National SMSC Quality Mark Verification Report

Name of School: Oakley School
Headteacher: Sam Perryman
Assistant Head & SMSC Lead: Mary Newell

Verification visit: 17.11.22

Dear Sam,

I am delighted to inform you that as a result of the recent verification visit, Oakley School has been awarded **Gold** level of the National SMSC Quality Mark for the second time, and this has been confirmed by the Quality Assurance Panel.

I am delighted that I was able to come back into Oakley and complete another verification visit. Having visited in October 2018, when your SMSC provision was so evident, it felt that this time it was so embedded; Oakley lives and breathes SMSC for each and every pupil's personality and need.

Please pass on my special thanks to my tour guides; Toby, Jacob and later Grace, who decided to join us on our walk around. They each brought their own personalities to the tour and showed off their Oakley school. I remember the wonderful displays from my last visit and again I saw how Oakley continues to voice SMSC and celebrate each pupil's work in a vibrant learning environment. It was also nice to see the Golden Moments display congratulating individual staff on their efforts or achievement; everyone is celebrated. Toby was very excited to show me the forest school area, which is such an amazing asset, alongside the well-kept gardening and vegetable beds. He explained how he and other older pupils are making a wooden house for the younger children. Perhaps the highlight of the tour was when Jacob offered, out of the blue, to play the drums whilst another class were practising Christmas songs, bringing a smile to everyone's face.

I would also like to offer particular thanks to the boardroom table full of pupils who spoke to me. As we sat around that huge table, I watched as they not only listened to each other, but also supported one another and gave each other confidence when anyone felt a little shy or overwhelmed. The conversation flowed wonderfully, and the time flew by. It was especially lovely to hear from Aaron when he told me about the soap box racing against mainstream schools and his delight in Team Oakley coming in third. When asked to describe Oakley in one word the students replied; 'home, fun, best place to be, good, wonderful, powerful, welcoming, superhero, forest school'. We also chatted about where pupils would go if they needed some time in a quiet place and the responses were plentiful. I also felt a sense of calmness as different children explained where they would go if they were feeling 'dis-regulated'. The introduction of terms such as 'dis-regulation and de-escalation' and the 'calm room' appear to have really made a difference and are clearly filtering throughout the school community as parents also used these terms.

I would like to thank the Governors, Glenn (Chair of Governors) and Lizzie for taking the time to speak to me and share their views- from a longstanding member to a relative newly appointment governor. It is clear that the governing body has an effective relationship with pupils and actively seeks opportunities to gain pupils' views and respond accordingly. Pupils have contributed to governor meetings thus allowing them another opportunity to interact meaningfully with another audience and giving them the confidence to speak out. Pupils understand the importance of their voice. Lizzie commented on the work done to engage parents through the difficult times faced during the pandemic. She described how one of the positive outcomes is that through virtual platforms and the class dojo, parents are now more able and likely to reach out to school. Glenn described Oakley as a place of 'joy and fairness' and how Oakley always continues to move forwards. He said, 'Oakley doesn't shy away from things. The school is looking outward and leading the way.' I would very much agree with this.

I was lucky to be joined by four parents. Please thank Tina, Anne-Marie, Kate and Martin. They all spoke with such affection and showed how connected they feel to Oakley and their child's progress and learning. A lot of work has been done to strengthen the link between parents and school and this was commented on and witnessed by me. When given one word to describe the school, parents chose; Inclusive, appreciation, nurturing and caring and all gave wonderful examples of how Oakley really is all of these words. One parent said, 'Staff go above and beyond, and everyone knows the names of all the children.'

The whole team at Oakley deserves a great deal of credit for the hard work they do. Under your leadership Sam, children really are at the heart of Oakley. The pupils feel connected to you as a headteacher and your warmth and approachability really shone in the visit. I would finally like to thank and congratulate Mary Newell. Mary has taken SMSC from strength to strength. She has obvious passion and drive and is rightly proud of the achievements of the school. Mary has worked incredibly hard to fulfil the requirements of the self-review tool and to demonstrate how Oakley has not only remained gold, but found ways to make SMSC the foundation of all that is done. Mary is a very reflective and ambitious SMSC Lead and she is constantly looking for ways to improve further.

I thoroughly enjoyed the time spent at your lovely school and would like to offer my personal thank you for accommodating me and allowing me to feel like one of the Oakley family.

I congratulate Oakley School on the Gold standard of SMSC development that is afforded their pupils. Young Citizens will be in touch to discuss which aspects of your provision can be shared with other schools.

Strengths of the school's SMSC development:

Through your self-evaluation and our discussions it is evident that there are numerous SMSC related strengths at Oakley; the following are a few key examples:

- In my last report I set the continuation of working with parents as an area for development and this most certainly has happened. Parents are a voice of SMSC now too.
- The work being done as a school in relation to Thrive is fantastic. This programme is already enhancing your SMSC provision and I am sure the next steps will continue to enhance it even further.
- The de-escalation language and training has also been transformational to Oakley and an environment where calmness thrives has been created.

- The opportunities offered to Oakley pupils is abundant. From pupils' art work featuring in the Trinity Theatre art exhibition, which was promoted on BBC Radio Kent through to trips to France and Italy, which has seen a few students from the college phase, get their first ever passport.

- Students feel safe, supported and listened to at Oakley School. The school's inclusive ethos enables students to feel empowered and thrive both academically and personally.

- Parents and governors spoke about how well the school had managed the challenges of the pandemic and how all children were supported through this and through the transition back into normal school life.

Areas for development:

- Continue to look for opportunities for Oakley pupils to compete against mainstream schools, which is something that you are striving to do.

- Good luck with application for Thrive Ambassador Schools programme and the subsequent award.

- Continue to look for opportunities to enable the excellent practice at Oakley to be shared more widely for greater impact across different providers.

Verifier: Victoria Quijada Chair of Panel: Yvonne Richards

Please note that this award is recognised for 3 years and that re-verification should be sought by November 2025.