QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR OAKLEY SCHOOL

Name of School:	Oakley School
Headteacher/Principal:	Sam Perryman
Hub:	London Special/AP Hub
School phase:	Special
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	05/11/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review:	12/02/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	The school remains Good - Evidence gathered during the inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection.
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	22/10/2024

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Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agrees 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/or pupils with additional needs	Leading
Area of excellence	N/A
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	N/A
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Leading

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.

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

- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

  Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.

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1. Context and character of the school

Oakley School is in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. It caters for 223 pupils with profound, severe and/or complex needs (PSCN) aged four to 19 years. The school is located over two sites with Phases 1, 2 and 3 in Tunbridge Wells and Phase 4, Key Stage 4 and 5, approximately seven miles away, in Tonbridge.

All pupils attending Oakley have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) capturing their Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Nearly half of the pupils are disadvantaged, well above the national average. The school has an Early Years Outreach Service for pre-school aged children across the district.

Oakley School is a lead partner within Kent Special Educational Needs Trust, a cooperative trust of local special schools; collaborates with West Kent Independent State School Partnership and shares highly effective practice, at all levels, within its local Early Years Special School Partnership comprising three special schools.

The school is structured across three Learning Pathways – Engage, Explore and Discover and four Phases. Pupils are grouped according to their learning needs, not solely by age.

Leaders are ambitious for all their pupils. Pupils are 'at the heart of all decision making' and the Oakley ethos: 'Work Hard, Be Kind, Have Fun, Stay Safe' ensures pupils thrive, achieve and are ready for their next stage, learning 'skills for life and independence'.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders set the tone for the day through their warm welcome, interpersonal relationships, vigilance and care, resulting in pupils wanting to come and learn at Oakley.
- The leadership team have well-defined leadership roles that match their individual strengths and expertise. Leaders are committed to collaborating with wider stakeholders, taking every opportunity to do so. Oakley has developed a culture of 'growing our own'. Staff welcome the opportunities to take on roles across the school successfully; additionally Oakley has success employing alumni pupils.
- Leaders have developed their bespoke Oakley Curriculum, the Oakley Learning Journey (OLJ) from the Early Years and 'Preparing for Adulthood' (PfA) frameworks. The OLJ is both a curriculum and a framework for assessment.

- Staff use the OLJ to accurately capture a picture of pupil strengths and to set targets. The curriculum content is delivered through a thematic approach which engages pupils in all Phases and Pathways.
- Leaders continually refine OLJ to include latest research, local and national agendas and changes in technology. Leaders have mapped opportunities within their 'Futures & Destinations' right from the start of transition into Phase 1, into a one-page infographic. This will be shared with families and stakeholders ensuring a greater understanding of Oakley 'skills for life and independence'. Leaders are exploring mapping AQA Unit Awards precisely to the OLJ. They are collaborating with the research department at the University of East Anglia to critically review their rationale.
- Leaders have prioritised the teaching of early reading skills and 'love of reading'. Leaders have a carefully considered personalised approach compiling pre-phonics, Rocket phonics and post-phonic programmes. They have recently introduced a robust 'pre-phonics' assessment framework following: 'Hear it; See it; Say it; Show it'. Leaders are developing a significant partnership with the National Theatre.
- Leaders respond proactively to the changing climate and complexity of need within the school. They use this information carefully to plan their continuing professional development (CPD) programme. The programme aligns with priority improvements, allowing fluidity to meet a current training need, for example, piloting a Gestalt approach and neuro affirming practices. Timely, routine and regular bite-size training ensures that all staff have a current and secure understanding of curriculum and pedagogy expectations, such as, a refresher revisiting the 'arousal curve'. As a result, the Oakley approach to wellbeing, engagement and behaviour is embedded throughout the school.
- Staff well-being is an absolute priority and emphasised within the staff recruitment process. Leaders have carefully built into the school day opportunities for staff to collaborate within planning and explicit time for CPD. Leaders have developed 'The Hub' digitally, where staff have access to up-to-date resources and signposts to external support. As a result of the Oakley well-being foci, staff feel valued and staff attendance, retention and career progression are strong.
- The school council take their roles seriously and wear their lanyards with pride. They interview new staff saying, 'We know who to appoint as we get good vibes'. 'We make sure everyone is looked after and OK.' Last week the school council had a joint council meeting in the Town Hall about local accessibility issues.

- Attendance is currently 92%. Leaders' robust analysis of attendance information through a multi-disciplinary approach ensures pupils and their families have the support/challenge to further improve being at school.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… leaders shared their awesome practice, potentially submitting an Area of Excellence at their next QAR.

… leaders explored codifying the Oakley Way: redefining the core universal offer and pedagogy toolbox, including expectations of the learning environment.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Staff have a strong knowledge of their pupils, skilfully use their Total Communication approaches. The seamless communication between the class team ensures effective transitions and high well-being for all. As a result, all pupils are supported with their regulation, some demonstrating patience.
- All staff members possess a clear understanding of the sequential steps outlined within the OLJ. They are highly skilled in proactively facilitating learning experiences that address and fill any identified gaps in pupils' learning. This ensures that each pupil receives tailored support aligned with their individual needs. For example, pupils have access to appropriate and well positioned sensory resources to self-regulate. Play based learning around community safety, firework night, enabled pupils to build the skills necessary for adulthood in a meaningful way. Within the 'Discover' Pathway, the careful use of open/closed questioning alongside sentence starters enabled all pupils to engage at their level, learning about personal hygiene.
- Leaders and staff speak with animation about literacy at Oakley. Staff are confident working within the Oakley personalised early reading programme. Cosy book corners and daily story time ensure pupils are introduced to high quality diverse texts, closely matched to the OLJ thematic approach. Staff ensure that personalised communication aids have the signs/symbols and experiential objects to ensure pupils can engage and enjoy the texts. Phase 1 loved seeing Julia Donaldson's 'The Baddies' at the local theatre. Phase 4 enjoyed their visit to The Globe embracing Macbeth. Pupils talked about the help they get to read and the stories that they like. One said, 'I have got more confident reading.'

- 'Every Moment <u>really</u> Matters' at Oakley. Leaders and teachers have recently embraced the '**Sh**ared Attention; **R**espond; **E**xpand; **C**onversation' (ShREC) research/approach to supporting high-quality interactions. As a result, teachers maximise learning throughout the day within their interactions. In Phase 4 the understanding of the story of King Arthur enabled pupils to explore the skills of kind, brave and responsible. One pupil commented 'I was brave at swimming, I don't like it, but I will still get in. That will inspire S.'
- Leaders and teachers regularly organise pupil progress meetings in partnership with families. During these meetings, new steps, strategies, and resources are co-created. This collaborative approach ensures that families are actively involved in shaping the support provided for their children.
- Targets for pupils are set once strong relationships have been established. This approach ensures that targets are meaningful and personalised, reflecting a deep understanding of each pupil's unique strengths and areas for development.
- Phase 4 pupils' curriculum includes creating their own podcasts. Pupils choose roles that play to their strengths and interests, for example as an introducer or an editor. As a result, pupils develop their identity, self-esteem, confidence and oracy skills. The podcast topics are chosen by pupils giving them a voice within their community.
- Leaders are extremely proud of their carefully mapped out and sequenced 'wider curriculum'. Older pupils, families and staff recently enjoyed a Hallowe'en club night within the community. One pupil shared that 'the night club was banging.' Phase 1 access 'day trips'; Year 6 enjoy a local single night residential; Year 9 are offered a longer residential; and Year 11/Key Stage 5 are excited to visit France, sail around the Isle of Wight and/or go skiing. Staff pre-teach the skills and small steps to manage these activities. Many pupils achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award and are animated talking about their annual 'Oakley's Got Talent'.
- Pupils contribute, through technology, towards their EHCP Section A with visuals, ensuring they have a voice within their plan. Older pupils have a clear idea about and ownership of their future destinations, including working in a school, working in the mint archive and working as a pub singer.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… teachers continued to empower support staff to extend learning and explicitly facilitate personal targets.

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

- Staff understand child development: consequently, warm, trusting relationships are visible at all levels and a principal element of life at Oakley. Early communication at the start of a pupil's journey with Oakley is fundamental in establishing the home/school partnership. Oakley staff go above and beyond to 'get it right'. Staff are attuned to every pupil, validating emotions. For example, in Phase 2, staff are playful in modelling counting incorrectly, then slowly and precisely with one-to-one correspondence. Staff feedback captured, 'We see a child's behaviour signalling that they need something more from us; we see beyond the behaviour'.
- Therapeutic approaches are embedded throughout the OLJ. Staff offer flexible and agile support and respond quickly to pupils' needs. By prioritising emotional and sensory regulation, pupils are better prepared for academic learning and personal development.
- The Oakley therapy team is a combination of fully qualified therapists and therapy assistants who are supported by NHS practitioners. Additionally, Oakley's own Thrive practitioners, play based therapists and a music therapist form part of the multi-disciplinary team.
- Thrive small group work and one-to-one sessions are complemented by a universal offer supporting 'self-regulation'. Leaders' quality assurance schedule ensures that Thrive activities are matched to pupils' SEND/emotional wellbeing and adapted appropriately. In Phase 2, pupils have been encouraged through play-based learning to create their own story and share this with their peers, resulting in improving their ability to work together.
- Staff understanding of interoception has had a positive impact on planning precise resources, environments and activities. Staff use explicit language and modelling to help pupils identify and label signals within their bodies. As a result of this explicit interoception work, older pupils feel more comfortable, for example, with the feelings they experience when washing up, thus preparing them for more independent living.
- Oakley's invitational approach, for example, in a 'Fun with Food' session in Phase 1, ensured pupils could engage with confidence and push beyond their comfort zone. Staff skilfully adapted the session, taking learning to individual pupils.

- Learning within Forest School demonstrated exemplary child-led play. Staff facilitated and responded to pupils' imagination and interests. Consequently, pupils communicated, collaborated and were able to play independently. Activities within Forest School exemplify the Oakley 'Work Hard; Have Fun; Be Kind; Stay Safe' values. Staff and pupils have fun, take risks and are respectful of each other.
- Staff respond to pupils' dysregulation using trauma-informed approaches, resulting in regulated pupils. For example, in Phase 3, a pupil asked for the calm corner during an impromptu mindfulness session. Staff offered the youngest pupils flexibility and time transitioning from the playground after lunch.

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

… none

5. Area of Excellence

None submitted.

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 content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

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 partnership of schools. The School Support Directory 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).