

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

101 Nightingale Lane, Balham, London SW12 8NA

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Inspection dates:

23 and 24 April 2025

## **Outcome**

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils delight in coming to this welcoming and inclusive school. They are happy, safe and very well cared for. Staff get to know each pupil really well. They quickly find out about pupils' interests and work together to establish the best ways to meet each pupil's needs. From the moment they join, pupils are valued as individuals and their voices are heard. They describe Oak Lodge as a place where everyone can be themselves.

All around the school, pupils are immersed in high-quality opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. They see staff as great role models for British Sign Language and English. The school not only builds pupils' knowledge in these languages, but it also strengthens their confidence too. Pupils rise to the school's high expectations. They achieve well academically and in their wider development. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, including the move on to college or work when the time comes.

Pupils work hard and behave well. They show kindness and respect, and they forge good friendships. The positive relationships that exist throughout the school contribute enormously to the school's friendly atmosphere. The deaf studies curriculum is just one of the many ways that the school helps pupils to learn about themselves and others, including important concepts such as identity.

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

Most pupils are deaf or have speech, language and communication needs. Since the previous inspection, the range and complexity of pupils' needs throughout the school has widened significantly. In response to this, the school has made changes to its curriculum. Some of this work is new. In a few subjects, the order in which subject content should be

taught as pupils move through each of the learning pathways is not clearly defined. Where this is the case, it sometimes makes it difficult for staff to know when specific subject knowledge and skills need to be taught.

Pupils benefit from the skills and expertise of well-trained teachers, support staff and therapists. Staff work together effectively to identify pupils' needs. They make sure that everyone is clear about pupils' targets and how to help them to achieve these. Pupils achieve well, particularly in their communication and language development and mathematics. They get the help they need to obtain a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditations. Pupils' annual review meetings are a great example of how everyone works together to celebrate pupils' achievements. For instance, staff and pupils prepare presentations for parents and carers. These include video clips and photographs celebrating pupils' successes across the curriculum and in other areas, such as work placements. This helps to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils enjoy reading. They build up their reading knowledge well and use a wide variety of age-appropriate texts which are well matched to their abilities. The reading programme, including in the sixth form, helps pupils to make connections between English and British Sign Language. Staff help pupils to understand and sign more tricky language concepts, such as the difference between 'cannot' and 'could not'. Pupils who need more help to catch up get the support that they need.

Pupils enjoy getting out and about. This makes learning meaningful. For example, pupils visit tube stations to look at timetables and maps. Older pupils use apps to work out the food miles different fruits and vegetables have travelled before getting to the supermarket shelves. Much of what pupils do is video recorded. This helps pupils to recap and embed what they have learned previously.

Preparing pupils for their future lives is a key thread which runs through everything else that happens. Pupils experience visits from a range of services, such as the police. They visit colleges and take part in well-considered opportunities to experience the world of work, particularly in the sixth form. The school makes sure that pupils see and learn from positive role models, including deaf people in different fields of work. This helps pupils to think about their future careers and aspire to do new things.

The 'colours of emotion' are well established and help pupils to talk about their feelings and emotions. Pupils enjoy visiting Snowy, the school's rabbit, when they need time to calm down or get back on track. The school works effectively with families to improve pupils' attendance if it becomes a concern.

Opportunities to develop pupils' leadership and teamwork skills are plentiful. Everyone gets involved in making products for the school fair and raising funds for the prom. Sixth-form students have set up their own business. They sell their items at markets and online. These include QR code cards designed to help people to learn sign language.

Governors and leaders at all levels have worked effectively to continually develop the school's work. Staff feel valued and well supported.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Recent changes to the curriculum are in various stages of implementation. In a few subjects, the school has not clearly defined what subject knowledge should be taught and when on each of the revised pathways. This makes it difficult for staff to know how pupils' subject knowledge should build up over time. Where this is the case, the school should ensure that staff have clarity about the key knowledge that needs to be taught and when in each of the revised pathways.

## **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 good 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101094
<b>Local authority</b>	Wandsworth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379088
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	92
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	30
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jane Biddulph (co-chair of governors) Anthony Langan (co-chair of governors)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Caroline Rowlandson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk">www.oaklodge.wandsworth.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Oak Lodge School caters for pupils who are deaf and pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Some pupils have additional needs, including autism.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- 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.

## 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and assistant headteacher. They also met with leaders responsible for sixth-form provision and safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors heard pupils read and watched them sign.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Tarrant

Ofsted Inspector

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