



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR OAKTREE SCHOOL

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| Name of School: | Oaktree School |
| Headteacher/Principal: | Russell Davey |
| Hub: | London Special and AP Hub |
| School phase: | Special Academy Key Stages 2 to 5 |
| MAT (if applicable): | N/A |

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| Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review: | Leading |
| Date of this Review: | 26/02/24 |
| Overall Estimate at last QA Review | Effective |
| Date of last QA Review | 09/02/2022 |
| Grade at last Ofsted inspection: | Good |
| Date of last Ofsted inspection: | 03/07/2023 |



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Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all levels Leading

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

**Quality of provision and
outcomes for disadvantaged
pupils and pupils with additional
needs**

Area of excellence Accredited

**Previously accredited valid areas
of excellence** N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades.
The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is
developmental not judgmental.***

1. Context and character of the school

Oaktree is a special school for students with complex needs aged from 7 to 19 years including learning disabilities and autism. All the students have education, health and care plans (EHCPs). The student admission number is 95 but there are currently 136 students on roll. The school is formally expanding in September 2024.

Students are from a wide range of ethnic heritages. The proportion who are White British is smaller than the national average. All the students are disadvantaged due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The proportion of students with additional disadvantage is well above the national average.

Students are organised into three different 'journeys' across the school on the basis of ability and need. Those in Journey 3 have moderate learning disabilities whilst those in Journey 1 have the most profound needs. Classes within these journeys are carefully comprised of students from Key Stages 2 to 3 and Key Stages 4 to 5. Students in older classes follow one of nine different 'pathways' to adulthood and employment.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- This is an innovative, caring, respectful and dynamic school where students and staff thrive. Leaders' vision, to enable all to grow and contribute, is embedded within the highly positive climate for learning. The incoming headteacher put this vision for students into words saying, 'We want our students to grow and grow and grow, one day they might even outgrow us'.
- This vision extends beyond the school to enhance the learning of even more students. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other schools. In the first half of this school year, leaders were part of 62 outreach meetings. They have also been instrumental in helping the local authority develop its autism strategy and supporting five local primary schools to create units for pupils with significant SEND.
- Leadership is increasingly and intentionally delegated. Subject leaders have ownership and responsibility for their remits, enabling development and new initiatives. The leader for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has researched and introduced a new scheme of work and assessment process for this subject, which is helping both teaching staff and students.

- A team of staff meets weekly to consider students' behaviour and wellbeing. Specialists, including psychotherapists, music therapists and those trained in THRIVE and emotional literacy, plan bespoke programmes for those who need support. Together with teaching staff, these specialists provide an excellent network for students' development and wellbeing. Behaviour is excellent, physical restraint is rare and students who spent little time in their class in previous schools are settled and learning at Oaktree.
- Leaders and staff relay many instances of how, due to highly effective provision, students' confidence, self-esteem and friendships are transformed at the school. Teachers report that several students are noticeably more mature and are eager to take opportunities and responsibilities, enabling them to participate more fully in modern Britain. These include being part of school voice (school council) and the local youth council.
- A key priority for leaders is preparing all students for adulthood including progression to further education, employability, independence and social interaction. Gatsby benchmarks are embedded throughout all provision. The broad and relevant curriculum, which has been developed thoughtfully and carefully, helps all students to progress and develop well. In 2023 all of the 12 Journey 2 and 3 students who left Year 14, successfully completed their school studies and moved onto college, including courses leading into work.
- The practical, engaging and enriched curriculum also promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and presents pursuits for later life and learning. Students on Journey 3 relaxed and prepared for learning as they engaged in a range of physical sports and activities at the beginning of the day.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

... leaders continued to develop and refine assessment systems and practices so that data clearly shows students' good progress and guides teachers to where they can improve provision even further.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Within the school's very positive, enabling environment, students make palpable strides in learning and development. Older students help in the school grounds and confidently welcome visitors, taking requests for food and drinks, making these in the school café and competently serving them with flourish and pride.

- The curriculum throughout the school is coherent, ambitious and accessible. The journeys and pathways provide exceptionally well for students' diverse abilities and needs. The bespoke needs of students on Journey 1 were met in a phonics lesson because teaching was tailored to their individual needs, including signing. A recent initiative on learning through structured play at break times has been beneficial for students on each of the three journeys.
- Skills of reading and phonics are promoted daily throughout the school and many students become fluent lovers of literature. Older students on Journeys 2 and 3 have opportunities to read newspapers each day, showing interest in current affairs and their horoscopes.
- Weekly professional training helps teachers and teaching assistants develop their subject knowledge and pedagogy. This contributes positively to students' progress. Both teacher and teaching assistant demonstrated good subject knowledge in a Key Stage 2 and 3 English lesson on conjunctions in which students identified and discussed the sentence, 'The wolves' heads are tucked behind their hind legs whenever a blizzard comes'.
- The pathways provide particularly positive ways for older students to recall, apply and extend what they have learned previously. Students showed understanding and initiative when they asked if they could use a laptop to supplement the overhead screen to record orders for drinks in the café.
- Students engage and excel in a wide range of subjects which are taught well. A range of high-quality artwork is displayed around the school.
- Students' voice and actions are highly valued and contribute significantly within the school. Those on a horticulture pathway grew kale in the school's polytunnels, and those on the hospitality pathway made this into nutritious soup which was then sold in the school's café.
- Students take a proactive and positive role in caring for the school's ample good quality resources. Students from Journey 1 followed a 'now and next' chart to carefully recharge and replace laptops in their trolley.
- Each student's development and wellbeing are central to every consideration. Students join or leave the school any time between Key Stage 3 and 5. As a senior leader said, 'Up to the end of Key Stage 5 students can stay as long as they want and will leave and move on when they are ready'.
- Relationships shine throughout the school. Levels of expectation and trust are aspirational but, with the school's concerted provision, manageable. Students and staff go beyond their comfort zones and risk making mistakes within this safe, supportive environment. Each person is valued and given respect and equality. A small group of students took care and pride as they diligently photocopied some resources for staff.

- Students enjoy school and most are keen to come. As one student on Journey 2 said, 'The teachers are kind and always help us if we need it'. Attendance is above the national average for special schools.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

... learning experiences were refined even further so that all students had additional opportunities to develop greater independence and increased progress throughout the day in and out of the classroom.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- Students who are disadvantaged beyond their SEND, by factors including school history, background, attendance or poor mental health, are at the core of all the school provides and does. These students are integrated, settled, engaged and, where necessary, supported well. For example, students who have had poor attendance and behaviour chatted happily and peacefully to staff in the busy dining hall.
- The THRIVE programme is particularly beneficial in identifying and addressing gaps in students' emotional and social development. This work has had significant impact on disadvantaged student's self-regulation, learning, relationships and mental health.
- The practical, accessible and engaging curriculum is highly suitable for disadvantaged pupils. Students engage in diverse, activities which have purpose and meaning. Disadvantaged students independently, responsibly and competently collected the correct papers from the printer and brought them back promptly for a leader.
- Although disadvantaged students have historically made less recordable, academic progress than other students, support has helped address these issues and the gap between the achievement of these students and others is narrowing.
- Disadvantaged students are highly appreciative of how much the school has helped them. They have gained understanding, skill and improved self-esteem which stands them in good stead now and in the future.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

... staff and students, particularly those on Journey 1, used total communication even more frequently throughout the day in and out of the classroom.

5. Area of Excellence

The breadth and impact of 'Pathways'.

Accredited

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

The school's work on Pathways is set within the context of leaders' vision and the priority to prepare all students for adulthood. This work is rooted in research, strengthened by very strong partnerships and at the forefront of all that the school does. This has a significant impact on students, their families and others in the local community. Students' learning, motivation, attendance and independence have all improved. Attitudes and knowledge of those in partnership organisations have improved and families are thrilled with what they see the students doing.

Leaders' developments and expansion of 'pathways' in Key Stages 4 and 5 stemmed from their observation that most of the Journey 2 and 3 students moved on to courses at specialist further education college. They believed that most were ready to study with peers outside the 'specialist' world and undertake vocational courses towards employment.

The work on expanding pathways and enabling students to move beyond the traditional courses developed alongside other observations and initiatives within the school. These included the introduction of Read, Write, Inc (RWI) to further promote literacy and THRIVE to address some of the barriers to students' emotional and social development.

These pathways encapsulate the school's overarching commitment to, and provision for, preparing students for adulthood. They include aspirations for students' involvement in wider society and their employment. They focus on removing barriers, promoting progress and providing accredited opportunities for learning which meaningfully contribute to the school community. This is true for all students

including those who are further disadvantaged by background, challenging mental health and poor attendance.

The school values the input of external consultants and frequently involves them in continuous professional development (CPD) and evaluating the school's effectiveness. For example, drawing on the expertise of consultants from RWI, White Rose and PSHE associates. This has helped staff development and guided initiatives. Leaders also learn from other schools, implementing and developing what they have seen on visits. For example, leaders were inspired with how another school was using THRIVE, so facilitated training for colleagues and rooted this within a newly created behaviour and well-being team which meets weekly. This work underpins the mitigation of barriers for many students.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

The provision, attitudes and relationships which underpin the breadth and impact of the pathways have had positive impact on the behaviour, attendance, learning and development of students at the school. Students are confident, polite, articulate learners who contribute hugely to the school community. They help tend the school grounds, grow vegetables which others cook and serve in the school café. They conduct administrative tasks for school staff such as printing and photocopying and in 2023, took the annual photographs for everyone at the school.

Attendance is above the national average for special schools and there are case studies showing significant increases for students who have had particularly high absence rates.

Students are engaging in the local community by contributing and changing the mind-sets of colleagues. For example, some are learning to play and coach tennis at a local club and others are helping groom dogs at a local business. All of the 12 students who left Journeys 2 or 3 at the end of Year 14 in 2023 went on to vocational courses at mainstream college. Some students are now entering careers including plumbing and support roles in local schools.

5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

Kyri Nicholas

Assistant Head Teacher

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Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

For further support following your QA Review, schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)