

## Autism Accreditation Assessment

### Oak Lodge School

Reference No.	175
Assessment dates	25 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Lead Assessor	Hannelore Bout
External Moderator	Joanna Dziopa
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:**

According to information provided by the school:

"Oak Lodge School has maintained its NAS accreditation through consecutive reviews since 2011. We are a secondary academy in Barnet that caters for students aged 11-19, we are an inclusive school that prioritises provision for children and young people on the autism spectrum as they are our largest cohort of learners that makes up 60% of the school. "

"We believe Oak Lodge offers outstanding educational provision for autistic individuals that offers meaningful pathways onto work placements or further vocational learning towards pathways in horticulture or the café or shop. We have a gift and craft shop that is located very close to the school, this provides an additional work experience placement for our young adults as well as offering team enterprise opportunities through the 'World of Work' sessions. Oak Lodge students make items to sell at our shop. "

"Our reputation in the Borough of Barnet as a highly successful autism inclusive school means we are always oversubscribed and as such senior leaders are part of a borough-wide autism strategy to ensure local families have the best available provision that meets the unique range of presenting needs that are wide-ranging. We believe firmly that Oak Lodge is a Centre of Excellence in autism and education and through our commitment to the SPELL philosophy and our partnership with Centre for Research in Autism and Education at UCL we have made positive links with a number of autism education networks as well as the autistic adult community to continue maintain the high standards that we would like acknowledged with 'Advanced Status'."

**Number of autistic people supported by the provision:** 106

**Cohort of autistic people supported by the provision:**

There are 193 students in total, aged 11-19.

According to information provided by the school:

"All learners have either severe and complex or moderate learning disability.

Approximately 60% are on the autism spectrum most with a confirmed diagnosis (106) some who do not."

**Outcome of last statutory assessment:**

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2019 and continues to be an outstanding school.

Challenge Partners, Quality Assurance Review, reviewed the school in March 2019, and their overall estimate was outstanding.

## About the Assessment

The assessment took place over two days.

The school's adviser assumed the role of the lead assessor with support from an external moderator on the two days of the assessment.

The school's Deputy Headteacher gave a presentation on the provision for autistic pupils.

The assessment team observed Twenty sessions over a total of 10 hours.

Sessions observed included; English, art, Sensory story, lunch, yoga, science, drama, RE, Attention Autism, Girls group, and the new Sharing Likes Project.

The assessment team held Discussions and focus groups with and several staff members and autistic students and parents, including the Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteachers, four teachers, four TAs, the therapy team, the annual review coordinator, the community trip coordinator and four individual family members.

We reviewed the comprehensive, staff handbook for autism provision

The assessment team also reviewed the results of surveys carried out with the families of autistic people, 24 in total. Seven online surveys, 15 paper copies were returned to the reception, and two emails were sent to the Deputy Headteacher directly. The results of the surveys can be found in the appendix to this report.

## Section 2: Key Findings

### What the provision does particularly well

**The assessment team were particularly impressed with:**

- The school's high caliber of active involvement in a variety of autism-related research projects, permeating the schools' ethos, enhance practice and driving the schools' progressive thinking.
- The school works closely with its local authority and collaborates in strategic work parties locally and nationally. The school is a strong advocate for contemporary autism support, through promoting strength-based approaches, well-being, and active engagement, not only for Oak Lodge students but for the wider autistic community.
- The school introduced SCERTS in 2011, it informs all EHCPs and drives all support and planning. The regular SCERTS INSETs and twilight INSETs ensure teachers and TAs are equipped to set meaningful targets outcomes.

**What stood out as particular strengths:**

- Well-being and mental health: The assessment team noticed the predominantly calm atmosphere, happy students, and positive staff. The school uses active engagement plans derived from SCERTS to inform behaviour support plans, in

order to ensure that the current transactional supports are being used for each student. There is a focus on strengths and passions to promote well-being and resilience. Students presented as happy, relaxed, and engaged in learning. Students' were discretely and effectively supported by Zones Of Regulation strategies to help reduce anxiety and recognise their emotional state.

- Teaching staff report that SLT is good at bridging research into practice, such as SCERTS Action research, to improve engagement.
- The inclusive approach focusses on emotional well-being, promoting independence, emotional-regulation, and making choices.
- The school developed and differentiated the curriculum to meet the wide-ranging needs of the students, such as the girls' group, a low-demand equals curriculum, community-based learning, and the "sharing likes" project, facilitating choice and resilience.
- The school produces compelling qualitative and quantitative data to evidence pupils' academic and social and emotional progress, such as the impact data of the girls' group on social well-being and the 2016-2018 Outcome Measures from SCERTS. Also, the active engagement profiles demonstrate a specialised understanding informing practice, such as individualised sensory circuits addressing interoception.

**What else the provision does well:**

- The vast majority of class observations demonstrated embedded bespoke support and learning resources. Also, a high frequency of micro transitions resulted in pupils moving smoothly from one task to another, enabling students to be confident and independent.
- The school has developed pastoral and parental support by having weekly pastoral meetings to ensure actions and support are allocated to relevant teams promptly. The school has adapted training for families from Mencap's "Family Links" into the Resilience Project to be able to meet parents' needs and requests. The school offers confidential long term counselling to several families. Parents fed back that counseling and parental support is responsive and very good and that the pastoral team helps with completing forms and helps with accessing outside support.
- The comprehensive SCERTS staff handbook 2019 provides a thorough guide on ways of working, understanding of methods, approaches, and expectations.
- The school's curriculum ensures the lessons are adapted to reflect students' interests and strengths. The curriculum is differentiated and personalised in to make sure the team places the correct level of demand on a student, and what bespoke transactional supports should be used.
- Most lessons incorporated a high level of sensory engaging and motivating activities, capturing pupils' attention and interests to support the curriculum. The sensory circuits and bespoke sensory diets facilitate students' readiness to engage with learning.
- The assessment team observed clear promotion of independence, and independent learning during lessons, all students learn out in the community regularly to generalise learning. Students move confidently and freely between lessons and break times.
- There are meaningful pathways into work placements, vocational learning at the schools' charity, Hearts of Oak, the Freshfield Café, the Lodge, world of work, enterprise opportunities.

- Oak Lodge School are actively sharing their expertise and training offer within the wider community and are considered a centre of excellence in autism and education.
- The assessment team observed highly creative, engaging, and personalised support within lessons, ranging from low demand sensory-based learning to structured teaching.

## What the provision could develop further

### Areas to consider:

- The school should ensure the recently introduced 1-page profiles (All About Me documents) are all giving clearer insight on individualised communication, sensory, emotional, and transactional supports.

As outlined by the service in their accreditation action plan, the assessment team would encourage the service to continue with the areas of development identified below:

- The school would like to build on existing sensory integration practice further through delivering more training and modeling, as they have seen significant benefits to student's well-being.
- The assessment team noted many low-arousal and purposeful classrooms, which were mostly laid out according to the guidelines in the handbook. The school should consider modeling the reduction in 'visual noise' further across the school to ensure teaching or working walls are low arousal and have a consistent format. Consider what information is accessible and relevant to the students and how staff information can be made accessible in discreet ways.
- On a very few occasions practice could be fine-tuned, for students following a semi-formal curriculum in particular, by ensuring that the differentiated visual supports and AAC's available in the classrooms are used consistently to support transitions, self-reliance and facilitate two-way communication with pupils across all areas in the school building.
- Consider the next steps in some of the semi-formal curriculum. How in some classes the child-led learning environment can phase in some low-demand adult-directed activities to help prepare for adult life.
- The school is looking to further develop communication with families. The school is engaging with families more, through home visits for all new students, training for families and extending the Teachers to Parents app. Some families fed back that, although the school sends out letters, newsletters, and is responsive to parents' requests, it would be better if all information was shared via electronic communication, such as email.

## Section 3: Professional Development

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

The school listed its main approaches as

- SCERTS,
- TEACCH,
- Intensive Interaction,
- Attention Autism,
- Social Thinking,
- Zones of Regulation (ZOR)

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

SCERTS is at the core of the autism-specific training, and the school has worked closely with Emily Rubin an author of the SCERTS Model and Centre Research in Autism Education to help develop and implement this.

The school invites guest speakers such as, Wenn Lawson, Zaffy Simone who have inspired and influenced practice in autism and Peter Imray who has proposed the semi formal model for more complex learners.

Sarah Hendrickks and Robyn Steward contributed to the SRE curriculum. Damian Milton's work has been used by the autism lead to inform the collaboration with the Barnet Autism Strategy on alternatives to Positive Behaviour Support using SCERTS. The school only uses research-based approaches and utilises the expertise that is acquired through its access to expert reference groups through its collaboration with CRAE.

The school sends representatives to attend and speak at autism-specific conferences. It is clear from speaking with SLT, teaching staff, and TAs that the school highly values the engagement with the autistic community and that the schools' practice is informed by their views as well as academic research.

The OT and SLT deliver twilights and INSETs on autism-specific topics.

The staff team is generally expected to attend five training days a year, which are mostly identified by the Senior Leader Team. Teaching staff also reported that the school welcomes and supports individual training requests.

The comprehensive Staff Handbook lists an A-Z of expectations, policies, and procedures. The detailed SCERTS staff handbook 2019 provides a thorough guide on ways of working, understanding of methods, approaches, and expectations. The induction and training program is based on SCERTS practice principles, the AET Competency Framework, and the Teachers Standards are referred to as a developmental tool for teachers.

The assessment team like the staff agreement: "I will provide essential transactional supports to foster engagement with learning and positive interaction", which underpins the transactional supports they should provide to commit to the Oak Lodge ethos and pedagogy.

All staff receive 1-day intensive training on the introduction to autism, using the SCERTS framework, at the start of each academic year. This is followed by autism-specific workshops. New staff follow an induction program on basic autism awareness, practical transactional support and understanding behaviour.

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

Staff attend daily briefings in the morning, whole staff meetings are held on Tuesday afternoons, and teacher meetings are usually held on Wednesdays.

Autism workshops are run on Thursdays and are well attended.

The school carries out frequent learning walks to ensure teachers are monitored and scored against Teachers Standards and NAS criteria. The school embraces the Appreciative Enquiry model for coaching observations and feedback taken from the UCL CRAE collaboration as part of Scot Greatheads work.

The Headteacher is the Staff Development Coordinator, and performance management is led by experienced SLT, who will help identify support and training needs.

The school emphasises a strong ethos on emotional regulation and active engagement and ensures the staff have regular de-escalation training followed by positive handling that acknowledges the Barnet preferred approach Team Teach.

The school is actively involved and participating in several research projects, steering groups and working parties, locally and nationally, and provides training to external organisations and speak at conferences.

The school keeps a database of all courses attended by staff and have analysed the evaluations on the training programme in a staff CPD evidence and impact summary. The staff reported they value the SCERTS training, the sessions in teacher meetings, and how the learning is student-focussed.

Staff interviewed during the assessment stated that they value the regular training and support opportunities. SLT is good at bridging academic research into practice, such as SCERTS Action Research, to help student engagement.

A high-quality programme of continuous professional development is in place at Oak Lodge School. This ensures that staff across the school have a robust specialist knowledge of autism-specific best-practice methods and approaches. Systems are in place to ensure that practice is highly personalised and maintained at a consistently high level throughout the provision.

## **Section 4: Person-Centred Support**

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

According to the admission policy: "Upon receipt by the school of consultation paperwork, the relevant Key Stage Coordinator or SENCo (Assistant Head Teacher) will be requested to review submitted papers and where possible, to see the prospective student in their current educational setting. If this is not possible, the prospective student may be invited into school with a parent(s) or carer(s)."

The senior leadership team has responsibility for transitions ensuring that they are bespoke and planned around the needs of the students. The majority of students transition in year seven and will come with an EHCP with targets set in the previous educational setting. The KS3 AHT has introduced home visits for all new students. The Students are baselined on entry to the school against SCERTS and Sensory Screens and every student receives a physiotherapy assessment every year to capture the

students unique profile of strengths and needs, their communication profile and associated cognitive profile to ensure a developmentally appropriate curriculum is adapted for each student.

The school has recently linked SCERTS within the EHCP planning process, with the aim to simplify the process and to ensure students have meaningful targets where SCERTS and academic measures are tracked simultaneously.

From there on, the students' progress on social communication and emotional regulation is assessed ongoing, with three data-drops throughout the year. SALT and teachers and other professionals work closely together when assessing setting, evaluating and updating highly personalised plans and targets. These are based on strengths, interests and what is meaningful to the student to ensure intrinsically motivating activities are taking place, positively impacting the students learning and progress.

Students' academic progress is currently tracked on BSquared and is linked to all outcomes.

The Evisense app, tracks multimedia evidence of observational assessments and journeys on an ongoing basis.

SCIO Sharepoint stores essential school information to provide links to other digital platforms and is used to compile end of Year Reports.

SchoolPod is the main system that holds all students confidential reports and information, including records of negative or disruptive behaviour and incidences.

The school recently introduced 1-page profiles (All About Me documents), which summarise key information about each student from all student documents. The school should ensure these are all giving clearer insight on individualised communication, sensory, emotional, and transactional supports.

SCERTS educational planning grids are used optionally by some teachers. Action research on active engagement is used to identify the best ways to support students who are struggling to engage with the curriculum.

The curriculum is tailored around the students' strengths, interests and ability. This ranges from formal to a semi-formal model. Within this there are classes that follow structured teaching but also students who follow a child-led, low-demand Equals Curriculum.

All pupils are supported to share their views at their annual reviews. Parents are encouraged to submit their views, and therapists and teaching staff submit a report to contribute to the EHCP at the annual review. This is coordinated by the annual review coordinator.

## Differences in Social Communication

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

Oak Lodge has two SALTs, who combined, work the equivalent of a five day week. The SALTs work with the teaching staff to create a communication rich environment and have termly meetings with form tutors to set and review student outcomes informed by the SCERTS assement. Some students have specialist support this may be

identified by the teacher, through EHCPs or by parents. These students have a series of individual sessions delivered by the SALT team and an individual report is produced for the Annual Review.

SCERTS baseline assessment is carried out each term, which monitors social emotional progress over time and the transactional supports needed. Students' communication needs, preferences and targets are recorded in their EHCP and interventions and preferences are summarised in One Page Profiles.

The school introduced SCERTS in 2011 and has worked closely with Emily Rubin in the past. The school participated in the SCERTS Champion research project with CRAE at UCL with Dr Laura Crane and Scot Greathead. The school runs an extensive SCERTS based training programme and a SCERTS study group for all Barnet School and other schools that subscribe to SCERTS.

The school's SALT delivers a range of interventions based on pupils' identified needs through their EHCP or assessments.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

During all observations, staff could make themselves understood through the use of simplified verbal communication, signs/ Makaton, and visuals. Throughout almost observations staff were seen to be clear in their communication and consistent in their approach. Staff are highly skilled communicators and were observed to differentiate their communication to match the communication preferences of each student. Staff used visuals to reinforce prompts or instructions, which were seen to be consistent across all classrooms.

Pupils understood the expectations of the lessons because of the use of instructions supported by visual supports.

Where best practice was observed, staff created opportunities to interact with peers, work in groups, take turns and to understand different points of view. Students appeared confident and happy to approach adults and students to engage in a spontaneous interaction. The café provides opportunity and purpose for students to practise a wide range of communication and interaction skills with staff and visitors.

On a couple of occasions, the practice could have been improved by referring to available transactional and communication supports.

## Problem Solving and Self-reliance

**Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

The SCERTS staff handbook provides comprehensive details on supporting transitions and the use of transactional supports. This supports school staff to be consistent in their approach to transitions.

Within classrooms, pupils are supported by class timetables, individual timetables, lesson schedules, and differentiated communication tools.

The school's curriculum has been developed so that it includes opportunities for students to build on their strengths, interests, and develop skills in independence and problem-solving. The school maintains a focus on preparing for adulthood.

As pupils progress there will be an increased focus on functional life skills through the Functional Skills Accreditation for Post 16. The students have work experience taster sessions, and they participate in a World of Work option. Students have the opportunity to attend work experience within the Fresh Fields café, the Lodge, and within the local community. The school offers a wide variety of community-based learning and activities to transfer and generalise skills.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

Pupils are supported to understand what is happening now and next through the use of visual timetables, visual and written lesson schedules, First-Then boards, choice boards, learning objectives, objects of reference, lo-fi communication systems, and a few students have iPads.

In all observations, pupils appeared confident to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions with staff and their peers. Pupils' contributions and choices were valued and respected by the staff who gave positive feedback after all contributions.

Where best practice was observed, pupils demonstrated they were confident and able to carry out tasks with minimal support, getting equipment independently. The class observation demonstrated embedded and bespoke support, as well as micro transitions, resulting in pupils moving smoothly from one task to another. Autistic people develop skills and confidence in expressing an opinion and making choices about lunch, art, engagement within an activity, what to do to get back to the "green zone."

In most observations, the staff offered very clear and differentiated transactional support when moving between tasks. It was evident by the pupils' confidence that this is embedded practice. On a few occasions, the assessment team felt that the transitions could be made more explicit to pupils by using the students' bespoke SCERTS supports.

## **Sensory Experiences**

**Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

From the website: "We expect our learning environments to be 'autism-inclusive.' Classroom routines are structured based on TEACCH principles to be safe, reliable and predictable with social and educational demands that are appropriate and meaningful."

Oak Lodge school has one day of OT support. Time is allocated for targeted support for some of the students through their EHCP, assessing sensory needs, training, and advice for sensory planning. The school have created a very detailed grid is made to enlist supports allocated to students to ensure that the EHCP provision is being met. All pupils have access to sensory equipment, sensory boxes to assist with emotional-regulation and sensory circuits. The OT spends time in class to ensure learning from recent training

is embedded in practice, continuity in sensory support and individualised sensory equipment is appropriate and in good working order.

The OT recently delivered training on the Sensory-Motor Approach, Sensory First Aid, and Sensory Diets. Staff reported this to be very interesting and has a positive impact on readiness to learn in class.

Targeted work was carried out with a particular student using “equipment-free sensory circuits” to use in school and at home. This was demonstrated to the parent who was surprised by the impact a 45-minute sensory session has on the level of engagement and learning.

The school would like to build on existing sensory integration practice further through delivering more training and modeling, as they have seen significant benefits to student’s well-being.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

Pupils had access to a wide variety of sensory tools and sensory boxes which supported them to regulate and remain engaged in lessons. As pupils move through the school, sensory activities were seen to be accessed discreetly by pupils.

Where best practice was observed the curriculum was delivered in a sensory engaging and motivating manner and pupils were supported to begin to tolerate a range of sensory experiences within a safe and secure environment, such as toy creatures, food, shaving foam, etc.. Pupils have access to a variety of supports and displays which helped them to identify sensory regulation activities.

Most lessons incorporated a high level of sensory engaging and motivating activities, capturing pupils’ attention and interests to support the curriculum. The sensory circuits and bespoke sensory diets facilitate students’ readiness to engage with learning.

The assessment team noted many low-arousal and purposeful classrooms, which were mostly laid out according to the guidelines in the SCERTS staff handbook. The school should consider modeling the reduction in ‘visual noise’ further across the school to ensure teaching or working walls are low arousal and have a consistent format. Consideration should be given to what information is accessible and relevant to the students, and how staff information can be made accessible in discreet ways.

## Emotional Well-being

**Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

Oak Lodge have collaborated with Barnet on the Barnet Autism Strategy during which the school consulted Damian Milton around alternative interventions to Positive Behaviour Support, Oak Lodge have positioned against the use of PBS.

The school is a strong advocate for contemporary autism support, promoting strength-based approach to well-being, and active engagement, not only for Oak Lodge students but for the wider autistic community in Barnet.

The school uses active engagement plans derived from SCERTS to inform behaviour support plans, in order to ensure that the current transactional supports are being used for each student.

Teachers received training from The Tavistock Clinical team on building resilience through assisted therapeutic interventions, such as working with animals, mindfulness, and yoga, which was observed in practice.

The school employs a full-time art therapist who delivers 1:1 sessions to students. The physical therapy team assesses and measure students annually and also work on proprioception, developing a sense of where your body is in space and time.

The school offers training in desescalation and positive handling. Staff receive training on the Oak Lodge Behaviour Approach.

SchoolPod is used for logging and analysing behavioural patterns as well as a good attitude to learning. The school has moved away from reward systems, such as sticker charts, use of tokens and using passions as rewards, as these may cause anxiety, instead, there has been a drive on developing intrinsically motivating learning activities, based on individuals strengths and interests.

Interviews with staff and TAs highlight a significant positive impact and a reduced amount of reportable incidents over time, since the curriculum has become more strength and interest-based and levels of demand have been tailored to the students learning style.

Families are consulted when a pupil requires a behaviour support plan and listed interventions.

The school has introduced a girls group in the last year where girls have an opportunity to develop enhanced sense of self, build friendships and explore topics and activities, creating special memories. This is run with SLT and writing professional Vicky Martin author of M is for Autism co-written with NAS.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

The assessment team noticed the predominantly calm atmosphere and happy students and positive staff within the school.

Students presented as happy, relaxed and engaged in learning. On a few occasions anxiety was discretely supported through ZOR strategies, taking breaks and using emotional regulation strategies.

The school has developed differentiated use of ZOR, which is embedded across the curriculum and supports independence and emotional-regulation.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and purposeful, with a clear bond of understanding being displayed across the school. TAs report the benefits of working across all key stages, so they get to know all students and build relationships with them. The documentation highlights the importance of trust and relationships when supporting students with emotional regulation.

Where best practice was observed, we observed a student, who reported to be feeling angry, was discretely supported to follow their chosen breathing techniques and was able to move back to the "green zone".

Autistic pupils were regularly seen to experience a sense of completion and achievement, and were calm and engaged with learning that was differentiated to be meaningful and motivating.

The school has recently introduced the Sharing Likes Projects, where students choose different options, assisted by differentiated visual supports.

Physical restraint, intervention or guidance was not observed. On a few occasions, students showed signs of anxiety, they were supported in empathetic and effective ways.

## **Section 5: Consultation**

### **With Autistic People**

Student voice, options, and choices are embedded in every practice.

Post 16 students have an informal school council, where they are consulted to have their say on meaningful and themed projects.

Students complete an easy read form before their annual review and are invited to attend the annual or transition review meeting.

All staff, including SLT, spend time with students at break time and lunchtime.

The school takes part in the external Pupil Voice Project, which is part of the Barnet Autism Strategy.

The assessment team met with a group of students who were supported by staff with their communication. All pupils said they enjoy school and were able to talk about what they like about school and what is important to them. They said:

- Staff listen when they are upset.
- The school is a happy place
- They enjoy friendships
- The teachers are kind, friendly, very happy and respectful.

### **With families of Autistic People**

The school has a pastoral team made up of the SLT and therapists, and the team works closely to ensure parent support is directed to the right person.

The school has weekly pastoral meetings, which are documented and actioned.

The school has adapted Mencap's' "Family Links" training into the Resilience Project to offer training based on meeting parent's requests and needs. This training is well received.

The school offers confidential long term counselling to several families. Parents fed back that counseling and parental support is very good and that the team helps with completing forms and accessing outside support.

The school has sections on its website to offer parents information, and parents are also given an Oak Lodge Parent Information Booklet, outlining details for support in Barnet.

The school communicates with parents/carers in various ways, e.g., home school diaries, letters, phone calls, emails, newsletters, interviews, and questionnaires. Parents/carers are invited to termly parents' evenings and annual reviews.

Four families spoke with the assessment team, randomly invited as they were dropping off or had meetings in school. Parents stated that the school is good at responding to emails and phone calls and report the school has very good autism knowledge and expertise and go out of their way to work with families. One parent reported that this school has been amazing and really helpful during a crisis.

The school is looking to further develop digital communication with families. The school is engaging with families more, through home visits for all new students, training for families in communication and extending the range of systems used to communicate with parents. Some families fed back that, although the school sends out letters, newsletters and is responsive to parents' requests, it would be better if more information was shared via electronic communication, such as email.

Two families sent feedback via an email and spoke highly of the school.

22 family members provided feedback to the assessment team overall by returning completed questionnaires (15 submitted on paper). The full results are shown as an appendix to this report.

19 family members stated that advice given by the school is mostly or always good.

6 family members stated the communication is poor or could be better.

3 family members chose to leave a comment on the questionnaire which is found in the appendix to this report.

One parent stated that;

"This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year my son is attending Oak lodge school. We love the school and why my son also. We are always kept informed and updated on everything concerning my son. The staff are brilliant well equipped able to answer most of our queries. I would recommend this school to anyone who has a child with autism."

### **With the wider community**

Oak Lodge is the lead school of a multi-Academy trust: Barnet Special Education Trust. Oak Bridge is part of the trust, which shares the same principles and values and educates students aged 19-25. The school is in the process of finding a location for the Windmill school, which will be an autism-specific school.

The schools' Headteacher is a lead Ofsted inspector and carries out reviews for Challenge Partners.

The school was involved in a number of research projects, such as SCERTS in Sprint, UCL research with CRAE and the department for education, which led to a co-produced White Paper, which is about to be published.



Oak Lodge hosts a local multidisciplinary SCERTS study group.  
The school is a member of the Moon Partnership, which is a working group of six local special schools.  
The school provides outreach.  
The school offers training to local services, police, and nationally at conferences.  
Hearts of Oak, the schools' charity, runs a local shop and the Lodge.  
Oak Lodge offers placements for clinical professionals and SCITT trainees.



**APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS**

**Families of Autistic People**

**Oak Lodge School FAP 25/11/2019**

Feedback questionnaire on Oak Lodge School to be completed before 11/11/2019

The support my relative is given is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		28.57%	2
3	mostly good		42.86%	3
4	always good		28.57%	2
			answered	7
			skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		42.86%	3
2	ok, but could be better		14.29%	1
3	mostly good		14.29%	1
4	always good		28.57%	2



The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
			answered	7
			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		28.57%	2
2	ok, but could be better		14.29%	1
3	mostly good		14.29%	1
4	always good		42.86%	3
			answered	7
			skipped	0

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		28.57%	2
2	ok, but could be better		14.29%	1
3	mostly good		28.57%	2
4	always good		28.57%	2
			answered	7



The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...			Response Percent	Response Total
			skipped	0
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. (1)				
1	19/11/2019 18:31 PM ID: 131224225	Better teachers		

## Paper surveys

The support my relative is given is...			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor			0
2	ok, but could be better			1
3	mostly good			3
4	always good			11
			answered	15
			skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor			0
2	ok, but could be better			0
3	mostly good			5
4	always good			10
			answered	15
			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
2	ok, but could be better			3
3	mostly good			3
4	always good			9
			answered	15
			skipped	0

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor			1

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
2	ok, but could be better			3
3	mostly good			2
4	always good			9
			answered	15
			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. (1)</p>				
		<p>I get updates on my sons day via his home school book and anything important comes I always get a phonecall</p> <p>A Caring school</p> <p>I am happy with the way the staff help with my son and if I have any concens I know I can speak to them about it</p> <p>My son started in September and feel his needs ar being met already in a short space of time and giving him time to settle</p> <p>This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year my son is attending Oaklodge school. we love the school and why mys son also. We are always kept informed and updated on everything concerning my son. The staff are brilliant well equipped able to answer most of our queries. I would recommend this school to anyone who has a child with Autism</p>		

## Total: electronic/ paper

The support my relative is given is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		13.63%	3

The support my relative is given is...			
		Response Percent	Response Total
3	mostly good	27.27%	6
4	always good	59.09%	13
		answered	22
		skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor	13.63%	3
2	ok, but could be better	4.54%	1
3	mostly good	27.27%	6
4	always good	54.54%	12
		answered	22
		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	9.09%	2
2	ok, but could be better	18.18%	4

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

		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
3	mostly good	18.18%	4
4	always good	54.54%	12
		answered	22
		skipped	0

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

		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	poor	13.63%	3
2	ok, but could be better	18.18%	4
3	mostly good	18.18	4
4	always good	50	11
		answered	22
		skipped	0





Email feedback 1:

“Dear R.,

I would like to start by saying thank you for considering me to have my opinions put forward on what Oak Lodge School has been delivering to my sons, S. of year 11 and J. of year 7. I feel privileged for this given opportunity.

I wish i could have been present today during the visit of the National Autistic Society, for which i am also a member, but i am afraid i have made other arrangement for this afternoon.

As i have mentioned here above, my son S. is the eldest of my four children and as his dad i have had to make one of the difficult decision but very thoughtful for him to join Oak Lodge School. This has turn up to be the best decision we have had to make for him. S. has really progressed well, he's made lots of friends and he is very happy to go the school every morning. There has never been a single day that S. did not look forward to attend the school.

We have been working together with the school for his progress in and outside of the school. He's becoming more independent and he has really made it easier for us not to hesitate to decide for J. to join Oak Lodge School, where he has settled very well, he feels very safe coming to the school and he's very happy. To our surprises, when Jonathan was at Primary school, he was communicating with us very little and he was not organised with instructions given to him at school and at home. But ever since he's joined Oak Lodge School, he is a new boy. He returns home smiling and he'll tell us what he has to have ready for the following day. sometimes we could be in the middle of doing something else, but J, will make sure we provide him with what he's requested before he can settle down. This is very new to us. We were not used to that and you have no idea how this has eased up a huge burden from us.

The other positive point is that Oak Lodge School have really made us feel welcome with any worries or questions that we have had. We will either ring and someone will always be available to assist us. The teachers communicate with us on a daily basis and they respond to our emails so quick that feel so nice for my boys to be at their good hands.

Thank you Oak Lodge for everything and the hard work you have been putting to my sons. I can imagine how hard this might be for you to work to our children but words cannot express my gratitude towards your hard work to keep our children educated, safe and happy.

Thank you.

Kind regards,





Email 2:

Dear G.,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts and feedback regarding the autism provision at Oaklodge School for the NAS review, it is a real pleasure to have been approached to do this.

We have been absolutely delighted with the support both E. and ourselves have received from your team of staff since E. joined in 2017. E. has flourished at Oaklodge and we have been so pleased with everything that has been done to support him both academically and socially. The staff team work exceptionally well together to trouble shoot issues as they arise and clearly have a very deep understanding of his needs in relation to both ASC and ADHD. They have sought out our input too when issues have arisen and are very keen to work with us in developing strategies we can use both in school and at home. I have always found the team to be incredibly responsive when we have raised things with them and they very much want to work in partnership with us. The whole team clearly have a deep understanding of ASC and how it impacts E. and I have found that they tailor transactional supports as well as learning opportunities that are bespoke for him and his needs. They work closely with us on his SCERTs targets as well as his short and long term outcomes as identified in his EHCP. The level of care towards E. and our family is exceptional and I feel that they all know my son very well - including office staff, peripatetic teachers as well as his LSAs and his immediate teaching team (a very special thank you to yourself, Elham, Nicole and Sally). I have found the staff to all be enthusiastic and nothing is too much for them - they really really care about what they do and the loving and caring culture permeates throughout the school. It is evident whenever I go to visit. Staff all seem to have a very good understanding of autism, how it impacts differently on students and how each student has different needs and how these can be met, they have obviously received very good training from yourself or have had the opportunity in other ways to develop their knowledge and understanding. Having visited E.s classrooms I can see how ASC friendly it is for him as he needs a clear timetable, needs to know routines and his need for a structured and ordered space - this is all in place for him at Oaklodge as well as all of the personalised transactional supports he has been given.

As you know, I think Oaklodge is a fabulous school and we are extremely happy he is there - I wouldn't want him anywhere else! As a family we know he is getting the best possible support and for this we can't say thank you enough, indeed thank you doesn't seem to be enough to express our gratitude. I very much hope your review goes well, you all deserve it to go well!

Very best wishes and all my thanks again

A



## **APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION**

Overall 3 parents gave conflicting feedback this does not represent our parents community 193 or approx. 100 ASC parents – we know parents are really happy as we have such positive feedback – through OFSTED too.

Our view is the survey results are not presented in a way that shows the small number of respondents (out of a possible 100) that felt understanding is poor. This is not representative of the whole school parental view.

## APPENDIX 3: ADVANCED STATUS APPLICATION

### APPLICATION FORM FOR ADVANCED STATUS

Name of registration:	Oak Lodge School
Date when provision was last accredited;	December 2016
Contact person:	Ginny D’Odorico
Adviser:	Hannelore Bout

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.**

Oak Lodge considers it has many strengths within the service mapped against the accreditation standards. A good starting point being its overall autism inclusive philosophy that permeates throughout all provision planning to generate an ethos and culture where autism is at the core of all our work. Our partnership with the Centre for Research in Autism and Education (CRAE) at UCL Institute of Education contributes to the pedagogy and methodology that is rooted in the latest evidence-based practice.

DHT for teaching and learning who is also the autism lead together with senior leaders, drive best practice for autistic individuals across their departments to ensure staff teach the way our young people learn.

Oak Lodge have already an established and recognized quality assurance mark from NAS. We use an eclectic approach that has an evidence base and is outcomes focused. We aim to drive sustained improvement by measuring the impact of our specialist teaching approaches using the SCRERTS framework given our autistic students make up the largest of the groups in the school.

Improving outcomes for all our students, but specifically aiming to achieve meaningful outcomes for autistic people has changed our practice to ensure all curriculum activities are developmentally appropriate and based on strengths and interests. We have drawn on the model that Katie Gaudion proposed in her PHD the “triad of strengths”, whereby autism is viewed as positive and enabling and harnessing students’ capabilities. We feel this sits with the values around the new autism accreditation core framework and standards. This philosophy has driven our practice forward, so that a relevant and meaningful curriculum model can be applied across our whole school community.

**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

All our policies reflect how we strongly advocate for autistic students, we do not have one single autism policy as our view is the unique profile of autism and its impact on the individual requires particular set of objectives that span a range of policies within our school. Below you will find links to some of the policies that reflect our commitment to autism specific practices that are readily available on our website. Additional polices available on request during the assessment period.

<http://www.oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk/Learning%20Content/TeachingandLearning.php>

[http://www.oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk/Policy%20Content/B4%20Behaviour%20Policy\\_V5\\_0618.pdf](http://www.oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk/Policy%20Content/B4%20Behaviour%20Policy_V5_0618.pdf)

<http://www.oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk/Policy%20Content/A18%20Sex%20and%20Relationships%20Policy%20Vs3%200118.pdf>

[Previous NAS review reports – Accredited](#)

[Challenge Partner Reports 2017-2019 – Outstanding Grade 1](#)

[OFSTED 2019 – Outstanding](#)

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?

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

The SCERTS Framework enabled us to focus on **matching the curriculum supports to the developmental level of the students** and improving the **quality the interactive style between staff and learners with autism through focused CPD** that also set the context for explaining the neurology of autism and neurology of social competence as a predictor of outcome.

At the start of each new academic year all staff have at least one days intensive training on introduction to autism using the SCERTS framework to cover the neurology of autism and social competence. This is followed by on-going – autism specific workshops that cover a range of topics / themes that are well attended by teachers and teaching assistants (weekly Thursdays) for the autumn term. New staff have comprehensive induction to introduce them to basic autism awareness, practical transactional supports and understanding behaviour. We offer Low Arousal approaches training to understanding and working with behaviour that challenges this is summarised in the attached information on training and CPD.

In the academic Year 2018\_2019 Dr Wenn Lawson delivered training on Interoception and autistic self in the context of Gender identify and Sexuality.

Attached is a summary of the evaluations of the whole school INSET training.

Autism workshops are run separately on a Thursday as a twilight as a register of interest sign up. They were attended by 10 participants consistently both teachers and teaching support staff, who attended 6-week sessions on a range of topics on autism and co-occurring conditions and the neurology of autism as a pre-requisite to the introduction of SCERTS. All Training records and evaluations available during assessment.

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)

Feedback from training is attached.

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)

During 2018\_2019 Oak Lodge School were part of an 'Action Research 'working party at IOE\_UCL along with 6 other autism specialist schools including: The Bridge School Islington, Queensmill School Hammersmith, The Grove School Haringey, Spa School, Southwark working on 2 projects: 1 Active Engagement 2. Appreciative Inquiry Model for Coaching leaders using SCERTS Framework to improve outcomes across the school.

Research project was led by Scot Greathead and Dr Laura Crane. Together we co-produced a White Paper for publication in collaboration with CRAE and the Department. For the purposes of this NAS Assessment the draft White paper is attached but this is not for public distribution as it is owned by CRAE. Also attached is the Active Engagement Impact report, further inspection of the materials can be carried out during the assessment.

Oak Lodge host a Barnet Borough SCERTS Multi-disciplinary SCERTS Study group. This is a research group that has Emily Rubin – one of the authors of the SCERTS model- as scientific patron of the group who authorises our research and the co-production of materials that are rolled out to all Barnet Schools, Psychology and NHS services to ensure SCERTS provides holistic program planning across tri-partite services for all autistic children and young people locally and Nationally. SCERTS working party minutes and inspection of materials available on request during assessment.

Oak Lodge school deliver training Nationally as part of the specialist Schools and Academies Trust <https://www.ssatuk.co.uk/achievement-show-2016/aspiration-and-achievement/> this is ongoing and we regularly write articles that feature in the SSAT Leading Edge Magazine for all SSAT members

Oak Lodge are part of a Barnet wide autism strategy to commit our support to demand for places for autistic children in Barnet. Oak Lodge School converted to academy status to establish a Multi-Academy Trust that will see the creation of a new all age autism specific special Free School. It was proposed the free school open in September 2018 however securing a site locally that meets the requirements of the new school has been fraught with complexity and therefore forced a delay. The Windmill School will be an all age school for pupils aged 5-19 with a primary diagnosis of autism. The new school will complement the existing local provision of autism specific Attached Resourced Provisions (ARP) and generic special schools. This corresponds with a January 2016 education committee report of Barnet Council that outlines potential options for future SEND provision. During our Assessment, Academy Development director will show the project plan to date to the review team.

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)

Oak Lodge began the implementation of SCERTS in 2011 following a training program available to all Barnet Schools. On completion of the SCERTS program and through a passion and drive to keep standards high around autism practice, an action plan was drawn up that included school leaders at every level and phase, working together in a coordinated way to implement the SCERTS Framework. Whole school training began in September 2014, followed by Middle Leaders strategic implementation from practice principles in teaching through to assessment.

At many levels of leadership across the whole school it was very quickly recognized that SCERTS was able to provide a valuable framework for our school development strategy as staff learned how the developmental learning trajectory in autism is very different.

The information in the SCERTS Manuals enabled staff to use a quick fire checklist to identify each student's unique profile of strengths and needs, but also provide a way to determine the communication stage and associated cognitive profile of each student in order to match the curriculum so it is developmentally appropriate. We aim to assess student progress in **social communication** and **emotional regulation** annually at 3 data drops during the year. We wanted to show how the environmental adaptations and curriculum adaptations were effective in improving the student's functional social communication and social interactions whilst also providing supports to regulate their arousal state to enhance engagement with learning. The SCERTS measures would run parallel to other academic measures of progress to give us an overall progress measure for each child.

Essentially we wanted to change aspects of the learning environment; following baseline measures to assess our student's capacity to be socially engaged and show the ability to emotionally regulate when distressed. SCERTS claims that students who are competent social communicators who are also emotionally resilient make better progress overall.

Analysis of SCERTS assessment data attached for the years 2016\_2018. We started a new system of assessment 2018\_2019 which we can show the review team during assessment.

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)

The implementation of SCERTS into the school created 'action research' opportunities for our teachers and support staff to look into the factors that build intrinsic motivation to learn, by infusing students strengths and interests into the curriculum.

By December 2014, every student had a baseline assessment to determine his or her level of language and cognition that was carried out in collaboration with speech and language therapists. This was obtained with a simple observational checklist. This exercise provided information for teachers regarding their student's language ability and therefore the associated level of cognitive development. A critical priority was to make sure each student could predict what happened throughout his or her day but more importantly all tasks were developmentally appropriate built on strengths and interests that were personalised and tied to meaningful endpoint for each student in their learning journey at Oak Lodge.

See assessment data – attached

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)

Oak Lodge offers outstanding educational provision for young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties in addition to their autism, as such our Academy Development Director was asked to participate in the analysis of needs within Barnet, as they were aware of a significant group of autistic learners who are not currently placed in the best possible environment for their learning. These children and young people's cognitive ability aligns closely or just below that of their peers, but their autism prevents them from achieving age expected outcomes within the current local provision offer.

Oak Lodge believed the needs of these children and young people would be better met in a more specialist provision that would be able to take better account of their sensory sensitivities than a generic special school, an attached provision or a full mainstream placement. It would provide them with an autism-specific, predictable and purposeful learning environment in which they could succeed and thrive more effectively, and where they will have the best chance of achieving academic success.

Due to the success that Oak Lodge has had delivering outstanding autism specific provision to children and young people in the Barnet catchment area and surrounding local authorities, we were considered to be in a strong position to open an autism-specific school as we have already demonstrated the capacity, skills and experience needed to run a highly successful school that meets the highest standards expected by the NAS and Ofsted.

Our application to open an autism specific all age Free School was positively endorsed by the Department for Education and the Local Authority in Barnet with the backing of the research team led by Professor Liz Pellicano at CRAE. The Barnet Special Education Trust that is the proposer group for Oak Lodge opening an autism specific school, comprised of a team of autism educators, researchers and autistic consultant advisors; Annie Etherington autism consultant and tutor on the Birmingham Masters MA in Autism, Dr Laura Crane and Dr Anna Remington Directors of Centre for Research in autism and Education, Dr Wenn Lawson and Zaffy Simone autistic consultants providing advisory input to the quality of provision at Oak Lodge and the design environment of The Windmill School.

Oak Lodge School has representation on the local Barnet Multidisciplinary Group for autism the Autism Leading Edge Group LEG for over 10 years, we are also a proposer group for the Mental Health Working Party to develop an autism strategy for mental health beginning 2020. Oak Lodge have regularly presented at the NAS sharing practice days and contributed to the re-writing of the Core Standards Framework, presenting at both the London and North East Hub launches.

The attached analysis of data from SCERTS and evaluation of our CPD provides additional evidence of impact directly on autistic people and their families along with any feedback obtained from the questionnaires that have been made available via our website link:

<http://www.oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk/Information%20Content/NASsurvey2019.php>

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: