

# Oak Lodge School

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

## Inspection dates

06/12/2016 to 08/12/2016

## 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

- Young people succeed in this provision. They make significant social, emotional and academic progress from joining to the point of moving on.
- Through reflective learning and empowering young people to make choices and assert their individual uniqueness, the outcomes and achievements for residential students are excellent.
- Young people are at the centre of practice. Staff present a positive role model for young people who are deaf. They encourage broad aspirations and limitless confidence, which directly improves the holistic well-being for all young people.
- Arrangements for ensuring the protection and safety of young people are of an extremely high standard, with practice supported by robust policies and procedures. Senior staff who take a lead on safeguarding are highly effective and have excellent external links with a range of professionals. As a result, young people receive an exceptionally high quality of care and protection.
- Robust planning, information sharing and open communication with parents and professionals ensure consistent approaches to care that form the foundation of trusting relationships. This results in a cohesive approach to young people's care and education.

- Dynamic and effective senior managers know the school's strengths and are continually looking to areas for development. Governors and leaders undertake regular monitoring checks. They spend time with the young people, who understand that their views, wishes and feelings are integral to decision making.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is at the heart of this school and is integral to its practice. The introduction of new opportunities increases the interface between the deaf and hearing communities and enables increasing participation in community activities. This broadens the young people's social skills and development.

### **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?**

There were no areas identified on this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

The school was notified of the inspection at 09:10 on 6 December 2016. An introductory meeting was held with the executive interim headteacher and head of care at 12:30.

Inspection activities included: meetings with young people, observations of interactions between staff and young people, tour of residential and main school, and attendance at meals. Conversations took place with the local authority designated safeguarding lead, the local education safeguarding advisor, parents, specialist teachers, head of catering and senior staff and chair of governors.

Records were scrutinised including: the single central record, recruitment, safeguarding, independent person's and governors' files, young people's files, medical records, supervision and appraisals documents and all policies and procedures.

Interpreters were used to facilitate communication with young people and staff.

## Inspection team

Juanita Mayers

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Oak Lodge School is a maintained residential special school for pupils aged 10 to 19 years. It is operated by the London Borough of Wandsworth. It provides an inclusive multi-modal communication environment for deaf pupils and hearing pupils with language, communication and/or auditory processing difficulties. Many of the pupils 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 15 residential places. The school is a signing community. The residential unit is located within the school building. Pupils may reside there for up to four nights a week during term time. Ofsted last inspected the school on 4 May 2016, when it was judged as good for overall effectiveness. The residential provision was last inspected on 14 September 2015, when it was judged to be outstanding overall.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Outstanding**

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their emotional understanding and development. The staff team promotes a culture of achievement so that young people enthusiastically engage in learning to live and work together, to build relationships, better understand their behaviours and how these impact on their peers. A young person said, 'I have made friends here through learning to listen and respect others.' Through warm, respectful and nurturing relationships with the staff team, young people make exceptional progress in gaining confidence and in individual language development. A parent said, 'My daughter, has complicated needs and experiences social isolation when at home. The school, in a short space of time, has enabled her to form friendships and is able to meet all of her needs. They maintain an open door policy to us as parents and are never resistant to trying new ways of working. This gives us confidence in this exceptional school.'

Prior to admission to residential care, many young people have experienced social isolation due to their deafness and other needs. This has had a detrimental impact on their holistic development and self-esteem. All young people make exceptional progress in their personal, social, medical and academic achievements from their unique starting points on joining the school. A parent said, 'My son's progress can only be described as remarkable. His behaviour, medical needs and ability to form relationships with others are brilliant. The understanding, nurture and care he receives from the staff exceeds our expectations. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say how fantastic this school is.'

For many young people English is not their first or second language. All staff use sign language and two members of the residential team are deaf adults. This brings a uniqueness and understanding of living with deafness to the care they deliver. In addition, it contributes to positive role modelling for young people and promotes strong, trusting relationships with staff. Staff are exceptionally positive role models and actively encourage and support young people to expand their individual and group life experiences. Staff have high aspirations for all young people and do not allow deafness to act as a barrier to success. As a result, young people adopt a 'can do' approach for their future. One young person wants to be an Olympic swimmer or coach, another would like to achieve in the world of science and another would like to be a fire officer.

Staff understand that due to young people's deafness they may have a more limited understanding of the world around them. Staff create opportunities for young people to make sense of current affairs through discussions, quizzes, watching and interpreting news programmes.

Young people make an active contribution to their residential experience. They inform decision-making about changes and meet regularly to share their views and wishes. Staff use questionnaires and meetings to seek views to improve the provision in line with young people's suggestions. The head of care responds to young people and is creative in ensuring that their identified needs are met.

Staff effectively safeguard young people and carefully balance safety in a non-oppressive way to ensure that young people enjoy an extensive range of individual and group activities. This includes purposeful and fun activities in the local and wider community. Young people learn how to interact in public places through taking responsibility for planning trips and how to remain safe in the community. Exceptional and meticulous planning between the therapeutic team, young people and residential staff ensures that appropriate risk management strategies are in place. This results in young people taking increasing responsibility for their safety as part of their independent development.

The quality of the residential provision is excellent. Young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their bedrooms, and are involved in the decoration and personalisation of community areas. There is a warm nurturing feel to the residential provision. Young people are happy in residential care and say that it helps them to improve and feel part of a community. There is excellent evidence that school attendance and social well-being improves for young people who reside at the school.

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

### **Outstanding**

The quality of care is outstanding because young people make remarkable progress in residential due to the care they receive from a knowledgeable, experienced and nurturing staff team. From the robust admissions process, through to preparation for leaving school, residential students consistently receive support and care that is of an exceptional quality.

Staff caring for young people understand their needs and the barriers that they have experienced in social situations and communication. Care is characterised by consistent routines and boundaries, in line with care plans. A dedicated staff team delivers care that is respectful and is communicated in a language that young people understand. Care is child focused and provided at the highest possible level. The school's integrated approach across care, education and therapy ensures that young people receive a level of care that effectively meets all their needs. Staff work in partnership with the senior 'complex needs and emotions co-ordinators' to successfully address a range of personal and complex issues. In particular, they enable young people to understand different and evolving issues in their emotional development. A young person commented, 'X has really helped me to understand why I sometimes get angry and to learn how to manage my feelings and not take them out on others. My behaviour has improved so much since living here.' Because of this effective work, young people are able to develop in social situations, establishing long-term friendships without fear of criticism, or a lack of understanding of their individual behaviours.

The residential assessment and admissions process mirrors the holistic and therapeutic approach in the school. Meticulous assessments and planning seek to ensure that the school can meet the communication, educational, residential and safeguarding needs of the young people. During this process, parents and young people visit the school, receive a comprehensive guide, and meet staff and resident young people. This experience is sensitively planned, invaluable to parents and significantly reduces anxiety. A parent said, 'Our daughter's needs are complex and had not been met well in previous

schools. The manager and staff were open to discussion, made all the changes we asked and showed no resistance to these. This open transparent approach and wish to work with us, means that I am confident that she is safe and well cared for.'

When young people have additional health needs, staff respond to these appropriately in line with advice and support received from experienced medical professionals who are integrated into the young people's support systems. Medication is recorded and stored safely at the residential provision. Young people are encouraged and supported to take an appropriate level of responsibility in the management of their medication, for example, working toward self-administration and keeping control of their medication. In emergencies, procedures are clear and all staff understand how to implement them.

The catering staff meet the dietary needs of all young people exceptionally well. The kitchen has a five-star food hygiene award and the school has achieved the healthy school status. Meals reflect all cultural, religious and dietary expectations and are appropriately healthy. Food is of high quality and plentiful with an excellent level of choice. The young people enjoy the food immensely. They influence the meals through direct feedback and the school's council. In the residential provision, young people are expected to join in meal planning, preparation and cooking in the house kitchen. They speak positively on healthy eating and are proud of their cooking skills. Observations of this indicate that it is an enjoyable part of daily routines.

Young people enjoy a range of activities both in-house and in the local and wider community. They say that they have numerous activities to choose from, both as a group and individual preferences. Staff listen to suggestions and ensure that preferences are met whenever possible. Young people are enthusiastic about trying new things, developing new skills and meeting their targets. All achievements are celebrated in ways that are meaningful for them. As a result, young people experience new activities that they can succeed in and this raises their self-esteem, ensuring that they continue to develop rapidly.

In-house care plans focus on jointly agreed targets and clearly acknowledge young people's views about their achievements. Care plans are individualised, comprehensive and are live documents. Staff meticulously maintain them, providing good evidence of the tracked progress made by the young people. Young people take pride in their individual progress and the positive outcomes achieved. They learn to take responsibility for their lives through the setting of objectives and involvement in individual care planning.

During residential stays, staff creatively promote contact between young people and their families, many of whom live a distance from home. Use of digital technology enables them to maintain face-to-face contact (via video) whenever they wish. Families are welcomed to visit young people in the evening. An independent person visits the school and is available to young people to discuss any concerns or worries with someone they do not view as a member of staff.

Safeguarding lies at the heart of this outstanding residential provision. Young people say that they feel safe and happy. They could all identify at least one adult they felt confident in speaking to if they had any worries or concerns. Robust arrangements are in place for the reporting of any negative incidents. Levels of negative behaviour, including bullying, are extremely low and most young people have no experience of this. There is positive interaction between young people who have developed good peer relationships. As a result, they feel relaxed and secure. A parent commented, 'The staff are very transparent in their work and we have every confidence that he is in good hands.'

The multi-modal signing community provides a safe sanctuary for young people, where they are understood and able to speak with staff members on any concerns in and out of the school environment. Respect, courtesy and consideration for self and others are embedded into the culture of the residential provision. Young people are supported to challenge any discriminatory behaviours and to celebrate and value individual differences.

Staff are not risk adverse and understand that young people need to learn how to manage risks according to their age, understanding and capability. Risk assessments are robust, with every conceivable risk considered and controlled measures put in place to safeguard young people. As a result, young people can participate safely in a wide range of activities. All staff work together in a highly integrated way to promote the importance of safeguarding as part of the overall ethos of the school.

The approach to behaviour management is one of the successes of the school. The emotions curriculum underpins young people's significant progress. Clear boundary setting within a nurturing environment enables young people to gain greater understanding of their own feelings and those of others and to develop behaviour that is more constructive. A young person commented, 'Being able to see my emotions tutor whenever I need to, helps me to stop lashing out at myself and others.' Because of this fantastic work, young people have improved their self-awareness and emotional resilience.

Staff understand and respond to any concerns that a young person is at risk of harm and are clear about how to report concerns. The school has five designated safeguarding leads, two of whom are in the residential provision. They have all received appropriate safeguarding training. Governors maintain a hands on approach to safeguarding, reviewing all incidents, actions and outcomes. The local authority education advisor for safeguarding describes the school as having 'created a robust and exemplary attitude to safeguarding'.

The senior management team and residential staff receive regular training. This includes training on radicalisation, the risk of child sexual exploitation and differing cultural practices. Staff are alert to the risks and know the routes to access should they have any concerns. Staff keep young people as safe as possible in the cyber world. They understand that the use of electronic devices is an essential part of young people's worlds and work on the principle of educating and supporting young people on how to keep safe online. All staff demonstrate excellent safeguarding thinking and practice.



Young people live in a safe environment. All necessary health and safety checks are in place. Trained staff address maintenance issues promptly. Staff involved with recruitment follow safer recruitment practices. Only adults deemed suitable to work with children are employed.

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

### **Outstanding**

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. Senior managers are proud of the young people's achievements and are ambitious for them. The culture of the school is characterised by high expectations for all young people and they champion the rights of deaf young people to have excellent opportunities for learning and development. They particularly value the contribution that residential care makes to progressing significant outcomes for young people, for example in school attendance, regulating behaviours and reducing social isolation. Leaders and managers ensure that young people make good academic progress, are safe and achieve their individual goals. The head of residential care is suitably qualified and experienced and brings a high level of commitment and passion to her role.

Governors undertake frequent visits to the provision and spend time with young people. They undertake routine monitoring and scrutiny of activities and all other aspects of the impact of residential care on young people. This provides them with a valuable overview of residential care in practice. Regular reviews and ongoing monitoring of young people's feedback on their experiences are in place. Senior managers utilise these outcomes to inform improvement planning for the residential provision. This means that young people understand their ideas and opinions are important.

Young people receive exceptional care. The head of care and staff members work alongside education colleagues to ensure a learning, reflective and improvement culture, which all young people fully sign up to. This enhances their progression and experiences. Staff address any challenging issues, and develop a consistent and shared approach towards supporting young people. All staff sign, making this an inclusive community and provide positive role modelling for young people. Ongoing communication between staff, parents, carers and professionals also informs change planning and provides a cohesive approach to care.

All staff receive regular, good quality, structured supervision, which supports their work with young people. Records provide good evidence of residential staff experiences and the investment in their individual development. Staff induction is thorough and new staff are provided with appropriate support and direction to achieve competence in their roles. Training is comprehensive and specific to the needs of young people. Appraisals identify individual targets to enhance the development of staff.

All aspects of the residential care offered to young people are child focused, with meticulous attention paid to supporting young people to achieve outstanding individual outcomes.

## 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>	

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>	14
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	14/09/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8673 3453
<b>Email address</b>	info@oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

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