courses for effectiveness and present specific examples of their application and impact to governors. The governors highly value the residential provision and are continuously seeking to improve and expand its overall contribution to the school.

All staff have a common understanding of the aims and ethos of the school and work in close partnership with each other. The multi-disciplinary approach and adherence to national standards ensures that children receive appropriate professional care and support from appropriately qualified persons.

During the inspection, children and young people and staff completed the Ofsted point in time surveys. The results from these are universally positive. Children and young people confirm that staff regularly consult with them and that they are supremely confident in the staff group. They know how to make complaints and confirm that when they have done so, staff treat these complaints seriously and they are effectively resolved.

Staff engage positively in regular, structured professional supervision which supports their work with the young people. Training is comprehensive and is specific to the needs of the children and young people accommodated as well as to meeting national requirements. Training in safeguarding is particularly comprehensive and effectively

applied to the benefit of students. Appraisals identify personal development targets, which allows staff to gain relevant additional relevant qualifications. The head of care is developing a means of including children and young people's views in staff appraisals to enhance their influence on the standard of care. All staff sign, making this an inclusive and welcoming environment for children and young people.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101094
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC042132
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	11
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shanee Buxton
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	23/03/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8673 3453
<b>Email address</b>	info@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

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