Ofsted Outstanding



The Oaks Specialist College Prospectus

Skills for Independence and Employment



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A warm welcome to The Oaks

The Oaks Specialist College is a successful and highly regarded provision providing purposeful programmes for 18-25 year olds with learning difficulties across Kent, East Sussex and London Boroughs.

We provide a safe, caring, and motivating learning environment that encourages taking calculated risks and fosters a culture of success and achievement.

We work closely with a number of employers and other organisations to ensure that the skills, knowledge and understanding gained in College are applied in the “real world”, so that every learner makes clear progress and is respected and valued in their community, confident and able to contribute fully to society. On leaving The Oaks, our young people will gain employment, further training or meaningful volunteering roles and be able to live their life more independently, with less dependency on others, as they continue to develop, mature, and thrive.

Our mission is to put young people with learning disabilities at the heart of all we do. We achieve our success by having highly skilled staff who really care about the work they do and are totally committed to our vision.

We aim to give all of our young adults opportunities to discover ways of learning that engage and develop them to being exceptionally well prepared for their next steps into adulthood.



Gordon Tillman - CEO

Ros Leach - Principal



PEARSON NATIONAL TEACHING AWARDS GOLD WINNER

base british association for supported employment
Winner of the 2025 Jurgen Donaldson Award.

Microsoft Elevate School System BEACON 2026-2028

disability confident EMPLOYER

The Oaks Inclusion Charter 2026-28

Achieve
Belong
Thrive

Our Commitment

At The Oaks Specialist College, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to creating a learning community where every learner feels they belong, is valued, and is supported to achieve their ambitions. We actively remove barriers, promote equity and dignity, and ensure all learners can thrive.

Our Principles

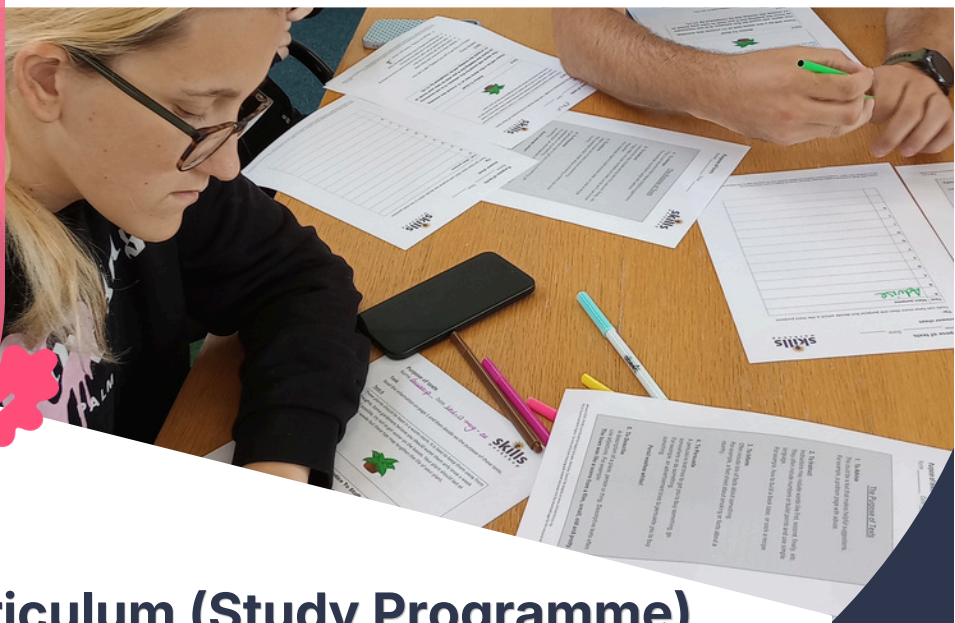
1. **Belonging and Respect** – Creating a safe, welcoming culture that values individuality and challenges discrimination.
2. **High Expectations** – Focusing on strengths, aspirations and positive futures for every learner.
3. **Responsive Support** – Identifying needs early and providing personalised support and reasonable adjustments.
4. **Removing Barriers** – Ensuring learning, environments and opportunities are accessible and inclusive.
5. **Learner Voice** – Listening to and involving learners in decisions that affect them.
6. **Inclusive Teaching** – Delivering ambitious, adaptive learning that enables all learners to succeed.
7. **Partnership Working** – Collaborating with families, employers, professionals and local authorities.
8. **Skilled Staff** – Developing knowledgeable, reflective staff who promote inclusive practice.
9. **Continuous Improvement** – Monitoring impact and taking action to address inequalities and improve outcomes.

What Inclusion Looks Like at The Oaks

- Learners feel they belong and can be themselves.
- Support is personalised and responsive.
- Teaching is ambitious, adaptive and accessible.
- Learners make progress towards independence, employment and adulthood.
- Inclusion is evident in everyday practice and relationships.

Our Shared Responsibility

Inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Together, learners, staff, families, partners and stakeholders commit to creating a community where every learner can achieve, belong and thrive.



Curriculum (Study Programme)

The Oaks provide an ambitious and inclusive curriculum that equips learners with the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and ambition necessary for successful adulthood. The curriculum embeds personal safety, wellbeing, functional Maths and English, social and communication skills, digital literacy, independence, and employability. These elements are integrated across all learning contexts to ensure relevance and practical application.



We provide a safe, caring, and motivating learning environment that encourages taking calculated risks and fosters a culture of success and achievement.

The Preparation for Adulthood curriculum focus areas are employment, independent living, friends, community and relationships and good health. We have developed four highly specialised and bespoke curricula to meet the needs of all our learners: Learning for Life, Skills for Independence, Preparation for Life and Work, and our Hybrid offer.

Learning for Life









RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) underpins all aspects of the Learning for Life curriculum. RARPA provides the structure through which progress is recognised, recorded and built upon, ensuring that learning has a clear purpose, impact and direction.

Each learner follows a personalised learning journey, to move toward the outcomes stated in their EHC Plan.

The focus is on increased independence, meeting individual needs, aspirations, and planning for their next steps after college and education. Our curriculum aims to equip learners with essential life skills and knowledge that prepare them for real world challenges by integrating practical learning experiences in both college and the community.

We emphasise employability skills, independent living skills, community inclusion, and health. Maths and English are integral parts of the curriculum and learning is embedded in real-life situations such as cooking, shopping, and travel training.

Following education, most learners will require social day care, supported employment, and/or supported living.



Skills for Independence
Entry Level 1 - Entry Level 2

A bespoke curriculum for young people who require a supported environment and a contextual hands on approach to their learning - The Skills for Independence curriculum is individually tailored to ensure each learner develops a wide range of skills, knowledge, and behaviours to broaden their aspirations and improve their confidence as they explore supported employment/volunteering opportunities.

Maths and English are taught and integrated through a range of practical subjects including: Food Life Skills, Enterprise, Drama, Minecraft; Eco-Studies. Employability skills are woven throughout the curriculum alongside effective communication.

Learners also participate in supported work placements on and off site. Learners can also combine work placements/internships as part of their study programme, if appropriate.

Following education, most learners will require social day care, supported employment, and/or supported living.







Preparation for Life and Work
Entry Level 2 - Level 2



An individualised curriculum for young people who require support to gain the skills and behaviours to secure employment/supported employment - The Preparation for Life and Work curriculum is used to expand our learners' understanding of the world of work.

Employability skills are embedded throughout all subject areas. The Maths and English curriculum is embedded in all aspects of college life in addition to learners' timetabled lessons.

Learners can combine work placements and internships as part of their study programme, if appropriate.

Throughout all curricula there is a focus on personalisation, inclusion, learner voice, personal development, greater independence and transferrable skills, knowledge and behaviour.

Following education, most learners will enter further training or employment (with some support)



Find out more about each of our pathways and programmes on our website

www.theoaks.ac.uk



Vocational Opportunities

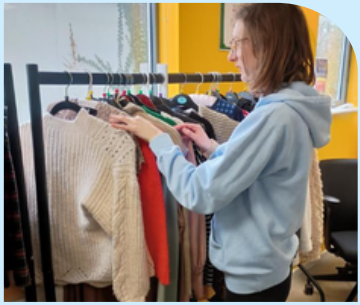
Our study programmes are tailored to suit each learner's individual needs. Learners are not restricted by a profile and will access learning across our offer as appropriate.

We currently offer the following vocational programmes/options:

- Performance Skills
- Game Design
- Art & Enterprise
- Health & Fitness
- Princess Christian's Farm
- Constance Farm
- Gardening and Horticulture
- Carpentry
- Outdoor Learning

We have some outstanding facilities on site including:

- Spill The Beans Cafe
- Commercial Polytunnel
- Wood Workshop
- Deja Brew - Coffee Van
- Tesco Training Centre



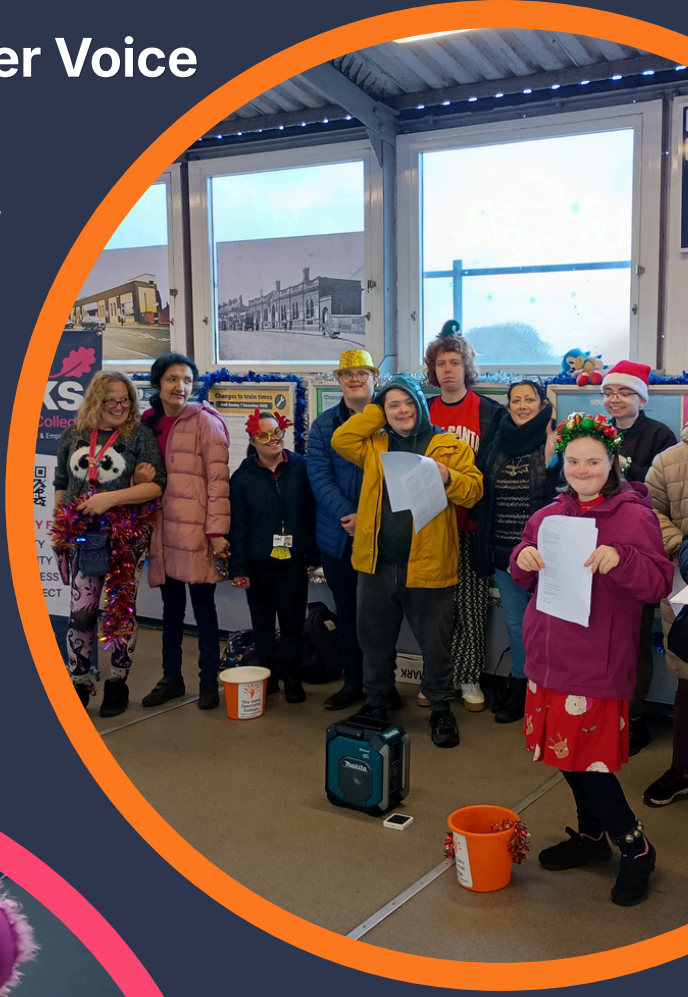




Learner Voice

Actively listening to and valuing learners' views is central to curriculum design and daily life, ensuring individuals play a meaningful role in shaping their educational experience.

The Oaks College Council meets monthly to co-produce initiatives that reflect learner priorities, including fundraising events, social activities and environmental projects. Each term, it leads a whole-college campaign on themes such as wellbeing, recycling and social engagement.







Accessibility





Our Accessibility offer supports learners during and after their time at The Oaks, helping them transition confidently into their communities and develop independence across college, community, and work settings.

Our aim is for young people to leave with essential lifelong independence skills. We support learners to use mobile phones and smart home devices, making the most of assistive and everyday technologies.

This support also includes working closely with stakeholders, next-step destinations, employers and contributing to research.

Through our partnership with AssistiV, learners can access sustainable assistive technology that supports wellbeing and task management, alongside tailored workplace adjustments.

Learners are supported to communicate using a range of personalised approaches, including AAC and VOCA devices, symbols, signing and visual supports. Through a Total Communication approach, learners are empowered to express themselves, make choices, self-advocate, build relationships and develop greater independence.



Every learner leaves The Oaks with a personalised Transition Passport, developed with the learner, teaching staff and the Accessibility Team. The passport celebrates strengths, achievements and aspirations, while outlining support needs, communication preferences and effective adjustments. It helps employers, education providers and support services to understand the individual and provide consistent, personalised support as they undertake their next steps.



Therapies

Our therapy team is dedicated to fostering learners' independence, with a strong emphasis on self-advocacy and self-awareness, preparing them for life beyond education. Our approach integrates therapy into the classroom and community settings, moving away from the traditional direct therapy model. This integration is achieved through close collaboration with teaching staff and external agencies.

Therapies include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Speech and Language
- Counselling

Therapeutic Interventions include:

- Cafe Club
- Makaton
- Sensory Drama
- Communication and Productivity Carousels

Having therapy embedded within the college community allows us to create interventions that are relevant to learners' daily lives and adaptable to their evolving needs as they transition into adulthood. This approach ensures that the skills and strategies developed remain beneficial beyond their time at college. As a result, learners graduate with enhanced functional skills, enriched life experiences, and greater communicative confidence.

Therapists may provide individualised interventions to address specific learner needs.

Careers

Our mission is to empower young adults to take positive steps towards independence and employment.

We achieve this through high-quality careers education, information, impartial advice and guidance (CEIAG). Through our curriculum, employability workshops, enterprise projects, careers events, community projects and work placements, learners develop the skills needed for the world of work. We work closely with employers to create meaningful opportunities that reflect learners' aspirations and local labour market needs.

At The Oaks, we follow the Gatsby Benchmarks to ensure our careers programme is well structured, aspirational and responsive.

Employability is delivered through the King's Trust Employability Qualification, helping learners build the skills needed for successful progression into employment. Where qualifications are not appropriate, bespoke sessions are offered across the college. We focus on more than just gaining a job; learners develop confidence, teamwork, communication, problem-solving and interview skills, alongside creating CVs and understanding workplace expectations.

Overall, our approach equips learners with transferable skills, resilience and self-awareness - preparing them for sustainable careers and positive futures.







Community Inclusion

At The Oaks Specialist College, 'community' is multi-faceted. Firstly, there is our own community within college. A supportive and open environment with the learners' voices at the centre of everything. Then there's our relationship with our local community, filled with fantastic, meaningful partnerships.



We work closely with a range of directorates within local authorities, including social care and health, as well as local and national bodies such as Natspec, BASE, the Careers and Enterprise Company, Jisc, NASEN, NTDi, Policy Connect, and the DWP.

We also partner and collaborate with a number of organisations and businesses including Microsoft, Mitie, Tesco, Waitrose, The Amelia Centre, Runway Training (Oliver McGowan Campaign), BNY Mellon, RBVE, MPS Housing and Nando's.

We have well-established, productive working relationships with The National Trust, Tonbridge Angels Football Club, FEAST, Tonbridge Boys School, local churches and local community initiatives and groups.



Safeguarding

The Oaks is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive environment where every young adult can thrive.

Our safeguarding approach promotes independence while ensuring appropriate protection, with staff trained to recognise and respond to concerns promptly and sensitively. We work in partnership with learners, families, and multi-agencies to uphold wellbeing, dignity, and rights, ensuring that all learners feel secure, valued, and confident as they prepare for adulthood.

Safeguarding Leads

Ros Leach
Principal &
Lead DSL

Lynsey Ritchie
Deputy Principal
& Deputy DSL

John Spavins
Deputy DSL
SCR &
Compliance

Nikki Twiner
Safeguarding
Administrator

Charlotte Thomas
Safeguarding
Administrator



Residentials

Learners' experiences and understanding of life beyond the community are enhanced through residential opportunities.



Admissions to The Oaks

Admissions to The Oaks are offered on an individual basis and all learners must have a current Education, Health and Care Plan. There are no other fixed or overarching admissions criteria; decisions are based upon the Leadership Team's assessment of the College's ability to meet individual needs. This is considered alongside the needs of all learners in the College, and the likelihood of the young person making educational and personal progress.

However, i**f you have achieved grade 3, or above, at GCSE level in either Maths or English Language, The Oaks will not be able to offer a study programme.**

Accredited & Non-Accredited Learning

The Oaks offer accreditation in Maths and English Functional Skills and Certificate, ranging from Entry Level 1 to Level 1-2.

Learners can achieve additional recognition by earning a custom qualification from The King's Trust. This qualification aims to help individuals boost their confidence, acquire practical skills, and enhance their employability.

Applying for a place

The Local Authority (LA) oversees any placement request through the annual review process.

We hold Open Days throughout the year so please do come and visit us. Dates and links to book places are available via our website or email: office@theoaks.ac.uk

If, after attending an Open Day, you think this could be the right place for your young person, during the annual review meeting you can state your preferred onward destination.

The LA's SEN Team receives the annual review paperwork and processes it. The LA should then consult with us according to the young person's stated preference.

Upon receiving the consultation request, we review all provided documentation. This may lead to an observation and assessment of the young person, at their current setting, to establish whether or not we can meet their educational needs and provision.

Based on the outcome of this assessment we will decide if a place is to be offered. If we offer a place, we send our response to the SEN Team. They then complete their decision-making process.

Please note that the LA has the final decision on placement and there is no right to appeal.













“Living my best life”







Our vision is to give young adults with learning difficulties opportunities that engage them and enable them to learn new skills as they prepare for their next steps into adulthood.

They will leave us as confident, capable, caring citizens who contribute to society and have positive, meaningful and productive long-term futures.



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