QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR
Oakley

Name of School:	Oakley School
Executive Headteacher: **Head of School:**	Gordon Tillman Sam Perryman
Hub:	London Special and AP
School phase:	Special

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	LEADING
Date of this Review:	28/10/2019
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	OUTSTANDING
Date of last QA Review:	21/01/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	03/04/2019

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of 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

Therapy at Oakley

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate	Leading

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed peer evaluation estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Context and character of the school

Oakley is the district co-educational, special school for day pupils in Tunbridge Wells. Pupils attending the school are aged from two to 18 years. All pupils have a profound, severe and/or complex need, with associated communication and learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), except those in the nursery (observation and assessment). The nursery provision is in its second year.

About one-third of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. The nature of pupils' needs is ever-changing. Typically, pupils with more complex needs are being admitted. The building is not conducive to the teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Leaders are working with the local authority to develop an environment that will enable pupils with PMLD to stay at the school for their full educational provision.

There are four phases:
Phase 1 has 48 pupils taught in six classes, with ten pupils at a satellite provision (located in a primary school) and 12 in the nursery.
Phase 2 has 60 pupils taught in six classes.
Phase 3 has 57 pupils taught in six classes.
Phase 4 has 41 pupils taught in four classes and is located on a separate site in Tonbridge.

Oakley's mission statement is 'children and young people at the heart of all we do'. The vision is 'to give all our children and young people opportunities to engage, explore, discover and develop their independence – to become confident, resilient, happy and well prepared for a positive and meaningful future'. Oakley is the only special school in the country to achieve the gold level for the 'National SMSC' quality mark. It is also a centre of excellence for speech, language and communication.

Last year, a college provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19-25 opened and is currently co-located within the Oakley's sixth form setting.

2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Leaders are outward facing. They seek out effective practice and are willing to work with others to develop pedagogy. This is illustrated through the school's engagement with Kent Special Educational Needs Trust, as one example. Individual leaders understand the importance of their own professional development. For example, a middle leader has recently completed a Master's degree in autism. The impact of this has influenced the school's work in developing pupil voice in EHCP reviews.

- The Oakley 'creative curriculum' is based on the national curriculum. This is complemented by the wider curriculum. Here, cohesive thinking is evident – for example, using residential visits to help pupils acquire independence and skills for life. There is clear justification for the curriculum offer to meet each pupil's unique needs.
- Phase leaders are more empowered and effective than ever before. Together with senior leaders, they make up the extended leadership team. Through this they have a secure understanding of rationale – for both the curriculum offer and for placing pupils on different pathways. They are able to talk about how training, mentoring and collaboration help teachers teach a range of different subjects.
- Curriculum teams are in place. They are currently clarifying in specific detail what effective progress (in respect of outcomes) looks like in each subject. They are exploring how best to do this. In phase 4, for example, qualification requirements and destinations (meaningful futures) are identified. Leaders then consider what needs to be taught when to enable pupils to reach these ambitious end points.
- Fundamental to Oakley's work is pupils' development in terms of using skills for life to function independently. 'Names not numbers' is key here, with leaders embracing the bespoke nature of provision for each pupil. Ambition is evident. Leaders are working towards being able to capture this better in their tracking systems. They are trialling a 'Progress SEN' model. This is a typical illustration of how leaders continually reflect on their practice to seek ways to improve.
- Governors are active and reflective. They align themselves with different phases and engage with relevant discussions. They pursue specific lines of enquiry when they visit the school. A recent example was to look at how well pupils have sustained their destinations. Governors recognise how curriculum development needs to be on the same track as destinations work. Governance holds leaders to account well for school performance.
- Leaders want to continue to improve consistency of teaching. This is about consistency in rationale for provision, rather than specific aspects in lessons. So, to this end, expectations have been clarified for all staff from the start of this academic year. For example, there is an expectation that therapy advice will be consistently seen in day to day learning. However, it may look very different for pupils on each pathway, or indeed within a pathway.

2.2 Leadership at all Levels - Even better if…

…leaders considered how to ensure that all documentation placed the pupil at the centre, thus mirroring the work carried out at Oakley.
…leaders continued to embed what it is that pupils need to know and do by the end of units of work/phases for changing cohorts through the creative curriculum.
…leaders reflected on their SEF (process and written product) by defining its purpose.

3.1 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - What went well

- There is a coherent teaching team. It is made up of teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) and is well supported by the therapy team. Leaders budget strategically, enabling TAs to have weekly training. A recent focus has centred on 'attention autism' or 'attention Oakley' as this training is having a positive impact on all pupils at the school.
- There is a clear rationale for zones of regulation provision. The strapline of 'if you can't reach them you can't teach them' underpins this. In all classes visited, there was evidence of pupils using techniques to self-regulate. Teaching staff understand the rationale. This is as a result of focused training activities, including therapy, delivered at the start of daily briefings.
- Staff understand the importance of parental engagement. They ensure that they listen to parents' views and build this into daily activities. Furthermore, staff maintain strong links with a range of other agencies, such as work placements. This work ensures that Oakley is well respected in the locality.
- Staff ensure that EHCP review processes are effective. Pupils, parents and staff benefit from the dialogue. Teachers ensure that pupils' voices are captured and used to influence the wording of the plan that ensues. This is a successful example to illustrate how the school's work is ensuring that learning is personalised for each pupil.
- Pupils were very happy to talk with reviewers. They recognise the range of awards they have achieved. They talk about authors. As a result of some authors visiting the school, some pupils now aspire to be authors themselves. Pupils value the wider curriculum, for example talking enthusiastically about their experiences on residential visits and in forest school learning. They proudly take on leadership roles, such as being members of the eco council.
- Teachers tailor activities skilfully. They have a secure knowledge of the needs of each pupil in their class. This tailoring is often subtle, with a well-phrased question or use of a visual aid being appropriate. Effective communication between staff teams in classrooms means that pupils enjoy seamless provision. As a result, each pupil receives work that challenges them effectively.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are supported effectively in developing life skills and independence. Clear links are evident between activities which promote these skills and each pupil's EHCP targets. Real life, purposeful learning was seen in many learning explorations. For example, pupils used coins to purchase their classroom snacks whilst others rehearsed similar skills in the local community. Pupils make strong progress in these skills. This aligns well with the clear moral purpose set out by leaders.
- All staff know what to do when there is a need to de-escalate. Pupils benefit from zones of regulation and associated provision. Pupils self-regulate well, most notably seen in their movement breaks. Pupils are well prepared for their learning and subsequently sustain concentration well.

- Trusting relationships underpin the work at Oakley. Staff are prepared to plan and deliver risky activities safely, knowing that they can trust pupils to engage appropriately. So, when pumpkins exploded, pupils benefited from the awe and wonder of the experiment! There is a tangible sense of fun in learning – Oakley is a happy and safe place to learn and play.

3.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - Even better if…

…teachers benefited by seeing what consistency looks like in different classes (through leaders continuing to facilitate the sharing of best practice across phases).
…teachers and TAs continued to ask probing questions, thinking critically about what resources they need to provide to support pupils when answering.
…in all lessons, pupils were encouraged to think and act for themselves with staff facilitating the learning.

4.1 Therapy at Oakley - What went well

- Four years ago, therapy was viewed in a very different light from today. Staff relied on therapists to deliver provision for pupils. Therapy was a 'bolt on' as opposed to integrated in the day to day work of the school. The change in approach occurred when the school invested in its own therapy team. Since that time, better training has meant that staff have the tools to develop their practice. Leaders are delighted to see staff and the therapy team working together collaboratively to develop teaching practice.
- Therapy is now integrated into the curriculum. The provision features in the school improvement plan. It is less evident in the SEF. The key question asked is 'how can therapy be used to upskill staff to teach better to enable pupils to reach the best possible outcomes'?
- The school employs occupational and speech and language therapists. These colleagues influence and enrich the work of the whole staff team. As they are contracted and committed to this school, they attend staff and other meetings. They follow up initiatives by working with staff in different phases, checking out if desired practice is evident and what it looks like in different pathways.
- The speech, language and communication centre of excellence continually evolves. Oakley is the lead host school for the occupational therapy 'The Balanced System' for schools. The OT and therapy team leader is a member of the extended leadership team. This helps other leaders, and subsequently staff, understand the correlation between therapy and the quality of education offered.

4.2 Therapy at Oakley - Even better if…

…leaders reflected on the wording in the SEF to ensure that therapy provision is captured and reflected upon.

5. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Leaders are keen to continue their work with the hub to explore review opportunities for members of the extended leadership team.
Governors are interested in finding out more about how they can work with Challenge Partners to inform their ongoing development.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.