

# Oak Lodge School

Nightingale Lane, London SW12 8NA

**Inspection dates** 4–5 May 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Governors have supported the school well through a period of difficulty. They have made sure that leaders have the capacity to improve the school further.
- Senior leaders have quickly formed an effective team and are making sure that the school moves forwards. They know where they want to go and how to get there. They are on track to achieve their goals.
- Pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects. They achieve recognised qualifications in a range of curriculum areas.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. The teaching of communication skills is threaded throughout the curriculum.
- The school's work to promote the personal development of pupils is a strength. Pupils develop resilience, maturity and self-belief.
- Pupils behave well; they treat others with respect and are diligent in lessons. They learn how to stay safe in school, outside and online.
- Members of the deaf community and those with hearing work well together as positive role models in supporting the academic and personal development of pupils.
- The school's work to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs, and develop a strong sense of their own culture.
- Very strong links with local colleges mean that sixth form learners can access courses that interest them, and they achieve well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not outstanding. Consequently, pupils do not make rapid and sustained progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Some teachers do not consistently adapt lessons as a result of their assessment of what pupils can and cannot do.
- Adults do not consistently demonstrate accurate letter and number formation when setting tasks for pupils to complete.
- Sixth form learners do not have opportunities to participate in extended work experience placements which would enhance their understanding of the world of work.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by insisting on greater consistency in:
  - the adaptation of activities for groups of pupils in the light of assessment information held by teachers
  - the accuracy of adults' presentation when providing feedback and instruction to pupils, for example through the consistent formation of letters and numbers.
- Improve the quality of the sixth form provision by offering a broad range of extended opportunities for learners to experience the workplace.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and interim executive headteacher have quickly formed a cohesive team and are securing improvements. The reduction in capacity caused by the long-term absence of the headteacher has been successfully addressed.
  - Leaders' self-evaluation is precise. They make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. They know exactly what the strengths of the school are, and what they want to improve. Leaders are well supported by a staff team who represent both the hearing and the deaf community. All work together to ensure that pupils reach their potential and achieve well.
  - Leaders have revised the systems and processes they have in place to measure the progress that pupils make. This system now contains information about all aspects of each pupil's development including behaviour, attendance, academic achievement and personal development. Leaders work alongside teachers to make sure that the assessments made are accurate. They check that targets set for pupils are challenging, achievable and realistic.
  - Middle leaders have a good grasp of pupils' achievement within their area of responsibility. They are clear about what they want to improve and how they are going to bring these improvements about. Middle leaders are aware of the minor inconsistencies evident in teaching and are working together to tackle these, alongside senior leaders.
  - The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. Pupils study national curriculum subjects and British sign language. They also study a structured emotions curriculum which has been specifically designed by the school to develop the social and emotional understanding of pupils who are deaf and/or language impaired. There is an emphasis on the teaching of communication skills and personal development which is appropriate to the pupils on roll. Sixth formers follow courses that develop their independence and life skills and prepare them well for adult life.
  - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the school's curriculum and enrichment opportunities. Positive role models from within the staff team promote a culture of high expectations and pupils' self-belief is strong as a result. Pupils learn about people from other cultures and beliefs through, for example, close links with a neighbouring old people's home for members of the Jewish community. Pupils participate in cultural events such as the annual exhibition of pupils' art work. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain because they are taught how to communicate effectively with those around them and to respect fundamental British values.
  - Leaders have used additional funding to support those who are eligible for free school meals, or those who are looked after, wisely. They have taken account of research into the most effective use of this funding to inform their spending. As a result, these pupils make as much progress as others in the school.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors have taken effective action to provide support for leaders during the long-term absence of the headteacher. They identified a dip in performance due to reduced leadership capacity over a period of time and worked with local authority officers to identify how support could be arranged.
  - Governors know the school well. They have recruited governors with relevant skills and experience. They pick up on appropriate issues from information provided by leaders and ask pertinent questions about it to secure improvements. For example, they have asked leaders about the attendance of groups of pupils and changes in the number of behavioural incidents.
  - Governors have taken a strong stance in tackling poor performance. They have worked with senior leaders to ensure that the school is in a good position to move forwards quickly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that arrangements for checks on the suitability of staff, the provision of training and referral of any concerns are secure. For example, training sessions for members of staff are recorded and shown to new recruits as part of their induction. Posters explaining the role of key members of staff in relation to safeguarding, including their photographs, are displayed throughout the school. This means that pupils understand who to go to if they are worried or wish to report a concern.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils make good progress because teachers deliver interesting lessons that are interwoven with opportunities to promote successful communication skills. For example, in an English lesson pupils were reading a selection of news articles. Once they had read their article, they wrote a summary of it and presented this to their peers using sign language. In this way reading, writing and communication skills were all practised.
- Technology is used effectively throughout the school. Tablet computers are used to photograph and record pupils' achievements. They are also used to access online dictionaries and research tools. In assembly, a tablet computer was used to communicate with a group of pupils away on a residential trip. Pictures were projected on a large screen so that those at the school could see their friends signing about their adventures.
- Throughout the school, pupils believe they are capable of achieving great things because there is consistent promotion of an 'I can' attitude. Teachers and other adults have positive relationships with pupils. Members of staff come from both the hearing and the deaf community, and many are fluent signers. Leaders make sure that interpreters are on hand whenever required, and pupils are used to working in this manner.
- Teachers and other adults have a good understanding of the special educational needs and disabilities experienced by pupils. This means that adults adapt their approach and teaching style to ensure that pupils understand what is being taught and access activities successfully.
- The revised assessment system is used by teachers to record what pupils can do and identify what they need to learn next. Some teachers are more skilled than others in adapting their lessons to take this information into account. Where this works well, teachers adjust their teaching to focus precisely on pupils' next steps in learning.
- Teachers and other adults implement the school's policy for marking and feedback to pupils consistently. Adults recognise pupils' efforts and provide helpful advice for pupils on how to improve their work. Sometimes adults provide frameworks for pupils' work which are inaccurate. For example, they do not use a consistent letter formation when writing letters and numbers for pupils to copy.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils participate in a very wide range of enrichment activities which support their well-being. These include yoga, tai-chi, dog-walking, musical instrument tuition and sporting activities. Leaders recognise the high incidence of mental health difficulties in adults with hearing impairments and seek to develop resilience to this in the pupils they cater for.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They learn how to travel safely and independently to school or college placements. The school emphasises the need for online safety through its computing curriculum. Leaders are not complacent as they recognise that pupils who have difficulties in communicating verbally will do so in other ways, including through social media.
- Pupils get on well together and there is a strong sense of community within the school. Therefore, incidents of bullying are rare.
- The school makes very good arrangements for the care of those who have additional medical needs. Comprehensive healthcare plans are in place which are reviewed regularly. There are clear steps to follow if an emergency situation occurs, including scripts for members of staff to follow when making a 999 call.
- Comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken for school activities such as trips and visits. Leaders have also undertaken thorough risk assessments relating to the school site. For example, they have assessed the possible risk to security during alterations to access arrangements. Suitable steps have been taken to mitigate these risks.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful. They are keen to communicate with visitors and to celebrate their achievements.
- Pupils behave equally well whether they are in lessons, outside or around school. Neither parents nor pupils raised any concerns about behaviour when the school issued questionnaires. In lessons, pupils

attend well and very little time is wasted due to low-level disruption because pupils aspire to do well.

- Overall, pupils' attendance at school is good. Leaders identified that attendance in the sixth form was weaker than that in the rest of the school. Pupils were less likely to attend when they were required to travel a long distance for only one or two hours of school or college. Leaders have adjusted the sixth form timetable to address this and attendance in the sixth form is improving.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils join the school with varied levels of attainment. Leaders and teachers carry out a thorough assessment of what they can do already and identify an appropriate pathway for their continuing education at Oak Lodge. Pupils make good progress from their varied starting points in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders carefully select accredited courses relevant to the needs and aspirations of each cohort of pupils. Pupils study a mixture of suitable courses such as GCSEs, functional skills or entry level qualifications in key stage 4 as appropriate to their abilities. Year on year the number of qualifications on offer expands. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of local colleges and sixth forms to ensure that pupils can succeed in their chosen subjects. All pupils study British sign language and the most able are challenged by the GCSE course in this subject.
- Most pupils consistently make at least expected progress in English and mathematics. They make similar progress in other subjects, too. For example, during the inspection pupils were completing their final piece of GCSE art coursework. They were keen to explain what the inspiration was for their work and what techniques they had used, and to celebrate the outcome of their efforts.
- There is a coherent approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. English and mathematics teachers work closely together to ensure that pupils learn, for example, how to spell key mathematical vocabulary such as 'cuboid', 'circle' and 'sphere'.
- The school's work to support the personal and social development of pupils through the curriculum is a strength. As a result, pupils make very good progress in this area and leave as mature and resilient young people, well prepared for life in the adult world.
- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals make as much progress as others in the school. This is because the additional funding to support these pupils is spent sensibly, focusing on the specific needs of this cohort of pupils.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The quality of 16 to 19 programmes offered in the sixth form is good. A suitable range of pathways are available for learners to select from, depending on their ability and preference. Most follow vocational or pre-vocational courses. Others focus on the development of independent life skills. Only a small proportion follow an academic route.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders work closely with local providers, learners and their families to identify appropriate courses. They have successfully adapted their policies and structures to address emerging issues such as a decline in attendance.
- Learners achieve well in their chosen courses because they are supported effectively by adults whether they are learning in school or elsewhere. Leaders keep the curriculum under review and learners move from one pathway to another if their needs change.
- Learners in the sixth form continue to study English and mathematics as part of their core curriculum. Those who are enrolled on local college courses attend school when they are not in college, primarily in order to continue their studies in these subjects. As a result of good teaching, learners in the sixth form make good progress in these core subjects.
- Some sixth formers who attend school full-time are given opportunities to study GCSE courses, such as art and design, that they were not able to access in key stage 4. This means that they either achieve accredited courses when they are ready and able to do so, or extend the range of qualifications achieved.
- Learners in the sixth form conduct themselves well. They are taught how to keep themselves safe as they grow in independence. The arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, particularly as they attend a wide range of other institutions, are secure.

- Most pupils in key stage 4 stay on to join the sixth form, and the majority stay until they are 19. During these three years they become increasingly independent, spending more time at college and learning to travel independently. Recent leavers from the sixth form have all remained in education, employment or training.
- Leaders ensure that careers advice and guidance is relevant and aspirational. For example, the school holds events with guests from a range of different careers. These guests are all deaf. They tell pupils about their life in the workplace, providing excellent role models and inspiration for pupils.
- Some learners have the opportunity to experience work placements. These are generally short-term, providing pupils with a snapshot of different working environments. Learners who are likely to seek employment when leaving school do not have extended opportunities to experience the workplace and benefit from a more graduated journey into the world of work.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101094
<b>Local authority</b>	Wandsworth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008737

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	31
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sean Pond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Mukasa (acting headteacher), Carla Chandler (interim executive headteacher)
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8673 3453
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk">oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk">info@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–13 January 2012

## Information about this school

- Oak Lodge School caters for the needs of pupils aged 11 to 19 who have hearing, speech, language and communication needs. Although the school is a maintained school in Wandsworth, pupils come from 28 different local authorities. Currently 14 pupils access the residential provision offered by the school.
- Various modes of communication are used within the school, according to pupils' preferences. The working language of the school is British sign language.
- The headteacher has been on intermittent long-term absence for over a year. The deputy headteacher has taken on the role of acting headteacher. In January 2016 the governors secured full-time support from an interim executive headteacher.
- All pupils on roll have a statement of educational need or an educational, health and care plan. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specific information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations in lessons. They spoke to pupils about their work and their life at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons, including in the lunch hall and the playground.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of staff and a group of sixth formers. Inspectors also met with two governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding, the school's plans for improvement and information about pupils' achievement. They also looked in detail at the work of a sample of pupils in a wide range of curriculum areas.
- During the inspection 17 pupils and eight members of staff were away from school on a residential visit.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, so inspectors considered the findings from a recent survey undertaken by the school.

## Inspection team

Gaynor Roberts, lead inspector  
Grace Marriott

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector



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