

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Oak Lodge School**

Balham, London

LEA area: Wandsworth

Unique reference number: 101094

Headteacher: Mr Peter Merrifield

Lead inspector: Vanessa Wilkinson

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Inspection number: 268608

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	92
School address:	101 Nightingale Lane Balham London
Postcode:	SW12 8NA
Telephone number:	0208 673 3453
Fax number:	0208 673 9397
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sarah Gray
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Oak Lodge School is a secondary special school providing for profoundly deaf boys and girls from Greater London. Pupils need sign language to access learning. (British Sign Language, Sign Supported English). Currently, there are 92 pupils. A significant number of pupils do not join the school at the usual time of admission. On entry to school, pupils are assessed as having a wide range of attainment. Many have had little or no appropriate previous education and a significant number have experienced trauma in their lives. Since the last inspection there are a lot more pupils with increasingly challenging behaviour who are being admitted to the school. 86 pupils have statements of special educational need and 6 are undergoing statutory assessment. The school population is exceptionally diverse in terms of pupils' linguistic and cultural background. 73 pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 21 different languages are used by parents. There are 29 refugee/ asylum seekers identified and 10 pupils are supported through EMAG. 70% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language or are at an early stage of language development. There are 15 pupils in public care and 65% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are currently pupils from 24 local education authorities attending the school.

The school operates over several sites. Post 16 provision is on the main site and in two Further Education Colleges. The school has links with 4 colleges in total. The school supports pupils on 9 full time courses at St Francis Xavier College, 12 part time course at Lambeth College and a 6 week photography course at Chestnut Grove School. The school also provides support to deaf adults in helping them to improve their basic skills and finding work through its Deaf First project.

The school has a weekly boarding hostel. There are currently 23 pupils accessing this. Deaf culture and sign language are important aspects of the school's provision and meeting the communication needs of pupils is one of the school's prime objectives. The school achieved the Investors In People kite mark in 2003 and the School Achievement Award in 2002.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Oak Lodge is an exceptional school. There is an outstanding commitment to pupils on the part of all those who work in the school. As a result, pupils' achievements are very good and teaching is very good overall. The school is led extremely well and management is excellent. The school provides excellent value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers and support staff have outstanding skills in signing which enables all pupils to learn and achieve very well.
- The considerable dedication of the headteacher and the senior staff has ensured that the school continually develops and improves.
- The excellent opportunities for enriching the curriculum and links with the community support pupils' learning extremely well.
- The outstanding care and welfare of all pupils gives them confidence to learn and develop into mature and responsible adults.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and their behaviour is excellent.
- Accommodation is cramped and, as a result, there is insufficient space for staff and pupils. The accommodation in the hostel and for Post 16 students is poor.

Since the last inspection in 1999, the school has made very good improvements and has dealt with all the weaknesses identified at that time. Teaching and pupils' progress have been improved, as have assessment systems. Religious education is now taught throughout the school. The school has put in place a number of new initiatives which will ensure that it continues to improve.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Year 11	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Year 13	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Pupils achieve very well. Many start school with very limited skills in communication, but all make excellent progress and develop excellent skills in communicating. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing and very good progress in mathematics and science. In information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils make excellent progress because there are many opportunities for them to develop their skills. Achievement in art is excellent. Pupils make good progress in religious education. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent because the school places such a great deal of importance on these areas. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Attendance is very good.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good. Teaching and learning are very good for all pupils and students. Teachers are excellent communicators and have a very high standard of signing. There is considerable commitment to develop pupils' skills in signing and the excellent involvement of both hearing and deaf staff supports pupils' and students' learning very well. Assessment is very good overall and is used very effectively to identify how pupils and students can improve. The curriculum is very good and there are excellent opportunities to enrich pupils' learning. The accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory and for pupils resident in the hostel and

students in Post 16, it is poor. The facilities for pupils and staff are also inadequate. The excellent systems for care, welfare and support and guidance of pupils and students ensure that there is exceptional support for each individual. Links with parents are good, whilst links with other schools, colleges and the community are excellent. The school provides excellent provision in its Deaf First project, which supports deaf adults.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides outstanding commitment and is continually looking at ways to develop and improve the school. He is very well supported by his excellent senior management team. Governance is very good. Governors are very supportive and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to be developed. The school provides excellent value for money.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They very much appreciate the support and help they get from staff. Pupils like their school and enjoy the opportunities they are given to take on responsibility.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

In order to improve further the school should:

- Improve accommodation for pupils, students and staff.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils' achievements and progress are **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils and students gain accreditation in a good range of subjects.
- All pupils and students, regardless of their backgrounds or special educational needs, achieve equally well.
- Pupils make excellent progress in developing their communication skills.
- Pupils make excellent progress in information and communication technology and personal health and social education.

#### **Commentary**

1. When they start school many pupils have little or no communication skills, but because of the very high quality of teaching they are able, by the time they leave, to achieve passes in examinations. More able pupils gain passes in a wide range of accreditation including GCSEs in mathematics, science, ICT and art. Pupils also achieve passes in Entry level in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and technology. Other accreditation achieved by pupils includes passes in an ICT course (CLAIT) and ASDAN. A large number of pupils achieve passes in an accredited course in signing (CACDP). By the end of Year 13, more able pupils achieve passes in a range of subjects including GCSE English, Entry Level Certificates in mathematics, City and Guilds basic adult literacy and GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses.
2. Many pupils have English as a second language and a number have additional special needs over and above their deafness. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress because the planning to ensure their needs are met is very good. The school's very good systems ensure that those pupils with additional special needs are given extra support and staff are well informed about the different approaches needed to help them learn. The achievement of pupils who are identified as gifted and talented is very good because additional support is provided for them. For example, there is professional coaching for sports players and stimulating work experience placements for talented artists.
3. Pupils and students make very good progress in English. Many become very competent communicators and the very good mix of deaf and hearing staff ensures that signing is always of a very high quality. Although reading and writing are very complex areas for deaf pupils to master, the persistent and consistent approach of all staff in encouraging pupils to use and understand English ensures they achieve well. In mathematics and science, pupils achieve very well because of teachers' very good subject knowledge. Progress in art is excellent and pupils achieve well in religious education.
4. Pupils make excellent gains in their use and understanding of information and communication technology because it is taught very well and all staff use ICT to support pupils' and students' learning. Throughout the school staff encourage all pupils to develop their skills in personal, social and health education. There are many formal opportunities in lessons which support pupils' learning very well. There are also very high expectations of pupils to develop into mature young people and pupils and students respond well to the range of responsibilities they are given and are well prepared for leaving school.
5. The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. It sets itself and pupils and students challenging targets and monitors progress towards them regularly. Staff look critically

at what has been achieved and set new appropriate whole school targets. There are clear criteria for reviewing targets and ensuring that they are sufficiently challenging.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils and students are excellent. Their personal development including their moral, social and cultural development is **excellent**. Pupils' spiritual development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make excellent progress in developing into mature, responsible young adults during their time at the school.
- The high expectations that both adults and the older pupils share leads to exceptional standards of pupil behaviour being achieved.
- The opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are of a very high quality.
- Pupils and students enjoy school and, as a result, their attendance is very good.

### **Commentary**

6. Pupils develop a very positive attitude towards learning. When they first start many find it difficult to settle to the routines in school, but, by the time they leave, they have become very well behaved, conscientious students. The school, through its mission statement, recognises the importance of pupils becoming independent and socially competent adults, and does a great deal to help pupils develop these skills. The vast majority of pupils stay on into Years 12 and 13, and successfully attend college courses. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and high adult expectation, contribute significantly to pupils' positive attitudes.
7. Oak Lodge is a very harmonious community, with its principles of respect and fairness to others being consistently exhibited by staff and pupils. Pupils behave very well in lessons, between lessons, during break and lunch times, and in the hostel. Although a number of pupils display behaviour difficulties when they start school, records show that there is a reduction in the number of incidents each year. The systems implemented by the school to promote and support good behaviour are excellent and have a very significant impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, there are few exclusions.
8. The school has set up a range of successful structures that motivate pupils to want to become more responsible, mature members of the school community. These include the school council, school prefects, and Head Boy and Head Girl roles. Pupils appointed to these positions take them very seriously and develop high expectations of other pupils' conduct. With appropriate support from key staff, they are able to work together to both represent and provide good role models to the other pupils in the school. For example, in prefects' meeting, a newly appointed prefect was describing the difficulties he was having managing the behaviour of a boy on his dining table. Several other prefects suggested strategies for improving this behaviour, whilst another reminded the group that pupils new to the school will need support and encouragement, and may take some time to be able to be responsible for their own actions.
9. The school's ethnically diverse community is well reflected in the school's provision, which celebrates the richness of the different cultures through assemblies, displays, the curriculum and links to other organisations. Deaf cultural awareness is particularly well focused on through Deaf Studies, where pupils are encouraged to develop a healthy self-image. Moral development is built upon regularly, for example when pupils are asked to reflect on their own behaviour. The school encourages a non-judgemental approach between people, which is reinforced through the Communication Rules, where pupils are asked to say whether they agree or disagree, rather than say whether they think something is right or wrong. The school is very successful in creating an inclusive environment, where pupils feel they belong and are valued. As they become more confident socially, opportunities are provided for visits out of school, with the older

pupils receiving individualised support to successfully access courses at local further education and sixth form colleges. Spiritual awareness is encouraged through assemblies, opportunities for prayer and reflection, and religious education.

10. Pupils' and students' attendance has increased steadily over the past four years. This reflects the value that they, and their parents and carers, place on the education that the school provides. Procedures to monitor absences are very good and, as a result, there is no unauthorised absence. Although there are occasional transport delays, pupils and students come to school on time. Punctuality to lessons is also good.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	0
National data	?	National data	?

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are **very good**. Assessment is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of signing by staff is exceptional and ensures that pupils' and students' communication skills are improved at a rapid pace.
- There is a consistent structure to lessons which ensures pupils and students have a clear understanding of what they will learn.
- Lessons are lively and interesting and pupils enjoy the work they do.
- Systems to measure and monitor pupils achievement are very good and enable teachers to plan challenging work.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4(10%)	20(49%)	14 (38%)	1 (3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

11. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the special needs of pupils and students. Teaching is excellent in a number of subjects including ICT, art and design and PSHE. In English, mathematics, and science, teaching is very good and it is good in religious education. All teachers have developed their skills in signing and many are fluent in BSL (British Sign language) and SSE (Supported Signed English). As a consequence of their excellent understanding of the problems of deaf pupils in acquiring language, staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' skills in grammar and this enables them to understand the written word. Staff constantly reinforce vocabulary and use their very good subject knowledge to extend pupils' specialist knowledge. For example, in science, Year 11 pupils are expected to explain terms such as radiation and gamma rays. There are high expectations of pupils and at no stage do teachers try to avoid teaching difficult or complex concepts to their class. Hence, in a Year 8

English lesson, the teacher worked hard to encourage pupils to consider and understand what a metaphor is by reading the poem "Animal House". Staff, including a large number of deaf teachers, provide very good role models which does much to raise pupils' ambitions and expectations.

12. Lessons are planned very well. All lessons start with an introduction and pupils understand the expectations because one or two of them will be asked to read and sign to the whole class what it is they are to learn. Staff check that pupils understand what is to be done and clarify any words that may cause confusion. In this way, pupils are clear about what they are to do and at the end of lesson teachers try to ensure they have time to check what pupils have learnt and understood. This, together with the consistent approach to developing pupils' understanding of grammar, means that lessons take a similar format which gives pupils confidence. Teachers' planning incorporates the roles of support staff, but a very small number of these staff do not yet take as active a role in lessons as they should and need more direction from the teacher. This has already been identified as an area for development and the school has implemented a very effective monitoring and training programme to improve support staff skills. In many lessons, though, support staff provide very valuable and effective support for both pupils and teachers by reinforcing learning and ensuring that pupils are well focused and suitably organised for the tasks they are asked to perform.
13. Teaching is enthusiastic and teachers work hard to find different ways to hold pupils' interest. For example, in a very good Year 7 maths lesson, the teacher developed pupils' understanding of sequencing through jumping, sliding and clapping games. Having caught their interest, the teacher got them moving left, right and forwards in groups so that they began to understand the use of co-ordinates. As a result of the very good planning and high expectations, pupils made very good progress. Role play is used well, such as in a very good Year 10 PSHE lesson when pupils considered the roles and responsibilities of prefects. Teachers make very good use of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, so that pupils receive as much visual and practical input as is possible. This was evident in a very good design and technology lesson in which Year 11 pupils considered the use of textiles. They were provided with a whole range of materials, samples, photographs and garments which gave them plenty of information and ideas to respond to the teacher's questions.
14. The systems for assessing pupils' and students' achievement and monitoring their progress are very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when assessment was judged to be satisfactory. The quality and range of information available about pupils' and students' levels of ability and their progress as well as their personal development allows teachers to very effectively plan learning that is challenging for pupils and students. By very effectively evaluating the information collected, the school is able to build on pupils' and students' success and address weaker areas. The pupil database is becoming increasingly more sophisticated and accurate as the school identifies and addresses any anomalies it finds. The school has also developed clear learning outcomes for each subject which are expressed as 'I can do, I will know and I will understand' statements. These are shared with pupils and students and ensure that they develop a very good understanding of their own learning and are clear about what they need to learn to improve. These criteria, along with subject portfolios containing samples of pupils' work and the developing moderation opportunities with other schools, ensure that the level of pupils' achievement is being judged more consistently.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **very good**. It reflects pupils' needs very well and is enriched with an **excellent** range of activities. Resources are very good, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory overall.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Learning opportunities are very good and support pupils' and students' needs very well.
- Careers education and guidance, work experience and the programmes for personal, social, health and citizenship education are excellent.

- The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of special events, additional activities and links with the community.
- The school is very effective in addressing any additional needs pupils may have.
- The school makes the best of the accommodation it has, but space is very limited for both staff and pupils.

### **Commentary**

15. The school provides a very good range of extremely relevant learning opportunities for pupils of all ages and for students over sixteen which are constantly reviewed and adapted. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum was judged to be good. Statutory requirements are now fully met as religious education has been introduced for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students over 16 have very good opportunities for developing their knowledge and understanding. They have access to a wide range of accredited courses. For example, pupils in Years 10 to 14 can follow course which lead to the General Certificate in Secondary Education, Entry Level Certificates or Unit Awards, OCR, ASDAN (Youth Award and Life Skills Certificate) and CACDP (sign language exams) The study skills programme provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 ensures that pupils develop appropriate attitudes to learning and the organisational skills they will need when they go on to the next stage of their education.
16. The excellent links that have been established with other schools and colleges promote learning by extending the range of learning opportunities available to pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students over 16. A very effective link with St Francis Xavier College enables pupils to follow a range of creative and vocational courses. In addition, the curriculum is enhanced extremely well by opportunities for pupils to follow courses which specifically reflect their special needs, for example in areas such as Deaf Studies. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of special events, visits and visitors as well as regular lunch-time clubs such as the signed singing and art clubs. Pupils benefit from excellent opportunities to take part in residential visits.
17. The school makes very good provision for pupils with additional special needs and those for whom English is not their first language. There are very effective systems for identifying any problems that pupils may have and for monitoring their achievement. These systems along with flexible and innovative interventions to address any problems ensure that these pupils learn as effectively as others.
18. The programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education is excellent. There are very good opportunities for all pupils and students to tackle a wide range of relevant and topical subjects such as the general election and the origin and needs of refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, the school has developed very valuable and well planned programmes of learning such as travel training which contributes successfully to the development of pupils' independence.
19. The school has developed an outstanding programme of careers education and guidance and work experience which prepares pupils well for life in the world of work. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, there is a comprehensive programme of learning to support careers education which is very effectively promoted through all subjects, particularly personal, social, health and citizenship education and through pastoral time. These opportunities make a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development, their behaviour and their ability to take responsibility.
20. There is a very good number of teachers and support staff who are very well trained for the roles and responsibilities they hold. This investment in human resources is reflected in the very high standards achieved by the school in all areas of its work. Resources are very good and those for information and communication and visual learning, which were criticized in the last report, have been significantly improved. Teachers and support staff use the resources available to them very effectively to promote learning.
21. The accommodation, although improved considerably since the last inspection and with plans for further improvements, remains unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and poor for pupils in

the hostel, for students over 16 and for students on the Deaf First programme. Premises staff keep the accommodation in an immaculate condition. It is a welcoming environment which is bright and stimulating because of the very high quality displays of pupils' work. However, it is too cramped, corridors are too narrow and there are inadequate facilities for both pupils and staff. The accommodation for science and art, the hostel accommodation, a very small staff room and the lack of 'common room' facilities for pupils in Years 10 and 11, students over 16 and Deaf First adults make it particularly unsuitable.

### Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **excellent**, as is the support, advice and guidance they are given. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are given confidence to learn as a result of the school's excellent care for them.
- Excellent and trusting relationships between pupils and staff contribute significantly to pupils' sense of well-being.
- The school's commitment to offer individual support and guidance to all pupils is exceptional.
- Pupils and students play a very important role in the life of the school and their views and ideas are highly valued.

### Commentary

22. All staff in the school care exceptionally well for pupils. Many pupils arrive suffering from stress or trauma as a result of displacement from their home country. The school works extremely hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and that they rapidly gain very good communication skills and confidence to seek help from adults. This has a very good impact on their learning and personal development. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and supporting pupils in public care are rigorous and relevant to the pupils' individual needs. The school has very productive links with outside agencies and works effectively with them to seek additional support, such as for pupils' mental health needs. Parents are very confident that their children are well cared for.
23. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are an outstanding feature of the school. Adults are consistent in their expectations. Pupils know that staff will treat them fairly and respect their individual backgrounds and specific needs. As a result, pupils learn to trust the adults working with them, gain confidence for learning and develop high levels of self-esteem, maturity and responsibility.
24. The support and guidance offered to pupils is exceptional because it is tailored to meet their individual needs. Pupils' individual education plans set clear targets for them to work towards. Pupils are very positive about the way in which mentors support them to achieve their goals. Support for pupils with behaviour difficulties is very good. Incidents are very carefully monitored and discussed with pupils so that they learn to control their own behaviour and set an example to others. Older students comment very positively on the way in which the school has helped them to learn how to behave well. The school knows that many pupils suffer from anger or anxiety due to communication difficulties and their social circumstances. Very good work is being done in emotional development lessons to help them to communicate these feelings to others and come to terms with their own frustrations. Careers guidance and advice for future study options are excellent.
25. The school council plays a very significant part in the life of the school. Pupils have the confidence to discuss others' concerns and to work with prefects to resolve issues before consulting with staff. Staff are genuinely interested in pupils' views and take their suggestions and concerns very seriously. Pupils are confident that they will be listened to and say that staff are very approachable when advice is sought.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with parents are **good**. Links with other schools, colleges and the community are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The school works very hard to engage parents in pupils' learning, although it recognises that there is more to do.
- Excellent community links enrich and extend opportunities for pupils' learning.
- Students have a wide range of courses available to them because of the school's excellent links with colleges.

### **Commentary**

26. The school has good links with most parents and these parents are very positive about the school in all respects. They say that they feel well supported and that they are kept well informed about their children's achievements. They appreciate the wide range of visits undertaken by their children outside school and are particularly appreciative of the personal and emotional support that pupils receive. They are very confident that the school deals very well with any concerns because the headteacher and staff are very approachable. Inspectors wholeheartedly agree with these very positive views.
27. Information provided to parents is very good. There are regular opportunities to discuss pupils' progress at review meetings or by informal contact on the telephone. Annual review reports are detailed and informative. The school offers parents many opportunities to visit, for example for arts events and prize-giving. However, a significant number of parents are not as involved as the school would like because of the distance lived from the school or problems with communication. This is a continuing difficulty, but the school is planning more opportunities, such as workshops on emotional development, to engage parents' interest and support for their children's education.
28. The school has a very well established place in the local community. Links with London's deaf community are extensive and afford pupils excellent opportunities to meet with others, for example for drama productions and sports competitions. Pupils' social and cultural development is very well promoted through participation in, for example, the Nightingale Ceramics project where they worked with artists and shopkeepers to create a mural to improve the local environment. Links with neighbouring senior citizens are very positive and give pupils and elderly people the chance to socialise together. Links with local businesses and industry are very strong and provide pupils with interesting and challenging work experience placements. The school is very well supported by charitable organisations such as Rotary.
29. The excellent and productive links with local schools give pupils opportunities to work together and for staff to share their expertise. Fundraising by a local private school has enabled Oak Lodge to improve ICT resources, provide individual mentoring for pupils and put in place plans to re-instate a post of family liaison worker with the aim of improving links with parents. Working relationships between the school and colleges are excellent. College links are extensive and offer students a wide range of courses and flexible options to help them stay in full-time education and beyond statutory school age.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the head teacher and key staff is **excellent**. The effectiveness of management is **excellent**. Governance of the school is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership motivates everyone to succeed.
- Excellent teamwork has been ensured through very clear delegation of responsibilities.
- Plans for future school improvements are based on rigorous appraisal of the school's work.
- Excellent procedures for continuously building staff expertise ensure a very high quality of teaching and learning.
- The school is very strongly supported by its governing body.

### Commentary

30. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational. He has an excellent long-term view of the school's progress and development, which he succeeds in bringing to fruition through his ability to motivate, support and seek the views of all members of the school's community. His excellent organisational skills enable him to effectively manage his multiple roles as head of the school, the hearing impaired service and a pupil referral unit (Corner House). Following the headteacher's example, everyone in the school promotes equality of opportunity and a concern for the needs of individuals.
31. The clarity with which responsibilities are delegated is excellent, enabling all staff to be aware of their personal contribution to the school team. This is an excellent move forward since the last inspection, where line management delegation was judged to be too informal. Senior managers fulfil their duties exceptionally well in response to the genuine trust placed upon them. In their various senior management meetings, their combined experience and knowledge enables them to make excellent strategic decisions about the continuing development of the school. The use by senior managers and subject co-ordinators of the excellent procedures for checking the quality of teaching has resulted in plans for development that are tightly focussed on areas where improvement is genuinely needed.
32. Underpinning all of the school's work is the belief that it is only as good as the people who work there. To support this belief there are excellent arrangements to ensure that all staff are able to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses, for example through performance management interviews. Excellent opportunities are then provided for them to develop their professional expertise further. New members of staff receive a comprehensive programme of support, as do staff who change roles, for example to become senior managers. There are excellent opportunities for continuing professional development. The school is particularly successful in supporting staff who wish to train as teachers. There is excellent interpreter-support to enable deaf staff to take part fully in all meetings and professional development events.
33. There is very good support from the governing body. Governors are frequent visitors and are very much part of the school community. They are dedicated to their responsibilities, which they carry out very effectively by allocating areas of work into sub-committees. They receive excellent information from the school, in reports and also from presentations by staff at governing body meetings. Through questioning and challenging that information, they have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and of areas where it needs to develop further.
34. The school receives a delegated budget that also funds the hearing impaired service, the residential hostel, the 16 Plus Department, and, separately, the Corner House provision. All expenditure is rigorously accounted for and suitable contingency funds are maintained.

Currently, the school is saving capital funding for improvements to the premises. The school provides excellent value for money.

### **Financial Information**

35. The Local Education Authority allocates a budget for the Hearing Impaired Service which includes the school and other provision. It is not possible to extract from this figure the financial information which relates specifically to the school.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work Related Learning**

Provision is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are supported extremely well throughout their time at school to develop a very good understanding of the world of work.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' awareness of further education extremely well.

### **Commentary**

36. The provision for work related learning is very effectively planned and prepares pupils and students extremely well for the next stage of their education and for the world of work. There is a very comprehensive programme of careers education and guidance which begins in Year 7 and this is developed further through discrete lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students over 16. The ethos within the school together with the high expectations of staff ensures that pupils and students learn to take responsibility and an awareness and experience of the types of further education available to them.

37. Procedures such as applying for and being interviewed to become a school prefect help to prepare pupils well for the future. The curriculum is very well designed to provide pupils with a range of academic and vocational learning opportunities and there is a very strong focus on developing pupils' independence and their ability to take responsibility. This along with the very high levels of information and support provided for pupils enables them to make informed and realistic choices for the future. The excellent links with local colleges and the very good quality support pupils receive during college placements and work experience contribute to pupils' success. The work experience programme is exceptionally well planned to reflect the individual needs and abilities of pupils.

### **Residential provision**

The residential provision at the school supports pupils' academic and personal development **very well**.

- The activities and experiences provided by the care staff make a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal progress.
- Very effective team work between the care and education staff leads to a high standard of care and support for pupils.

### **Commentary**

38. Care staff provide very good levels of support and encouragement and have very positive relationships with the pupils. The staff know the pupils extremely well, which enables them to provide an excellent level of individual support. Pupils are very well supported in completing their homework. As a result, they settle quickly to their tasks, with some of the older pupils working for up to one and a quarter hours. The Head of Care maintains an overview of what

homework is being set, and how well pupils engage in the tasks. The information from this monitoring is then used by staff to evaluate the quality and quantity of homework provided.

39. Each evening a wide range of very good activities, both on and off site, are provided. These include sporting, recreational and cultural experiences. All activities have specified aims, which the staff evaluate on completion. For example, in a drama workshop, run by a local theatre company, pupils worked very enthusiastically and are planning to do the production at a local theatre.
40. There is very good liaison between staff in the hostel and teachers to ensure the best interests of the pupils. Since care staff participate in a range of activities during the school day, such as assemblies and school trips, they are aware of how well pupils are doing and where there are concerns. Teachers contribute to pupils' care plans, which mainly focus on developing their independent living skills and basic academic skills. Care workers also attend pupils' Annual Education Reviews.
41. Accommodation in the hostel is poor. The rooms and space available are small. There are limited social areas and no communal dining areas to support a more family-orientated setting. Pupils have their meals in the school dining room. Staff have made the best of the limited space and conditions, but the school recognises improvements are needed and appropriate plans have been established to address this.

## **Deaf First**

Provision is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides excellent learning opportunities for deaf adults.
- Funding for the Deaf First initiative is not secure.

### **Commentary**

42. The school provides an excellent range of short courses and supported college placements for deaf adults who want to return to education or prepare themselves for employment. They have access to a very wide range of accreditation such as GCSE, GNVQ and City and Guilds qualifications. There is a very appropriate emphasis on supporting students to improve their basic skills and develop their interview techniques. Communication support workers provide very effective support for students which is extremely well matched to each student's individual need. A programme of voluntary work provides very good opportunities to extend student's Curriculum Vitae and for them to experience being in a work place. In 2004, students were successful in achieving a range of qualifications in literacy, numeracy and preparation for employment and are now being supported to follow degree courses.
43. The school is constantly seeking partnerships and grants to enable it to provide the Deaf First programme. The school does not know which monies will be available from one term to the next. This does not enable staff to plan effectively in the longer term as provision has to be adapted continually to reflect the level of funding that has been secured.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4 AND POST 16

### ENGLISH

*Six lessons were observed, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator.*

Provision is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The exemplary signing skills of staff ensure that pupils and students make excellent progress in developing their communication skills.
- Specific lessons in BSL enable pupils and students to improve their skills in a structured, well planned way.
- The focus on improving each pupils' individual skills in reading enables all to make good progress.
- Pupils and students develop their skills in writing effectively through carefully structured teaching.
- Teachers place considerable importance on encouraging pupils to understand the grammar of English.
- Leadership of the subject has ensured that the large staff team work together well.
- Pupils' literacy skills are well promoted in the teaching of all subjects.

#### **Commentary**

44. Pupils make very good progress overall in developing their skills in communication, reading and writing. Each pupil is assessed when they arrive at Oak Lodge as to the best form of communication which will suit their needs, whether this is British Sign language (BSL), supported Sign language (SSE) or, for a very small number, speech. Those with very limited language skills have individual lessons initially, and all pupils have lessons in BSL through Deaf Studies. As a result, all make very quick improvements in their skills so that within a very short space of time they are able to communicate quite fluently. As pupils get older, their vocabulary expands and, by Year 11, they can discuss a range of topics, for example, when comparing two poems, recognising and using the term "onomatopoeia". All pupils are entered for accreditation in BSL and, by Year 11, most have passed Stage 2 of the nationally recognised CACDP course. The involvement of the speech and language team in supporting teachers in lessons is very good. This was very evident in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were encouraged to speak or to sign and the very good team work between the teacher and speech therapist ensured that pupils developed their skills. By the end of the lesson, pupils recognised the importance of the need for eye contact with whomever they are talking. By Year 13, students are very confident communicators. The most able can discuss books they have read whilst others can compare films they have watched and decide which was the most humorous.
45. Pupils and students make good progress in their reading and writing skills. Many, when they start, have a very limited understanding of the written word, and several have no understanding of the alphabet or letter recognition. Although progress is slow in reading, pupils and students achieve well because there is a very good focus on encouraging them to think about the structure of English and to understand the rules of grammar. Good use is made of a commercial reading scheme that is age appropriate and provides pupils with good opportunities to develop an understanding of key words and spelling. In some classes, such as in Year 9, there is a very good focus on current events and pupils read newspaper articles and look at how a newspaper is constructed. By Year 11, pupils have studied a range of novels including work by Shakespeare and the Sherlock Holmes mysteries. By the end of Year 13, students are reading texts such as "Cold Comfort Farm" and "The Tempest". A very good initiative has been developed which supports pupils with additional special needs. They are given individual literacy

support and the teacher ensures that staff have an understanding of the strategies that can be used to help them learn.

46. Since the word structure of BSL is so different to English, pupils find it difficult to record in the written word. However, by the time they reach Year 11, most are able to respond to questions about texts they have read and write instructions for example "How to fry an egg". More able pupils write in detail and compare advertisements. They are also able to write imaginatively, such as writing stories entitled "Mary and the unicorn". All pupils need considerable support, but work hard to present their work well. By Year 13, students continue to develop their skills. Whilst many are still extending their understanding of the structure of sentences, more able students write in detail, for example, comparing two major events in their lives.
47. Teaching and learning are very good. The major strength of teaching is the exceptional communication skills of teachers and their very good understanding of the special needs of the pupils. Staff have a high level of signing which enables them to model language and speech for pupils and to support pupils in trying to understand the idiosyncrasies of the English language. Teachers are skilled at explaining how to form sentences, the use of plurals and the difference in writing in the past and present tense. They offer very good explanations, for example, in a Year 11 lesson, clarification was made of the difference between "having lunch" and "eating". Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will learn – they are persistent in developing pupils' skills, encouraging them to think about their signing and their vocabulary. The aims of the lesson are always made clear to pupils and, on the whole, teachers make good use of the last few minutes of the lesson to recap on what has been learnt. Teachers are enthusiastic and lessons are often lively and interesting. This was very evident in a Year 7 lesson. The pace of the lesson was quick and good opportunities for role play captured pupils' imagination and made the lesson "fun". Assessment is used well to enable teachers to have a good understanding of how to help pupils and students progress. However, marking of pupils' work is not always effective and does not help pupils to know how well they are achieving. There is good record keeping, but the lack of any annotation on some pupils' work makes it difficult to assess how much help pupils had to complete the task.
48. Leadership and management of the subject is very good. Provision for English has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be good overall. The English department is very large and made up of a number of full and part time teachers. The subject co-ordinator has been effective in ensuring that there is a consistent approach in the way teachers work in lessons. The very good partnership and support of the deputy headteacher ensures there are effective links between all those involved in developing pupils' communication and English skills. Teaching is closely monitored and there are good systems to ensure work is moderated.

### **Literacy across the curriculum.**

Staff ensure that all pupils have excellent opportunities to practise their communication skills and are consistent in the way they encourage them to improve both their signing and their vocabulary. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills, although the frequent use of worksheets in many subjects limits pupils' opportunities to practise extended writing.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Nine lessons were seen in mathematics, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator.*

Provision is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils and students are challenged by tasks which are carefully planned to meet their learning needs.
- Teachers use ICT very well to help pupils and students to understand difficult ideas.
- The subject has been developed very well by extremely strong leadership.

## Commentary

49. All pupils and students achieve very well in mathematics throughout the school. As a result, pupils in Years 10 and 11 and Post-16 students achieve nationally recognised awards for their accredited courses. High attaining Post-16 students are very well catered for and achieve very well in part-time courses at local colleges. Pupils and students achieve so well because teachers plan and prepare courses and lessons that are tailored to meet their individual learning needs. By Year 9, pupils have an understanding of how to round up to two decimal places and are beginning to understand the concept of probability. ASDAN is used well to support pupils' numeracy skills. For example, in a very good Year 11 lesson, pupils learn about the different ways of paying for items and successfully work out the best payment terms when using bank and credit cards.
50. Teaching and learning are very good. The most significant feature of teaching is the excellent ability of all staff to help pupils and students learn by providing visual prompts. An exceptionally high standard of signing is used consistently. This enables pupils to understand very clearly their teachers' explanations of difficult concepts and understand what is expected of them. Of particular importance to pupils' achievements is the very good use made of ICT. The use of interactive smartboards, especially, enables difficult ideas and processes to be very clearly demonstrated visually. Pupils also use computers very successfully to collect and analyse data and to produce materials, often by searching for them on the internet, for their assignments for accredited courses. Learning is stimulating and interesting and teachers have very high expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils and students pay attention to what they are being taught and work very hard to achieve the tasks they are given.
51. Very good leadership and management by the subject coordinator has brought about a very good improvement in mathematics provision since the last inspection. She has used the school's excellent processes for identifying how effective teaching and learning are and providing clear action plans to develop provision further. Recent improvements to the consistency of approach between teachers have produced the very accurate assessment techniques that are an essential part of this process.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

52. The opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects of the curriculum are good and these are identified in curriculum plans. Teachers encourage pupils to use their numeracy skills and understanding, for example, to weigh and measure ingredients when preparing food, in design and technology and for recording data in science experiments.

## SCIENCE

*Four lessons were observed, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator.*

The provision for science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge which is used well to make lessons interesting.
- Very good teaching enables pupils to do very well, despite the inadequate accommodation.
- The subject leader has brought about significant improvements to the subject.

## Commentary

53. Pupils make very good gains in their understanding because teachers' skills in communication are very good and staff use their subject knowledge to provide clear explanations. Consequently, pupils achieve passes in GCSE and Entry Level Certificate. By Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of evaluating their work, for example, in Year 9, pupils considered how they could have improved their study of Wandsworth Common. Year 11 pupils have an understanding of use terminology such as methane and conduction and explain, for example, the effects of different forms of radiation.
54. Teachers are very effective in the use of questioning to ensure that pupils understand what they have learnt and clarify their thinking. These opportunities contribute very successfully to pupils' achievement as misconceptions are picked up quickly by teachers and corrected. Teachers make learning interesting, have high expectations and make very good use of ICT. This was demonstrated in a Year 9 class who were effectively engaged in learning about the environment and achieved very well because they had been on a field trip to the local common. Year 10 pupils were very well challenged in a lesson about the production of carbon dioxide through burning. Clear criteria for learning have been established and these ensure that pupils know what the learning outcomes will be for each lesson and each module of work. Pupils understand what they have achieved and know what they need to learn to improve and this makes a significant contribution to their personal development and awareness of their own learning. The learning criteria and a very good portfolio of pupils' work are being used effectively by teachers to plan work with the appropriate level of challenge.
55. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and poor for those in Years 10 and 11. The school only has one small laboratory, which is too cramped and only enables pupils to work in a laboratory environment for one hour a week. The science preparation area, which has recently been created, is inadequate. Teachers and support staff work extremely hard and creatively to ensure that inadequacies in the accommodation have as little impact on pupil achievement as possible.
56. The subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader is very clear about strengths and areas for development in the subject and plans are already being successfully implemented to improve the provision further. Standards have improved well since the last inspection when the subject was judged to be good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

*Three lessons were seen, pupils' and students' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator.*

Provision for ICT is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A very good curriculum enables pupils to progressively build their skills.
- Pupils are stimulated to learn by the excellent ICT skills of their teachers.
- Excellent leadership has enabled the subject to develop.
- The use of ICT throughout the school supports pupils learning extremely well.

### **Commentary**

57. The achievement of pupils and students in ICT is excellent throughout the school. In Year 7, pupils take a special course that ensures that they all develop basic skills. The very good curriculum develops and extends their understanding so that by the time pupils reach Year 11 and the Post 16 class, they achieve extremely well in nationally recognised courses, providing work portfolios of an excellent standard. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate their ability to organise information gathered from a range of sources including the internet and use mind-maps, whilst older pupils retrieve information successfully from a database. All pupils are extremely confident in their use of computers and this was displayed in a very good Year 8

lesson when pupils working on mind maps took it upon themselves to redesign their central feature using graphics. Their knowledge and understanding in where to obtain pictures, change colours and insert text was impressive.

58. Teaching and learning in ICT is excellent for all pupils and students. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that enables them to offer very confident support to pupils. Learning objectives are established at the start of each lesson and all instructions and explanations are clarified by excellent use of signing and practical demonstrations, mostly using an interactive smartboard. Teachers have very high expectations. Although the tasks are very challenging for pupils, teachers are sensitive in their use of support, so as to promote independent working.
59. Excellent leadership and management by the subject coordinator has enabled excellent improvement to be made when compared with the last inspection. There are very well planned and detailed learning objectives for each year group which are the result of continuous assessment of the subject's strengths and weaknesses, followed by detailed action planning. Resources are excellent.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

60. Excellent use is made of ICT to support pupils' and students' learning in other subjects. The whole school embraces the use of ICT, thus encouraging the interest of pupils by modelling its positive benefits. Virtually all of the school's management and organisation information is created and distributed via the internal "intranet" rather than through paper copies. This has encouraged an excellent level of computer literacy amongst staff who are then confident in their support of pupils. The most significant innovation is the use of interactive smartboards in lessons. Teachers make very good use of these to provide visual explanations of difficult concepts, such as probability in mathematics.

### **HUMANITIES**

*Inspectors observed one lesson of history. A limited amount of the pupils' work was sampled for both subjects.*

61. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for geography and history. Planning is very detailed for what pupils will learn, but the topics do not completely reflect the needs and interests of pupils from such widely diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **Religious Education**

*One lesson of religious education was observed, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held with staff.*

Provision for religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' excellent communication skills enables pupils to develop their understanding of different views and values through discussions.
- The subject is well led and has ensured there have been good improvements since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

62. Pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the traditions, festivals and practices of all major faiths. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss a range of issues such as human rights and, because signing is of such a high quality, pupils are able to express their thoughts and develop new vocabulary effectively. Discussions are handled sensitively and thoughtfully so that pupils can understand that there is more than one view point. As a result,

they have confidence to present their ideas and listen carefully to each other. Lesson plans show that a very good range of topics is taught, making good use of visits to places of worship, visits by members of different faith groups, video material and ICT.

63. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Much has been done to improve provision since the last inspection and the subject policy rightly draws attention to the diverse religious backgrounds of the pupil population. As a result, all pupils study their familiar faith while also learning about a wide variety of others. Additionally, the school makes excellent arrangements to include pupils of all faiths, for example by providing halal and vegetarian food, making suitable arrangements for pupils to fast during Ramadan, and setting a room aside for Muslims to pray.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Design and technology**

*Only one lesson was seen in design and technology and, as a result, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision.*

64. Displays around the school reflect the high standard of pupils' work. The curriculum is very good and pupils have very favourable opportunities to learn a range of techniques. Pupils plan and design their work carefully and have made necklaces using clay stencils to produce the decorative links. There is good attention to colour and pupils have designed and made electronic bugs which are highly decorative. Resources are good and this was reflected in the very good textiles lesson observed in which pupils were able to sample a vast range of different materials.

### **Art and Design**

*Four lessons were observed and pupils' work was scrutinised.*

The provision for art and design is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils and students have an extremely good range of opportunities which enable them to make excellent progress.
- Teachers' very enthusiastic approach to the subject encourages pupils and students to be very creative in their work.
- The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

65. The quality of pupils' and students' work is exceptionally good because they are consistently provided with very good learning opportunities. Pupils and students develop the confidence to express themselves through their work and they demonstrate increasing competence in their use of a wide range of medium. This is reflected in the way pupils express their knowledge of a range of topics. By Year 9, for example, pupils show an understanding of concepts such as positive and negative shapes and the difference between natural and mechanical shapes. They are able to select and draw artefacts using shading to good effect. Work in pottery is of a very good quality and pupils are clearly competent in ceramics producing a wide range of carefully decorated vases, pots and plates. By Year 11, pupils' achievement is outstanding and this is reflected in the very high grades they achieve in GCSE and at Entry Level Certificates. Students in post 16 have very good opportunities to continue with their studies through the excellent college links that have been established. They are very well supported to extend their learning through work experience placements such as working in the National Theatre scenery department.

66. Teaching and learning are excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be very good. Pupils are encouraged through very enthusiastic teaching to be very creative and develop their skills and learn about art history. For example, role play in an exemplary Year 10 lesson ensured that pupils developed a very good understanding of the Renaissance and the influence of Leonardo de Vinci. Teachers clearly enjoy the subject and this inspires pupils to work hard. There is very good use of sketchbooks to encourage pupils to develop their ideas and to practise and improve their skills. Homework is very effectively used to encourage pupils to develop their skills further. Teachers and support staff are extremely skilled at ensuring that pupils' communication skills are supported and extended throughout the art curriculum and there is an excellent emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and use of subject specific vocabulary.
67. The subject is extremely well led and through the commitment and enthusiasm of staff has ensured that pupils make the very best progress despite the inadequate accommodation. The rooms are too small and work areas are cluttered as there is insufficient storage space. Unfinished work is constantly at risk of being spoilt as there is not enough space to leave it in situ between lessons. The school also ensures that pupils' and students' work is recognised and celebrated both locally and in the wider community by participating in exhibitions at places such as The Tate Gallery.

### **Physical Education (PE)**

*Only one lesson was seen in PE and, as a result, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision.*

68. There is very good planning for what pupils will learn and detailed assessment procedures. In the lesson observed, pupils clearly enjoyed what they were doing and worked hard to design and perform a sequence of moves, using a variety of apparatus. There is good team work and pupils work well together. They are able to constructively criticise each other, and listen to different ideas of how their performances could be improved. The school has very good links with a variety of organisations which provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and skills in areas such as football, cricket and dance.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHE)**

The provision for personal, social, and health education and citizenship is **excellent**.

- Pupils and students make excellent progress because the school places so much importance on promoting their skills.
- The very good relationships and careful planning enables pupils and students to develop their confidence extremely well.
- Excellent leadership has ensured that the curriculum is very broad, addressing a wide range of individual pupil needs.

### **Commentary**

69. The provision for pupils' and students' personal, social and health education and citizenship is a strength of the school. Through their participation in PSHE and Citizenship lessons, and the many other curricular and pastoral opportunities, pupils make exceptional progress. By the time they reach Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of people's feelings, discussing issues such as developing positive attitudes to others. Students in Post 16 show a very good understanding of the world around them, discussing, for example, the plight of refugees and what will happen in the forthcoming elections.

70. Tutor time is used exceptionally well to support work in lessons, encouraging pupils to be aware of recent events and also to encourage them to think about how they treat others. For example, after an incident during the day, a tutor used the afternoon registration to have circle time to try

to resolve a problem amongst the girls. The very effective communication skills of the teacher and very good interventions of support staff enabled the girls to think about what they had done and went some way to resolving the situation.

71. Teaching and learning are excellent. Careful lesson planning ensures a good use of topics, which were relevant and interesting to the pupils and students, such as the general election, and being able to explain a medicine label. Planning is well linked to pupils' and students' individual targets and the excellent level of communication of staff ensures that pupils and students develop their vocabulary extremely well. The very good relationships between adults and pupils enable them to stay focused on their work throughout lessons. Pupils and students know their ideas and suggestions will be valued by staff and their peers and, as a result, they are keen to participate in discussions. Teachers ensure that lessons are interesting and stimulating and role play is used well to help them work out effective ways of dealing with challenging situations.
72. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The curriculum has been developed very well and has clear objectives outlined for the most and least able groups of pupils and students. The planning for citizenship covers a good range of topics, including gender issues, racism and discrimination, crime, and the protection of animals. Emotional development has recently been introduced, having been identified as a need for many of the pupils starting at the school. Assemblies, pastoral sessions, registration, Deaf Studies and displays are all used to extend pupils' opportunities for learning in this subject. This contributes very effectively to a whole school approach that places a very high value on personal, social and emotional development. PSHE was not reported on in the last inspection report so it is not possible to judge improvements since then.

### **Deaf studies**

73. This course is specifically designed to enable pupils to develop an understanding of deaf culture and improve their communication skills. All pupils have lessons in this subject and they gain an understanding of the history of the deaf and learn about famous deaf people. The focus of the lessons is to improve pupils' skills in signing in BSL and many achieve Stage 2 in CACDP. The curriculum also ensures that pupils have an understanding of the technology that can support them and they are well prepared for life out of school by learning about the different organisations which can help them. A variety of life skills from finding out about bus passes to how to cope in a work situation all support pupils well. The subject is managed well and a lot of hard work has gone into establishing a curriculum for deaf studies which, it is hoped, will gain national accreditation.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>1</b>
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>1</b>

The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

\* In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.