

Autism Accreditation Assessment

Oaklands School

Reference No.	457
Assessment dates	12 th February 2020 – 14 th February 2020
Lead Assessor	Nikki Kennedy
External Moderator	Lana Holmes
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	Yes

Section 1: Context

About the Provision

Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:

Oaklands is a purpose built site with pupils from 3-19. Since the last assessment, the school has moved to a new purpose built environment where the needs of autistic pupils have been considered in the design.

“Within the school there is a specific provision for those autistic pupils who benefit from a more specialised approach, including attention to sensory issues, a highly structured approach, and a focus on visual systems. The remaining students with autism who are able to cope with a less structured environment are placed within our complex needs class groups.

Within the Sixth Form provision, there are 2 specific groups for students with autism who need a smaller, tightly structured environment and appropriately modified curriculum. The majority of students in the autism-specific department are non-verbal and many can present with challenging behaviour.” (Assessment Introduction Form)

Number of autistic people supported by the provision:

64 pupils across both the primary and secondary provision with a higher proportion of pupils within the secondary provision.

Range of autistic people supported by the provision:

Pupils across the school are mainly non-verbal although some have limited language. Many of the pupils have learning difficulties within the moderate to severe range.

Outcome of last statutory assessment (Body; date, outcome):

Ofsted, July 2019, Outstanding

About the Assessment

The assessment took place over three days. The provisions adviser acted as assessor with support from a moderator.

The assessment team observed 19 sessions. These included both academic and vocational classroom sessions and physical activity sessions.

Discussions were held with staff members and multi-agency professionals.

Personal files were sampled across each key stage

The results of surveys carried out with the families of autistic people were also considered and can be found in the appendix to this report.

Section 2: Key Findings

What the provision does particularly well

What stood out as particular strengths:

Oaklands school are unique in that they have access to both a shop and café on site. Pupils work in the café and shop and they are designed and set up to facilitate them to be able to learn the skills necessary for working within that environment. The café is well used by both the parents and drivers and escorts within the school and is often seen to be busy.

Since the last assessment Oaklands school have moved to a new bespoke building. Effective use has been made of the environment, which enable learning and regulation.

Staff have received training on prompts dependence and hierarchy; this is evident and consistent across all classrooms. Staff deliver outstanding support for pupils which enables them to problem solve either through the use of questioning or by providing them with the necessary visuals to allow them to do things independently.

Oaklands school have a skills based approach to teaching with the aim that the pupils will have the skills necessary once they leave school/college to be as independent as possible in their lives. The impact that this has on pupils is exceptional as pupils from the sixth form were observed to be navigating their way through the school day and activities independently supported by systems that had been put in place by staff teams.

Outcomes for pupils are excellent; pupils are well prepared for life beyond Oaklands through the many skills and experiences that are provided for them.

Staff have consistently been seen to give pupils opportunities to problem solve often throwing questions back to the student to direct them rather than solving the problems for them. Where necessary this was supported by visual/gestural prompting to enable pupils to get to the answer they seek.

Oaklands school have provided many opportunities to autistic people to have successful employment. Autistic people are carrying out vital roles within the school, which also provide them with meaningful tasks that support the school community to run successfully.

The knowledge, skills and understanding of the pupils is exceptional. This came through in both the staff interviews and observations. Staff were able to confidently share strategies and approaches to support pupils and had the confidence in their own practice to stand back and allow pupils to work things out for themselves and work independently during observations.

Oaklands school have an ethos of self-reflection in all elements of the school, practice, teaching, and support. Many staff within the school have participated in action research projects in areas of interest; this has then had an impact on teaching, support and processes within the school.

What was done well:

Therapists within the school provide a consultative approach, this was seen to be very successful as therapists work really closely to develop staff teams and empower them to understand the needs of the pupils they support so that therapy becomes part of everyday rather than an add on intervention.

What the provision could develop further

Other areas to consider:

Oaklands school have 3 job coaches who successfully find and support pupils in work placements. Some pupils have been successful in gaining paid employment because of this programme. Oaklands could consider how they develop this programme further so that more pupils are able to have access to paid employment opportunities.

Oaklands school staff have an incredible insight into the needs of the pupils they support much of which appears to be intuitive and seamless. Oaklands could consider the development of their pupil's specific paperwork to reflect the knowledge and understanding that the staff have of the pupils.

Section 3: Professional Development

Main approaches or methods employed by the provision in supporting autistic people

Oaklands School uses a range of established and well researched methods and approaches in supporting autistic people. A multi-agency team who work with pupils and help to develop the school staff team supports this.

Training staff receive in these approaches and in understanding autism as part of their induction

Before starting at the school all staff will have a pre-employment induction, which goes through policies and HR processes.

Staff have a comprehensive 12-week induction, all of which is department specific, therefore those within the autism departments/SLD and 6th form will all get autism specific training. This includes training on all of the methods and approaches, which are used within the department. It has an emphasis on the TEACCH approach as the key underpinning approach used within the school. Various key members of staff within the school deliver induction training. The lunchtime staff will also get autism specific induction training that follows the key themes and enables them to understand the needs of the children they will be supporting.

The induction training is supported by a cycle of observations so that impact of the training can be monitored. The probation system is highly robust and ensures that the school have strong and confident practitioners supporting the pupils throughout the school.

On-going support and professional development available to staff in working with autistic individuals

Opportunities for professional development at Oaklands school are unrivalled with all staff offered the same opportunities. Staff feel they have opportunities to develop as individuals through their reflective practice and training offered.

INSET days are used to provide intense training to all staff, covering topics, which have been highlighted through need within the school, as well as specific topics which need to be refreshed.

There is an annual cycle of training, which ensures staff knowledge is current and refreshed. This is reinforced with weekly inset sessions for teachers of which support staff need to attend 4 per year. Attendance is based on highlighted need from the school development plan, performance management meetings and lesson observations.

In addition, therapists provide regular training for class teams around specific students but will also carry out whole school training on key topics.

The impact of all training is regularly monitored through lesson observations, which include support staff, observations by therapists and the behaviour team.

Learning walk are carried out within departments on key themes, all staff are involved in this process and it is an opportunity to share best practice on key themes.

2 sessions at the end of the academic year are dedicated to student handover and class teams having the opportunity to share good practice regarding the pupils they have supported in that year.

Oaklands school has an ethos of reflective practice, staff are encouraged to carry out research projects within their own departments, which later influence and develop practice amongst the class teams.

Section 4: Person Centred Support

Brief description of how individual support is planned, implemented and evaluated:

Home visits and educational visits for observations are carried out before entering school. This will include meetings with relevant professionals to collate information required all about the autistic pupils.

Therapists will carry out observations within their specific fields based on observation and communication with both teaching teams and parents. This will be used to create programme, which are delivered, by class teams and therapy assistants.

The new curriculum provides an assessment framework for staff, which supports both academic and personal development. Pupils are given targets based on highlighted areas for development within their curriculum areas in addition to those identified within the EHCP. The curriculum target and EHCP targets for some areas may be the same but this may not be the case for all pupils.

Teachers and support staff regularly assess pupils; this information will include the level of independence to which they are able to work and how secure they are in the skills, which are being taught. This is then recorded using SOLAR which IEPs showing targets that link to EHCP.

Targets and EHCP for those in Year 10 onwards focus specifically on developing skills for transition into adulthood.

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Speech and language therapists assess all new pupils that come into the school in collaboration with parents and class teams. From this collated information, therapists will create programmes and share these with teaching teams. Targets set are included within IEP documents, which allows staff to track progress. All staff within class teams track progress and record the level of support, which are used.

Oaklands have speech and language therapy assistants who are responsible for providing necessary therapy for pupils, most are groups rather than individual interventions.

Communication preferences are identified in a pupil's pen portrait, further information is found in some classrooms on the PECS levels of pupils.

Module plans for all subjects detail communication strategies for each individual student this is accessed and regularly used by support staff to know what they are doing with specific students.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Pupils at Oaklands school have personalised communication tools that specifically link to their needs and abilities. These were seen to be used throughout the assessment functionally by pupils as part of lessons as well as key times where communication is expected throughout the day. During one observation, pupils were seen to choose items of interest as part of a maths activity. This was not an isolated example of communication systems being used successfully during teaching.

Oaklands school have distinctive in their creation of an environment and ethos within the staff team where less is more regarding the use of verbal communication. Visual supports were seen to be used consistently throughout the school to support communication, problem solving and independence of the pupils.

Staff were regularly seen to give pupils the time they needed to process information in order to enable them to participate effectively in activities.

Autistic pupils were seen to be provided opportunities to interact with staff and their peers regularly throughout the day. Where best practice was seen one pupil was given the opportunity to select a peer to support her in completing an activity rather than a staff member.

Self-Reliance & Problem Solving

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Observations are regularly carried out on pupils. When recording progress pupils staff will comment on the levels of support, which have been provided using the prompt hierarchy that is used throughout the school.

Module plans for all subjects will include pupils' skills of independence and strategies to support them to be independent in the classroom.

Life skills and independence are a core element of teaching from key stage four through to sixth form. The local authority have changed the EHCP headings from year 10 and focus on the preparation of young adults for adulthood. Oaklands school will report progress in each of these areas for annual reviews from year 10.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Autistic pupils are provided regularly with visuals that enable them to work out what to do. Timetables across the school are highly personalised and where classes were seen to transition to different group tables within a lesson portable timetables were given to enable them to do this. Where best practice was seen during one observation clear guidelines were presented so that pupils were aware of what they were required to complete at each station with further visuals to support them in doing this independently.

Effective use was made of workstations within all classrooms and autistic pupils were seen to be able to complete a range of tasks that were presented in draws independently without

Autistic pupils were seen to be expected to do things for themselves rather than be supported by staff. In most examples, this included clearing up workspaces, collecting equipment and participating in activities in the classroom.

Pupils were consistently seen to make informed choices and decisions throughout the assessment. Regular choices were made regarding activities of their choosing as part of free time, regulation activities and as an embedded part of lessons.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Sensory experiences that pupil's enjoy are included within their pen portraits.

All pupils who have a highlighted sensory need within their EHCP have a sensory diet and programme developed by the occupational therapists. This is created in collaboration with the class teams and regularly reviewed with all staff concerned to establish progress and difficulties.

Occupational therapists reported that much of their work was completed by observing, demonstrating and modelling with the staff team so that they had the skills to deliver programmes with pupils regularly through the day and during the week.

When staff were interviewed, they were able to talk knowledgably about the sensory needs of the pupils they support and were fully aware of the need for alerting and calming activities for pupils to be successful during the day.

Sensory circuits are a permanent feature in the school PE hall four days of the week so that pupils are able to access this at key points throughout the afternoon.

Occupational therapists also work in consultation with families supporting them to implement strategies and programmes into the home so that any approach that is used is not specific to school but becomes embedded within a pupil's life.

The occupational therapist also reported that although there are some challenges to a big school it has been used in a positive way concerning occupational therapy enabling children to get movement breaks in corridors and access proprioceptive input needed through opening heavy doors.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Autistic pupils were regularly seen to engage in sensory activities that they found enjoyable. Many of the lessons observed had a multi-sensory element to them that allowed pupils to touch, hear and feel different element or where staff used a multi-sensory approach to teaching a skill.

Autistic pupils regularly encounter a range of sensory experiences within both the school and the community. With regular trips into the community planned for all pupils. Where experiences could be challenging for pupils staff were aware of the impact that it may have and supported the pupils to access these successfully. One specific example was during a music lesson where there was a lot of noise created through playing musical instruments but staff were fully aware of its impact and had strategies available should they require them.

A wide range of sensory supports were available to pupils to enable them to self-regulate. Movement breaks were seen to be used to great effect specifically where pupils had been expected to sit and engage for a period. There were many examples across the assessment where pupils were able to recognise the need to self-regulate and were supported to do so effectively.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

All staff at Oaklands school are trained in TEAM TEACH. This is regularly updated and refreshed. Incidents are all recorded regardless of severity and these are logged and monitored by the head of school.

A behaviour team has been established in the school, this team support staff in reflecting on practice within the classroom and what a child is trying to communicate through their behaviour. This has enabled a solution-focused approach to unpicking behaviour, which is not reliant on the senior leadership team. The head of school reports that staff have increased their confidence with managing the most challenging behaviour and will try many different approaches before referring to the behaviour team.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Autistic pupils were seen as happy and relaxed throughout the assessment. They were seen to experience a sense of achievement and the positive emotions, which come from this. Appropriate praise was given to pupils throughout the activities they were completing and the impact this had on their engagement and enjoyment of activity was clear.

Pupils were not seen to be anxious throughout the assessment, where pupils were known to be anxious staff had a good understanding of this and strategies were used by both staff and pupils to support this not only within the school but also out in the community.

All pupils were seen to have an element of autonomy – supported by the range of visuals available to them, which enabled this. They were encouraged to problem solve rather than having things done for them. All pupils also showed confidence and self-assurance throughout the assessment in the team that were supporting them and in themselves.

Pupils all appeared to have excellent relationships not only with the staff team but all with their immediate peer group. There were examples throughout the assessment where peers were encouraged to help each other rather than getting an adult to support.

Oaklands school has a very calm feel and the pupils are supported well in understanding their emotional and sensory needs. There were many examples across the school where pupils were participating in activities that they enjoyed as part of regular teaching as well as having access to necessary tools/strategies for regulation.

Section 5: Consultation

With Autistic People

Through the use of preferred communication systems, pupils are seen to express choices throughout the day. This included the opportunity to choose what activity was needed for pupils to self-regulate.

SoSafe gives pupils the communication tools and systems that they require when communicating with other people. It provides them with the knowledge regarding who is safe to talk to and the way in which they communicate.

With families of Autistic People

Relationships with parents begin prior to the pupils transitioning into the school. A key link is created for parents so that they have one contact throughout the transition. A transition coffee morning gives parents to meet others who are joining the school. Once pupils are into school a priorities meeting is held so that parents are able to discuss the aspirations for their young person, targets that they want to achieve. This is held in addition to the regular annual review and parents evenings.

The school have a family support worker who supports families with accessing funds and resources, to which they are entitled. They will act as a reference point of information for families for activities and support, which is available within the community.

Monthly training sessions are delivered for parents, siblings and professionals. These cover a range of topics and can support parents to provide consistency of approach between home and school. This is further supported by home visits from a range of professionals within the school to help implement and support strategies, which are successful within the school.

9 parents responded to the accreditation survey. Whilst this is a low return, it is consistent with the low return to Ofsted survey, which highlights on 6 responses for 123 pupils. Information provided by the school stated a letter was sent to the parents in December. Also if parents said they were having difficulties accessing a computer/internet we facilitated by letting them use the school computers.

Ofsted within their report stated "Parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who responded to the online questionnaire, were unanimous in their support for the school. They praise the communication between staff and parents. In common with leaders' focus, parents speak specifically about the progress their children have made. Parents particularly value the opportunities provided for pupils to gain work experience and life skills."

APPENDIX 1 : SURVEYS

Oaklands School FAP 30/12/2019

Feedback questionnaire on Oaklands School to be completed before 30/12/2019

The support my relative is given is...			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor	0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better	0.00%	0
3	mostly good	33.33%	3
4	always good	66.67%	6
		answered	9
		skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor	0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better	0.00%	0
3	mostly good	55.56%	5
4	always good	44.44%	4
		answered	9



The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
skipped		0

The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 poor	0.00%	0
2 ok, but could be better	11.11%	1
3 mostly good	44.44%	4
4 always good	44.44%	4
answered		9
skipped		0

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 poor	0.00%	0
2 ok, but could be better	22.22%	2
3 mostly good	22.22%	2
4 always good	55.56%	5

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...			
		Response Percent	Response Total
		answered	9
		skipped	0
<p>Comments: Please note you are not required to comment below, if you do so they may be quoted in the final report. Our questionnaires are anonymous and Autism Accreditation cannot be held responsible for comments which identify any individual. (3)</p>			
1	03/12/2019 18:46 PM ID: 131912963	We had a lot of issues with AJ with his last school., we are very lucky to found Oaklands all the teachers are amazing and very supportive of AJ needs.	
2	08/01/2020 14:24 PM ID: 133645144	All the staff are extremely supportive. Everyone cares about our children and does everything they can to make a difference in their life.	
3	10/01/2020 07:56 AM ID: 133724558	The staff are very supportive. There just isn't enough input from speech and language therapists and occupational therapists though.	

APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION

APPENDIX 3: ADVANCED APPLICATION FORM

Name of registration:	Oaklands School
Date when provision was last accredited;	February 2017
Contact person:	Mairead Standring or Agnes Gretschel
Adviser:	Nicola Kennedy

Comments made by the provision should be factual and if necessary can be evidenced.

Criteria 1: Does assessment of the provision confirm that there are many considerable areas of strength within the service in relationship to the Autism Accreditation Standards with no or minor actions for development? *This will be addressed within the assessment report and does not require further comment.*

Criteria 2: Is the service considered to have outstanding features in meeting statutory requirements related to outcomes for autistic people?

Please provide a website link to the relevant reports and any additional comments that might be helpful in interpreting the reports. If the service is not accessed by a statutory body please write n/a

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50093300>

Criteria 3: Is a high-quality programme of continuous Professional Development in place.

Does it ensure that staff have a robust specialist knowledge of autism specific best practice methods and approaches?

All staff once they start employment at Oaklands participate in a 12-week induction programme including training specifically about autism, communication strategies and sensory processing. SMSA's also have training in working with young people with autism. Throughout the year we have 3 INSET days which are also used for training.

Please provide a description of the professional development programme specific to autism (max 250 words)

As part of our 12-week induction the first 4 weeks of training is specific to the department you are working in, so staff within the asd department train specifically in this (see INSET programme) on 2 of the INSET days during the year staff again have access to dept. specific training (INSET programme) This year staff working within the asd department have had Dave Hewitt's – challenging behaviour and a day's TEACCH training. The Assistant head has also attended training carried out by the NAS and then delivered information to the department as part of their weekly meetings.

Criteria 4: Is feedback from autistic people and their circle of support excellent showing that the service is held in very high esteem and its work is greatly valued? *This will be primarily based on surveys carried out by Autism Accreditation as part of the assessment process.*

Please provide any further evidence of feedback from autistic people or their families e.g. results of surveys etc. (max 250 words)

We have four members of staff currently employed by us who are on the autistic spectrum. The families we work with show great appreciation and hold Oaklands in high esteem. We often have members of staff coming for interviews who have heard from past families about what we offer at Oaklands.

Criteria 5: Is the service established as a centre of excellence in the field of autism, sharing its expertise through quality consultation and training as well as actively contributing to research into autism and innovations in practice?

Please provide any further evidence of feedback from autistic people or their families e.g. results of surveys etc. (max 500 words)

Oaklands offer training in TEACCH to other schools within the borough. We have also been asked to put on some bespoke training for another MLD/EBD school.

We have a member of staff within the department who has been involved in research projects previously and is sharing knowledge with staff.

We have been approached by other main stream schools in the borough who have been advised by educational psychologists to come and visit Oaklands to observe our asd practice and gain advice form staff.

Criteria 6: Are assessments informed by specialist expertise and grounded in a robust understanding of the nature of autism?
Is assessment data collated and presented in a range of formats so that it is accessible and of practical value to staff who have different levels of contact with the autistic person, as well as the autistic person and their circle of support?

Please provide any further evidence (max 500 words)

We use SOLAR to assess our students, we as a school adapted the old B square descriptors. All staff working with students with autism use assessment flexibly and tailor the activities to the individual needs of the students to ensure that it is accessible.

We have recently looked at the way we use SOLAR know that we have used it for two years and are looking into ways to make it even more accessible.

Criteria 7: Does the service provide highly creative and very personalised support based on a thorough and up-to-date understanding of how each autistic person communicates and socially interacts; their independent living skills and the impact of external factors including sensory input on their emotions and well-being? *This will be primarily based on observations of practice carried out by Autism Accreditation as part of the assessment process.*

Please provide any further evidence (max 250 words)

All students have a PHP (positive handling plan) which details strategies needed to keep each student regulated and strategies to use to help calm and ensure the students are ready for learning.

ILP (individual Learning plans) detail information about the students preferred communication methods and sensory needs

IEP's take into account the different areas of the students learning

All students have Occupational therapy programmes which detail the sensory needs and activities to help them regulate

Criteria 8: Has the service collated an impressive range of qualitative and quantitative data which provides compelling evidence of the considerable positive impact it has had (both in the short-term and in the long-term) on the lives of autistic people? Can it demonstrate that it is truly inspirational in what it is able to achieve?

Please provide any further evidence (max 1000 words)

Outstanding case studies of students who have made outstanding progress at the end of a key stage that is not reflected academically.

End of year assessments

Case studies

Annual reviews

ADVISOR COMMENTS (These are optional and should only include additional information not already included in the assessment report)

Further areas to work upon: (Accreditation use only)

Adviser comments: