



Become the best you can be

Heathlands School

The development of pupils' communication, language and literacy is at the centre of all teaching and learning



Heathlands School

Nursery, Primary and Secondary School
for Deaf Children, Day and Residential

Welcome to Heathlands School



Contents

Pages 2-3	Welcome to Heathlands School
Pages 4-5	School day
Page 7	Heathlands Nursery
Pages 8-9	Lower School: Primary
Pages 10-11	Upper School: Secondary
Pages 12-13	Residential
Page 14	Language and Communication
Page 15	Admissions
Page 16	Vision Statement

Every child is valued, and their potential recognised to the fullest. Classes are small, so all children have attention, and are taught by qualified teachers of the deaf, assisted by specialist learning support staff.



**Foreword: Co-Head Teachers,
Sarah Shields and Lesley Reeves Costi**

We are proud to welcome you to Heathlands. Our vision sums up our approach: "Become the best you can be".

High expectations

Established in 1975, Heathlands sets high expectations for pupils, encouraging each child to achieve academically, develop independence and to contribute positively in their communities.

Specialist curriculum

Our school has developed a curriculum specially designed to meet the needs of deaf children. We have placed extra emphasis on:

- communication
- language
- literacy

...the foundation stones for the effective education of deaf children!

Dedicated staff

Heathlands has a team of highly experienced staff, many of whom are deaf themselves. We are passionate about educating deaf children and committed to ensuring the best opportunities and outcomes for your child.

We never stand still!

Set in beautiful grounds, with state-of-the-art facilities, we are designed with the needs of deaf learners in mind. Specialist teaching areas have been developed and extended to suit the delivery of a modern curriculum.

Heathlands never stands still, and is constantly developing.

Parent partnership

Another important part of our school, is you, the parent! You will see, by reading the many parent and pupil stories within this prospectus, that you and your child are very important to us. We champion the link between school and parent and work very hard to involve you in every step of your child's time here.

Get in touch

We would urge you to visit our school. We are confident you will find this a welcoming and supportive school, with staff that listen, consult and actively encourage your involvement. We know that you will be impressed by the quality of education and care we can offer your child.

To make an appointment to visit, or to simply ask us a question please get in touch. Call the school office on 01727 807807, email us at head@heathlands.herts.sch.uk or request a FaceTime call.



“We always use BSL at home, and so it was very important for me to find a school with a BSL environment, as it is my children’s first language.”

Struggles at mainstream school are a thing of the past, and Maira’s children are thriving at Heathlands

Maira and Jaan Laumets live in London Colney with Ervin, Roger, and Marfa.

Finding the right environment

When Maira moved her children from mainstream school she made a list of priorities for an ideal educational facility. The list included the right language environment, low class numbers and an ability to make lots of friends. Maira decided that Heathlands suited all her children’s individual needs.

“We always use BSL at home, and so it was very important for me to find a school with a BSL environment, as it is my children’s first language” explains Maira.

Improved skills

“There has been a massive improvement in Roger’s signing, as well as his reading, maths and communication skills... Ervin is also much more expressive than he was and his reading and writing skills have really improved.”

Children say:

“I like school because it’s interesting to watch the storybook with our teacher,” says Roger. “I also like to chat with my friends and play football.”

Ervin also enjoys having fun and chatting with his friends and adds: “It’s easy to learn because there is always signing.”

School Day



Heathlands School is set in attractive, secure and well maintained grounds. Every room is equipped with up-to-date ICT equipment including interactive white boards, digital visualisers, internet connection, DVD players and other equipment... enabling the most effective visual presentation for teaching.

School hours

School hours are 8.45am - 3.30pm.
Residential pupils arrive Monday 8.45am
and are picked up Friday 3.30pm.

School meals and snacks

Nutritious fresh food is prepared on site
by our catering team. Children can also
bring in packed lunches. Fresh fruit and
homemade bread is always available.
Younger children have healthy snack-time
every morning.

Working with Parents

We work closely with parents in order
to raise student achievement and
develop the school community. We can
communicate with parents via Facetime
and Facebook, and also benefit from
parent Governors and parent 'volunteers'
in classes. There is also a wide range of
school events that parents can attend,
and we run regular parent/teacher
consultations.





Enhanced curriculum

Clubs

To further enhance the curriculum, and encourage lifelong learning, there is a wide variety of clubs that children can join, during lunchtime and after school. Options often include:

- sailing
- football
- signing choir
- multi sports
- cricket
- snorkelling
- basketball
- film club
- drama
- ballet.

Off-site learning

Away from school learning opportunities have included:

- British Museum Egyptian room
- Geography field trip to Epping Forest
- St Albans Abbey art trip
- Sky Studios - English
- Luton Airport - humanities survey
- Schools' Shakespeare Festival
- St Paul's Cathedral
- Tree Planting in Heartwood Forest
- Various inter school sports activities
- Big Bang Science Festival

Partnerships

Heathlands is an inclusive school such that all members of the school community are encouraged to be active participants. The school collaborates with other local schools to provide an enriched social and academic experience through shared projects and learning opportunities.



Lyndon and Georgia have high academic expectations for their daughters, which Heathlands helps them to fulfill

Lyndon Borrow and Georgia Dimopoulou live in Chiswick with daughters Chloe and Thalia.

High expectations

"Our academic expectations are high," says Georgia, "and at Heathlands we felt that parental and school expectations matched each other. The girls have attended since they were two and have never looked back."

"Absolutely love it"

"Heathlands uses the same curriculum as mainstream schools. The only difference is that there are smaller class sizes and the teachers can sign. Our girls are so happy here, they absolutely love it."

Valuing opinions

The school works closely with parents to help develop student potential. "Parental involvement is encouraged and the staff value our opinions," says Lyndon. "Communication is excellent. The Head Teacher has a very busy, responsible job, but always has time for the children and will drop everything to talk to parents if necessary."

Children say:

When asked what she likes about Heathlands, Chloe says: "everything!" ... whilst Thalia adds: "I like science, reading and all my friends."

Heathlands School is fantastic and I recommend it 100%!"

"Heathlands uses the same curriculum as mainstream schools. The only difference is that there are smaller class sizes and the teachers can sign. Our girls are so happy here, they absolutely love it."



Heathlands Nursery



Heathlands Nursery provides a vibrant and language rich learning environment.

Heathlands Nursery is extremely well resourced to support pupil learning and staffed by qualified and specialist learning support staff. A child centred approach is used in line with National Early Year Foundation Stage requirements.

All children within the Nursery have individualised Learning Journals in which skills development, learning and achievements are noted and next steps are identified. Close liaison is kept between nursery staff and parents, for example through the Home –School books. A popular sign and play session for pre-school age children and their parents is held every week.



Oyin wants the best of both worlds for her twins, and Heathlands School provides just that

Oyin Kalejaiye lives near St. Albans with son Seni and twins Toni and Tosin.

Moved from Kent to use Heathlands School

Oyin was so committed to finding the very best education for her twins that she sold her house in Kent and moved the entire family to live near Heathlands School.

“Toni and Tosin are both profoundly deaf and had cochlear implants at the age of two,” says Oyin. “The boys could already sign, and I knew that implants would never be a cure for deafness but I wanted them to have access to sound so that in later life they could choose whether they wanted to use the implants or communicate by signing.”

Role models

“Some of the teachers and learning support assistants at Heathlands School are deaf and I liked the fact that they are all such good role models. My boys are learning that nothing will prevent them from doing what they want to do with their lives.”



“Some of the teachers and learning support assistants at Heathlands School are deaf and I liked the fact that they are all such good role models.”

Visual techniques

“I think all the staff are fantastic because they are well trained, passionate about the children and supportive of the parents. They know the visual techniques that will make learning fun and interactive and the children don’t get bored or frustrated. They are also incredibly helpful and supportive. Heathlands School is fantastic and I recommend it 100%!”

Lower School: Primary



Heathlands Lower School provides a broad and balanced curriculum which engages pupils and develops their love of learning.

Development and learning

The curriculum in lower school focuses on the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and the development of learning and thinking skills across all National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation stage subject areas.

Heathlands Primary Curriculum:

- core subjects of English and maths are taught each morning with literacy and numeracy skills then applied throughout the rest of the curriculum.
- learning is enhanced through a thematic approach focusing on the development of pupil skills as well as knowledge.

- curriculum planning and delivery is differentiated to meet individual needs and modified to suit deaf pupils.
- language and communication skills development is central to learning and is integrated within the daily planning for each child.
- requirements of the National Curriculum, PSHE and RE are in line with mainstream schools.

Achievement

The curriculum is designed so that our children become successful, confident learners who enjoy learning, making progress and achieving.

Justin and Jamie are flourishing and both feel they belong in the caring atmosphere of Heathlands School



Linda Dean lives in Reading with her sons Jamie and Justin.

Enjoying learning

Linda is delighted with the excellent progress both her sons are making now they are boarders at Heathlands. She says: "It is amazing how much Justin has learnt since starting there at the age of nine. The staff have been very good at finding just the right level at which to teach him so that he can access all the information. I think the support he is receiving at Heathlands is perfect. Jamie is also coming on very well with his learning now. He has improved academically because of the staff at Heathlands and he can now understand all the lessons."



Making new friends

Linda had to battle to get her eldest son, Justin, a place at Heathlands. She knew he wasn't thriving at his mainstream school because his needs weren't being met and she was determined to find the right school for him, having attended a school for the deaf children herself. She says: "Justin could not interact with his peers because of his deafness and was very isolated at his former school and this led to him becoming increasingly frustrated and unhappy. Since moving to Heathlands as a boarder, Justin has benefited from being with other deaf children and has learnt a lot from them as well as from the staff at the school. He settled in very quickly and fitted in with the routine of the school really well. As a result, his frustration reduced and he has learnt how to express his feelings and manage them better, which has meant his behaviour has improved."

Developing signing skills

Jamie has just completed 4 years as a boarder. Linda says "He begins his fifth year this coming September and I have been pleased to see that he is enjoying life at Heathlands much more than he did during his time in a mainstream school. He is no longer isolated and has plenty of good friends now. He has learnt a lot of new signing skills and has

picked up some special signs that are perhaps exclusive to life at Heathlands, which has enriched his language skills.

After school activities

"They both love boarding at Heathlands because it gives them the chance to socialise in the evenings.

There are also lots of exciting social opportunities for boarders at Heathlands. Justin goes to scouts and Jamie goes to cubs with interpreters and they also get treats, such as going bowling or to the cinema," Linda says.

Learning to be independent

"The staff are also teaching them life skills, such as cookery, after school to help them become more independent. Both my boys feel that they belong and are very happy at Heathlands and I would enthusiastically recommend the school to other parents of deaf children."

Children say:

Justin says: "I love doing after school activities with the other children."

Jamie says: "I like playing with all my friends at school."

Upper School: Secondary



Heathlands Upper School is a strong and vibrant department catering for Years 7-11. A broad and balanced curriculum is offered. Expectations are high for each pupil to achieve their potential. Pupils are grouped according to ability and the curriculum is tailored to their needs.

Curriculum learning pathways

Our prime objective is to enable each student to achieve their maximum potential through a stimulating and challenging curriculum.

We have developed three possible learning pathways to suit differing needs and abilities.

One route allows students to study GCSE courses in at least 8 subjects (most students will be expected to achieve grades between A* and C).

A second route enables students to study some GCSE subjects and also follow some nationally accredited vocational courses.

A third learning route to develop independent living and life skills will operate if there are students for whom this is appropriate.

Each learning pathway ensures that:

- development of literacy skills takes place across the curriculum and this is recognised as essential in order to facilitate success

- all pupils have access to their preferred learning style and mode of communication
- students are grouped according to needs so pupils of all abilities can achieve success
- pupils are given professional guidance about choice of subjects to be studied at KS 4.





Curriculum is provided which is challenging and stimulating. Curriculum adapted to suit differing learning needs.



Ellie loves being able to use her experience to benefit another generation of pupils at Heathlands School

Ellie Monk teaches English and Deaf Studies to secondary school pupils of varying abilities in Key Stages Three and Four at Heathlands.

Happy memories

Ellie has thoroughly enjoyed her first two years teaching at Heathlands, where she can well remember having a great experience as a pupil herself. She says: "I had an excellent education here, which I couldn't fault in any way. I loved every minute of my time as a pupil and made some friends for life while I was at Heathlands."

Supportive environment

After obtaining a degree in English and an MA, Ellie came back to the school as a Learning Support Assistant and trained as a teacher while teaching at the school. "I knew that I would be really well supported if I came back here to teach because the staff here are all very helpful. We all support each other, so it's a really positive environment to work in."

Empathy with pupils

"As a deaf person myself, I understand how difficult learning English can be for many of the children here and that is why I wanted to become a teacher. Our curriculum has been designed to meet the needs of deaf children with the emphasis on communication, language and literacy. I understand how deaf people receive information and so I know how to put it across in a way that will help them."

Rewarding moments

"The best thing about the job, and something that I always look forward to, is when the children suddenly 'get it'. Literacy and language are very difficult to learn if you are deaf, so it is really rewarding when you teach something and the children finally grasp it. It's the most wonderful feeling when I see pupils really understanding something I have been teaching them."

Time in the spotlight

One of the highlights of Ellie's time at Heathlands so far has been producing Twelfth Night for the national Shakespeare Festival for Schools project. She says: "The English department worked hard with the children to practise the play at school and then we performed it at the Abbey Theatre in St Albans. All the parents, friends and families really enjoyed coming to watch the children perform the play."

Good teamwork

"I would wholeheartedly recommend Heathlands to other teachers. The team spirit here is really good and there is always someone available to help you. We share our experiences and work together really well. I think it would be a very good atmosphere for anyone new to teaching to come into."

Residential



Heath House is the residential department of Heathlands School, providing weekly boarding for both primary and secondary aged pupils. It is a happy, safe, positive environment in which openness, trust, tolerance and respect are encouraged...and where all activities support the learning and developmental objectives of all our boarders.

Parents

Staff work collaboratively with parents to ensure the best outcomes for boarders; communication, social skills, independence and preparation for working life.

Residency: 'home from home'

We create a home from home atmosphere so the children are actively involved in the planning and organisation of their environment. Pupils in residence are organised into groups according to age and gender. Boys and girls sleep in separate corridors on opposite sides of the building. Some have single bedrooms and some share with their friends. There are common rooms where boarders can mix and socialise, play games or watch TV and DVDs. A domestic style kitchen allows boarders to develop a sense of responsibility and independence skills.

Independent living

Heath House operates an Independent Living Programme. The programme covers key areas of

- personal care skills
- managing day to day domestic tasks e.g. meal times and laundry
- taking responsibility for their individual health needs
- staying safe and managing risks
- caring for their belongings and the environment
- independent travel and going out in the local community
- solving problems and seeking help.



Tara has learnt to communicate and has made plenty of new friends in the supportive setting of Heathlands School



April Williams and Josef Waldman live in Buckland with their daughter, Tara, aged five.

Developing communication skills

April and Josef are thrilled with the progress made by their daughter, Tara, in the two years since she joined the nursery at Heathlands

School. Her Mum, April, says: "Tara has had profound hearing loss since birth and before she started in the nursery in May 2016 she could not communicate at all. She has now learnt British Sign Language and can also say words and speak to us.

Forging new friendships

April says Tara had attended a mainstream playgroup but

because of her hearing loss could not communicate with the other children and had therefore not made any friends. "We realised that it was difficult for hearing children to understand why Tara could not communicate with them, but it was sad for us to see her so isolated. Therefore it has been very important for us to see her forge friendships with the other children at Heathlands.

Specially adapted curriculum

"When it was time for her to start at nursery we looked into her going to Heathlands School as it has a curriculum adapted specially for deaf children, with the emphasis on communication, language and literacy. I had a friend who had attended Heathlands who had done very well there. After looking round the school, we were pleased to find that it met all of Tara's needs," April says.

Starting to sign

"Before Tara started in the nursery she had no speech at all and couldn't use sign language. But she settled in immediately and she was never upset about going in each day. She quickly made friends with the other children and started to learn to communicate.

Progress with speech

"Tara can now sign in sentences and can understand what we sign to her. She has also started to speak. The school have helped her develop in both areas and they are giving her everything she needs to help her make progress. We can tell she is a lot happier and are glad that she has had the chance to make friends with children who, have similar needs" April says.

Maths and reading success

"We are pleased the school has high academic expectations of all the children and that Tara is already doing well academically. Even though she is still in the Reception class, she is making good progress in Maths and can count and multiply by two. Tara enjoys bringing a reading book home with her every night and always knows most of the words in it. She likes looking at the pictures and describing what is in them to us.

Dedicated exercise help

"In addition to doing PE with the other children, because Tara has certain physical needs and mobility problems, she is given help by a physiotherapist while she is at school to do exercises to strengthen her muscles.

Friendly and approachable staff

"We love the setting of the school and the friendly atmosphere whenever we go in. The staff have always made us feel at ease and communicate well with us, and we have both now learnt to sign. Even though Tara has to travel quite a long way each day to get to school, we feel it is well worth it because of the benefits being at Heathlands have brought her," April says.

Advocates of the school

"The class sizes at Heathlands School are small so the children get lots of attention and have access to some excellent facilities. We are incredibly satisfied with the school and would have no hesitation about recommending it to other families."

Children say:

Tara says: 'I like my teacher and all the friends I have made at school.'



Language and Communication

Language development is the key to all areas of pupils' learning. It facilitates:

- thinking
- reasoning
- understanding
- literacy.



Our pupils

Pupils at Heathlands have a wide range of language needs, with most having language skills on a par with their hearing peers. A large percentage of pupils are children from deaf families who have British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language, or children with hearing parents who have signed from diagnosis or the early years. We also cater for:

- children with additional needs
- children with late diagnosis
- children who have come to Heathlands late, from other settings or having used other communication approaches
- children with specific language impairment
- children with language delay.

Total communication

Heathlands has a 'Total Communication' approach, which includes:

- British Sign Language
- Sign Supported English
- spoken English
- written English
- visual support for teaching (e.g. through ICT)
- lip-reading
- listening: assistive technology (including Soundfield Systems and/ or radio aids)
- audiology: hearing aids, implants.

Our aim is for children to become confident learners with optimum language ability.

Audiology

Heathlands is built for deaf children, so classrooms are designed with optimum acoustic conditions for listening. Sound absorbing surfaces and careful choice of resources further contribute to an excellent listening environment. Each child is supported with individual communication approaches, which often include the effective use of hearing aids and cochlear implants to develop listening skills.

Sign language

For most of our pupils early language and communication will be acquired through sign language. Staff are fluent in BSL thus allowing direct communication with pupils. All members of the school community learn to sign supported by Heathlands' BSL Centre.

Speech and Language Support

Heathlands also has:

- qualified teachers of deaf children trained in language development and skilled in a variety of approaches to meet the needs of deaf pupils
- Speech and Language Therapists, specialist in working with deaf children
- an Audiology Assistant and visiting Audiologist.
- specialist Learning Support Assistants.



BSL Centre

Becoming a Specialist SEN College in 2008 helped us to build a new state-of-the-art BSL training centre. Designed and equipped with superb ICT facilities, the centre has a wide range of other resources to support deaf awareness and the learning of BSL.

Sharing our experience

With the establishment of our BSL training centre Heathlands expertise, experience and facilities can be shared with our partner schools and the community. Heathlands provides BSL and deaf awareness courses to many local schools and offers accredited Signature courses. Our parents and carers signing group meets every week. For more information: bsl@heathlands.herts.sch.uk



Admissions



Applications

Heathlands School acts as a regional resource centre, and welcomes enquiries from parents across the UK. Applications are usually made through the child's Local Authority, but we welcome visits from parents.

If parents feel our school meets the needs of their child they should contact their LA. The LA will then consult with the school and make a formal application.



Visit the school

Parents who are thinking of applying for a place at our school are invited to visit and look around at any time. Please contact the school office to make an appointment.



How to find us



Vision statement: become the best you can be

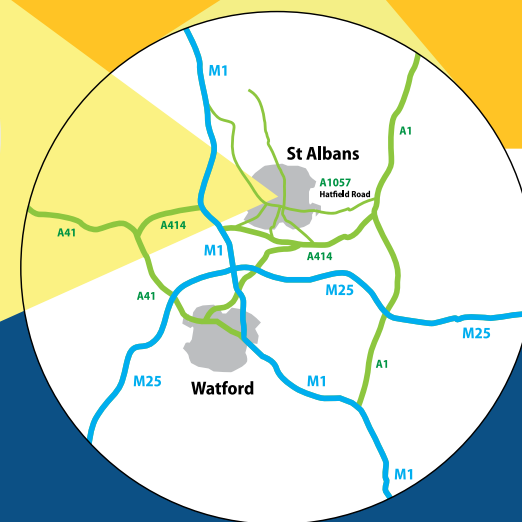
Our Vision is for Heathlands to become synonymous with high achievement. We aim to provide a consistently challenging, stimulating and caring learning environment that engages and develops our pupils through personalised learning.

We commit to recruit staff of the highest calibre who, through their continuous drive for improvement and innovation, create an enriching and supportive environment. Every individual in our school community is valued and all success is celebrated.

The whole school community is encouraged to develop the moral values, confidence and resilience to make a difference to lives in Heathlands and beyond. By striving for excellence in all that we do, we can become the best we can be.



to St Albans
town centre



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Heathlands School

Nursery, Primary and Secondary School
for Deaf Children, Day and Residential

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