

Inspection of a good school: Oak Lodge School

101 Nightingale Lane, Balham, London SW12 8NA

Inspection dates:

25–26 February 2020

Outcome

Oak Lodge School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school for pupils who are deaf or have hearing loss and related speech, language and communication difficulties. Leaders make British sign language (BSL) central to their teaching. This helps all pupils to understand the lessons.

Pupils enjoy and take full part in lessons. Leaders have set up a subject-based curriculum. Pupils move around the school calmly and safely. Teachers prepare activities which pupils find interesting. As a result, pupils achieve well. They think about jobs that they might do in the future and work towards this.

Pupils like school. They say they feel safe. If they worry about anything they know that they can talk to staff. Staff and pupils get on well together. There is no low-level disruption. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Staff and pupils told us that if there is any incidence of bullying, this is swiftly dealt with.

Leaders provide a wide range of additional opportunities for pupils. This provides for pupils' broader development. There is an after-school club, a 'feeling good' session and enrichment sessions.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders make sure that pupils are well prepared for life after school. They encourage pupils to be aspirational and to consider a wide range of options for education and employment. Subjects are matched to the needs of pupils who attend the school. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training in their subject areas. Consequently, staff have strong knowledge of their subjects.

Leaders in all subjects plan well so that the knowledge and skills pupils are expected to learn are set out. Lessons are planned to build on what pupils already know. This results in lessons being fine-tuned to each pupil's needs.

All pupils have lessons in BSL, and signing is used to support all lessons. In some lessons teachers sign. In other lessons a communication support worker works alongside the teacher. This makes sure that pupils always have access to BSL. At present, BSL is also taught as a separate subject. The content of the BSL curriculum is not always closely linked to that of the core curriculum.

When they arrive at the school, many pupils have some gaps in their knowledge and skills. Leaders recognise this. They make sure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are closed before moving on to more difficult work.

Pupils work well. They enjoy reviewing their own work and that of others. Staff describe how they build on pupils' skills and knowledge over their time at the school. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders are aware that the development of reading skills is very important. They have developed many strategies for teaching reading. These are matched to the needs of pupils. Leaders take into account pupils' hearing difficulties. Reading is taught as a separate subject three times a week. Pupils are taught in mixed ages for reading. Each group is taught in a way that will best support their learning. For example, some pupils are told a story in BSL and then see it again, using pictures and text. Others read for meaning and follow written instructions. Some practise their whole word and phonic reading skills. Pupils achieve well and can use the skills they learn in other lessons.

Pupils make the most of opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities. These include gardening, technology, social action, drama, and deaf identity. Pupils also take part in yoga, sports activities and theatre studies with staff from other organisations. These activities enrich their learning.

Staff told us that leaders support them well. Leaders listen to staff. They manage staff workload. For example, staff are given time for training within the school day. Pupils and staff say that others in the school care for them.

Governors work well with school leaders. They check on leaders' work and visit the school to see it in action. They know the school well. They know what is working well and which areas have room for further improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. All staff know how to report any concerns. Attendance is checked to ensure pupils come to school as much as possible. Leaders work well with a large range of external agencies. This ensures that any concerns are immediately followed up. Governors check on the school's safeguarding practices and receive regular reports.

Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. The pupils are also taught how to be safe out of school. Lessons in personal, social, health and economic education and English help with this.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' understanding of written language and their development of communication skills are not coordinated well with the BSL curriculum. Leaders should make sure that these important subject areas link together well, enabling pupils to fulfil their potential.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good/standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 4–5 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	101094
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10121635
Type of school	Special school
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Desmond Jarrett
Headteacher	Caroline Rowlandson
Website	www.oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Oak Lodge School is a secondary special school for pupils who are deaf or have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- We visited lessons with senior leaders. We met with pupils and teachers, and looked at questionnaires completed by parents, pupils and staff. We also met with the chair of governors and a co-opted governor.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design technology. We visited lessons with senior leaders and met with teachers and pupils from those lessons. We looked at pupils' work.
- We looked at the school's systems and processes for keeping pupils safe. We talked to staff, parents and pupils and asked them about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Penny Barratt, lead inspector

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