

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Oak Lodge School

Heath View, East Finchley, London N2 0QY

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

Oak Lodge School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lynda Walker. This school is part of Barnet Special Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lynda Walker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Val White.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They arrive at school smiling and happy. Pupils show their great happiness in the way they greet the staff and friends. Staff very skilfully nurture pupils with kindness and build strong, caring relationships. Pupils feel safe and know that they can speak to trusted adults in school.

The school sets high expectations for pupils to achieve well personally and academically. Pupils meet and exceed these expectations, including students in the sixth form.

There is a calm atmosphere in the school. Staff know each pupil well and support them individually if they become anxious or emotional. Staff's specific training on supporting social and emotional needs enables them to expertly reduce pupils' anxieties quickly and calmly.

The school provides pupils with extensive enrichment opportunities. All pupils attend clubs on a weekly basis. They speak highly of their experiences, including in dance, football, gardening and music. Pupils thrive on displaying their skills in performances such as singing in the choir and dancing in local shows. This develops their confidence and independence. Students in the sixth form develop even further as leaders, for example

producing the school newsletter. This prepares them exceptionally well to be successful citizens in society.

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

The school has expertly designed the curriculum for all subjects. Careful thought is given to an increasingly wide range of needs. The school links closely with feeder schools as part of its initial assessment of pupils' individual needs. This forms part of a thorough process to ensure that with highly effective support, pupils access the curriculum successfully. There is clear intent for all pupils to develop key skills and knowledge. The precise identification and ordering of what pupils should learn support them very well to remember it. Further thought is given to pupils' interests as a hook for learning. For example, pupils learn about nutrition and develop practical skills in food technology. They use this learning and their numeracy skills when running the school café each week. In the sixth form, students achieve a wide range of vocational and academic accreditations and qualifications. This prepares students exceptionally well for when they move on from the school.

The school places a great priority on developing pupils' reading and communication skills. It enables pupils to develop their fluency and understanding of texts, for example through the daily reading session. Pupils at all stages confidently read aloud during lessons. Students in the sixth form read and speak with great confidence. Pupils in the early stages of reading receive effective phonics teaching. Pupils' love of reading is nurtured through the books that they individually know and love. The school fosters close partnerships with highly skilled specialists and therapists, including for speech and language. This helps pupils to learn to communicate and develop physically. Pupils express themselves using a range of equipment and technology.

Staff review pupils' targets skilfully and adjust them to show the knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. They ensure that pupils have many opportunities to revise their learning. For example, in physical education, pupils develop their skills well. This is through, for example, practising their jumping and movement through a range of well-considered activities. This helps pupils to retain their knowledge and skills over time.

Pupils are incredibly respectful and polite throughout the school. They understand how to be kind. Sixth-form students are excellent role models. The school takes pupils' attendance rates seriously. It has clear systems for dealing with any pupils with low attendance. For example, the school arranges for medical appointments to take place on site, which supports pupils' attendance in school.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils highly value the range of experiences available to them. The school helps pupils to learn about how to stay safe online and offline, respectful relationships and how their bodies work. The sixth-form provision is strongly focused on meeting students' needs and interests. Students gain broad workplace experience and benefit from their work experiences in the community. Students take part in charity work and produce items such as soap and greeting cards. They then sell these in the school shop.

The school, governors and trustees want pupils to have the best education. Staff are expert in many areas. The school's integrated work with external agencies is exceptional. Staff feel supported and appreciate the care for their well-being and consideration of their workload demonstrated by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in September 2019.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143865
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10346039
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	68
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Val White
CEO of the trust	Lynda Walker
Headteacher	Lynda Walker
Website	www.oaklodeschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Barnet Special Education Trust, a multi-academy trust. The school is also part of the MOON partnership, which is made up of four special schools in Barnet.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autism, moderate learning difficulties or other complex needs, including physical and medical conditions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning where appropriate and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers. Inspectors also met with teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors, chair of trustees, governors, trustees and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including parents' written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Janice Howkins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Diane Rochford

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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