



Heathlands School

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

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

Become the best you can be

Welcome to Heathlands School: become the best you can be



Foreword: Co-Headteachers, Sarah Shields and Lesley Reeves Costi

We are proud to welcome you to Heathlands. Our vision for deaf education 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 moving forward.

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 encourage 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. You can call the school office on 01727 807807, email us at admin@heathlands.herts.sch.uk or call us via VRS (link on the website).



Is everything you want from a school too much to ask for? Stacey has found that it is not

Wuqaas and Stacey's children are full time students at Heathlands School. Daisy is 12, twins Zak and Leo are 10 and Scarlett is in Reception.

Need for support

Daisy's first school was the one that Mum Stacey herself attended as a child. Although it is a mainstream setting, during Stacey's time there, there were several other deaf children in her class and they were well supported with their learning so she hoped that Daisy would receive the same level of specialist help she herself had had.

Better options

However, as Daisy was the only deaf child in her class, that same support was no longer available and so after researching the options, Stacey decided that the very best alternative was Heathlands School. "Heathlands seemed to offer everything we wanted for Daisy in terms of good quality education in a setting more suited to her needs", she says. "Even though it was a long way from where we were living at the time, we felt that it was by far the best place for her and so we moved her there".

A trip too far

Daisy was later followed to Heathlands by Leo and Zak, but the two-hour journey each way became too much, especially as the children's escort was not able to use BSL and not trained in the administration of EpiPens, which both Zak and Leo needed. Therefore, the family felt their only option was to move closer to the school.

The best decision

That decision, says Stacey, proved to be the best one they ever made. "Heathlands has been an absolutely wonderful place for all my children. At her last school, Daisy was isolated and unable to join in the full school experience alongside her peers, so when she visited Heathlands and saw how everyone was signing, she was so excited. When Leo and Zak started there, I saw quite clearly the contrast between their early years and Daisy's, and when it was time for Scarlett to start school, Heathlands was a no-brainer!"

Thriving through support

One of the many reasons Stacey has to be grateful to Heathlands is the help she has received in the identification and support with Daisy's diagnosis of autism through specialist and targeted help. "It was the staff at Heathlands who were able to make sure we could access the appropriate help, and who effectively addressed Daisy's

additional needs. She had struggled to keep up for a while, but after the diagnosis she began to thrive and is now fully able to make the very most of school life."

Tools and confidence

Heathlands offers a variety of therapies and strategies, including play therapy and shape coding, the latter of which has been particularly helpful for Leo and Zak. Stacey also appreciates how the children are encouraged to become independent outside the deaf community, by visiting shops and cafes and to make themselves understood. "As we know from experience, being deaf in a predominantly hearing world can be an isolating and difficult thing, but Heathlands is giving my children both the tools and the confidence to become a part of society as a whole. They have as much to offer as anyone else and should never be marginalised because of their deafness."

A new understanding

It is not only the children who are greatly benefiting from what Heathlands has to offer, but Stacey and her husband, too. "Before we moved here, we also felt at a disadvantage in that as deaf adults we were more or less alone amongst our neighbours. Heathlands to us feels like a family, a community where everyone has at least one thing in common and we all understand each other. It's a really great feeling and we now have not only a wonderful social life but a brilliant support network. We get together all the time, adults and children, and help each other out wherever we can."

What more could one ask?

Stacey sums up how she feels about Heathlands: "All I wanted was for my children to have a great experience at school. Not just a good education but a close social circle, a preparation for adulthood and the means to lead a full, happy and productive life in the future. That, and more, we have found at Heathlands."

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 and other equipment enabling the most effective visual presentation for teaching.

School hours

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

School meals and snacks

Nutritious fresh food is prepared on site by our catering team. Children can also bring

packed lunches. Fresh fruit and salad are always available. All children have a 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 telephone, facetime, video relay service, Arbor and text. There is also a wide range of school events that parents can attend, and we run termly 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
- gym club
- snorkelling
- basketball
- film club
- drama
- ballet.

Off-site learning

Away from school learning opportunities have included:

Hazard Alley, V&A, Kew Gardens, Zoo, Universities, Farm, Bletchley Park.

Partnerships

Heathlands is an inclusive school, 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.



“Deafness does not define my daughters.” Vita has found a school where her children are finally able to fit in

Vita and her husband Ugis moved to the UK from Latvia when their children were young. Their daughters, Sara and Sally, are 17 and 11 years old respectively and both attend Heathlands School.

Isolation

Both Vita and Ugis are deaf. Vita comes from a family who are mostly deaf also, so they are very well aware of the need to appropriately support their children in a hearing world.

Vita attended a school for deaf children in Latvia so when the family came to England she had assumed that there would be similar provision in the UK. “When we arrived here, my Health Visitor advised me what our options could be but where we were living at the time there was little choice. Initially, Sara attended a school which had support for deaf children, but it was very limited. I remember seeing Sara looking sadly through the window at the end of the school day, just waiting for me to collect her. She didn’t feel that she fitted in.”

A different world

Vita had had no experience of what ‘mainstream’ was, a very different concept to her, having grown up in a totally different education system, so she was unaware of any other potential alternative or specialist provision, until she heard about Heathlands and arranged to visit. Although it was a long way from where they were living in Peterborough, it sounded as though it would offer a greater level of support for her daughters, and their hopes were confirmed. “There was no question that this was a far better environment for the girls. There was a lovely Sign and Play group we could attend, and we met people like us; those in a similar situation with aspirations to access good education for our children without them being held back by their low expectations.”

A good move

Because of the distance involved – an hour and a half away from their home – Vita was offered the chance to board the girls, but this was not something she wished for. “We had so recently moved to a new country and it was all so very different, we didn’t wish for them to be away from us. Purely because we liked the school so much, we decided to move closer so that the girls could attend as day pupils, and we have never regretted that decision.”

Impressive progress

First and foremost, Vita needed to know that the quality of the educational provision was up to her expectations and in this regard, she has been delighted.

“Both the girls are performing to a high academic standard, and considering that at the same time they were learning a new language I am impressed with their progress. It is clear that Heathlands has a wealth of experience not only in supporting deaf children, but those for whom English is not their first language.”

Options

Now in sixth form at Heathlands where she is studying chemistry, Sara is studying psychology and biology at neighbouring Marlborough School. This arrangement allows her to gradually transition into a hearing environment but with support from Heathlands should she need it. Vita says: “It was a big change for her but a very positive one. I believe it was the perfect way to integrate into the wider community, while still attending Heathlands for chemistry lessons, which has done so much to help her.”

Sally’s own transition, into Year 7 secondary education at Heathlands has also been smooth, and although the family were given the option of a mainstream setting, Sally has enjoyed her time at Heathlands so much, she has decided to stay on.

Hidden benefits

It is not only her daughters who have benefited from what Heathlands has to offer, but Vita and Ugis as well. “The girls have made a lot of really good friends, and through them, so have we”, she says. “The other parents, the staff, everyone has been so lovely and so approachable that we feel they are like family to us. For the girls, being immersed in a community which treats deafness as normality means they feel they fit in easily and are no different to anyone else. No child wants to stand out from the crowd and at Heathlands, they are just as much a part of the school as all their peers.”

Exceeding expectations

Vita concludes: “When we first visited Heathlands I didn’t really know what to expect, but what our family has found has exceeded our expectations in so many ways. My children are accepted for who they are, not defined by their deafness and not treated any differently to anyone else, because Heathlands has given them the tools and the confidence to flourish.”

EYFS: a vibrant and language rich learning environment



Heathlands EYFS provides a vibrant and language rich learning environment.

Well resourced

Heathlands EYFS is extremely well resourced to support pupil learning and staffed by Qualified Teachers and Specialist Learning Support Staff. A child-centred approach is used in line with National Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.



Learning Journals

All children within the Nursery have individualised electronic Learning Journals, in which skills development, learning and achievements are noted and next steps are identified.

Home-School books

Close liaison is kept between lower school staff and parents, for example through the Home - School books.

Sign and Play

A popular sign and play session for pre-school age children and their parents is held fortnightly.





Deepika and Saurabh were not prepared to accept second best. Heathlands School surpassed their expectations

Deepika and Saurabh live locally with their children, including Shiv, who is in Year 5 at Heathlands School.

Shiv was born with a very rare form of deafness which is not able to be aided with cochlear implants or hearing aids. He underwent Auditory Brainstem Implant surgery but is still profoundly deaf.

Different, not disabled

Battling to get the necessary support for their son, and with absolutely no experience or knowledge of the implications of deafness, Deepika and Saurabh were desperate to find an appropriate educational setting where they lived at the time. "The only things we could find were special schools which catered for children with a wide range of disabilities, and we felt this was not what we wanted for him. We believed that he should be somewhere he felt like a 'normal' person, not someone with a disability and therefore different. To us, Shiv is not disabled, he's just deaf, and we were determined that he should be treated as such."

Limited options

Specialist provision for deaf children in Bedford proved impossible to find, and the local authority could only suggest home schooling. "Obviously, that was not a viable option", says Deepika. "We couldn't even find a way to access tuition in signing, so we needed to look further afield for somewhere that could help."

Internet searches took them to Heathlands School, which seemed to offer something much closer to what they were looking for. "We went to visit the school and literally within a few hours, Shiv had learned a few signs. We couldn't believe it. We had no doubt that we had found a perfect setting for him, and ever since have been proven right."

A good move

The travel distance was a problem, but Deepika and Saurabh were so keen to accept a place at Heathlands, they moved house and now live within a few minute's walk of the school. "It was so fortunate: we moved in August and in September Shiv started school. It worked out so well and absolutely for the best."

Total communication

One particular reason why Deepika and Saurabh chose Heathlands was its approach to Total Communication. This encompasses a wide range of methods including BSL, sign supported English, lip reading and visual support, thus catering for children who have different levels of listening

access. They were also delighted that they were offered full support in learning BSL, which they have now done to Level 3. "That has helped us tremendously; not only with communicating with Shiv, but with other families that we have met and formed great relationships with through the school. We feel that Heathlands is rather like a second family for us now."

Beyond expectations

Deepika describes how Shiv's early years were difficult for the family. "No knowledge, no support, no understanding of where to look for help, but Heathlands has been a salvation in many ways. Shiv is succeeding beyond our expectations, he is happy, confident and achieving. I sometimes think he'd rather be at school than at home! I will never forget the day, just one week after he'd started school, he came home and signed to me "I love you". There are no words to say how I felt. We want to be part of his world, rather than he be part of ours, and Heathlands has helped us to live within both."



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 language and literacy 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.





Looking for a fully immersive education for their children, Liz and Jay found everything they wanted at Heathlands School

Liz and Jay Thomas-Morton have recently moved from Birmingham to be closer to Heathlands School which their three sons all attend Heathlands School.

A broad offer

Noah, Hugo and Joel, who are twelve, ten and six years old respectively, have been in specialist settings for deaf children since both nursery and primary age. Whilst they were very happy with the boys' primary school, Liz and Jay felt that at secondary level, a combination of both academic and social opportunities was very important.

Liz explains:

"A good academic education was really important as far as we were concerned, but we also wanted our boys to have a holistic experience, where all their needs were met effectively, including a fulfilling social life, and that was what Heathlands offered. We decided to move all the boys there when Noah was nearing secondary age, and we also moved house to be nearer the school as we wanted them to remain at home."

No barriers

Principal amongst their wishes was for the boys to have a strong social circle where their deafness was not in any way a drawback, and that they should feel at home amongst their peers. What they found at Heathlands was not just a like-minded wider community, but what they now describe as a second family.

"We immediately felt this was a place with no barriers—somewhere where the children's life experiences were understood and shared. It ticked every box for us".

Direct communication

Heathlands offers a range of teaching and therapy methods designed to accommodate the needs of each of its students. These include British Sign Language, Sign Supported English and spoken English as well as speech therapy and other interventions.

To Jay, the principle of direct communication is vital:

"In order to ensure that the children get the most from their education, they need to have the personal connection with their teachers. This means that if third-party translation is needed with signing, for example, some of the more subtle messages of the lesson may be missed. So for us, the fact that a high proportion of the teaching and ancillary staff are also deaf is a major factor in the quality of education at Heathlands."

Empowerment

Both Liz and Jay feel very strongly that, for Deaf children to truly survive and thrive in today's world, it is essential that they

develop strong literacy skills and, where it comes naturally, speech, alongside a deep connection to the Deaf community.

Liz explains:

"Literacy empowers them to access information, succeed academically, and participate fully in society. Equally important is immersion in a Deaf environment, surrounded by Deaf peers and role models, where they can freely communicate, build meaningful relationships, and embrace their identity. This nurtures self-esteem, cultural pride, and social competence. When Deaf children grow up feeling secure in who they are and confident in their language and communication, they are far better equipped to navigate the wider world - engaging with hearing people from a position of confidence."

"Heathlands School provides exactly that environment: a place where Deaf children are supported to achieve academically, develop a strong sense of identity, and grow into confident, capable individuals ready to take on the wider world."

Great dynamic

The social aspect of Heathlands School has been a huge bonus for the Thomas-Morton family, with all of them taking full advantage of what they describe as a great dynamic. Liz and Jay agree:

"We socialise a great deal, with play dates, parties, sharing school runs, just everyday chats on the playground. Because we are all in the same boat, communication is easy and relaxed, and we all understand each other's perspective - not just the other parents but the staff are completely immersed in the deaf community and so there are no obstacles to communication to overcome."

Something special

"The recent collaboration between Heathlands' Sixth Form and Marlborough, a mainstream school offering post-16 education, furthers the students' journey. With ongoing input from Heathlands staff, it creates a healthy, supported transition - giving Deaf students the chance to experience a mainstream environment while remaining grounded in their linguistic and cultural community."

Spread the word

Many Deaf parents of Deaf children send them to Heathlands because they are very aware of the benefits that Deaf schools provide - so it was a natural choice for Jay and Liz.

"We have found something rather special at Heathlands and would love for more hearing parents of Deaf children to discover the benefits for themselves."

Upper School: Secondary



Heathlands Upper School is a strong and vibrant department catering for Years 7-11. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided which is challenging and stimulating. Expectations are high for each pupil to achieve their potential. Pupils are grouped according to ability and the curriculum adapted to suit differing learning 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 4-9).

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 for next steps after KS4/KS5.



Heathlands Sixth Form: a university style environment



Heathlands Sixth Form works in cooperation with Marlborough School as its partner. Students can choose to study a range of A-Levels and Level 3 BTECS in preparation for higher education.

Students in Year 12 and 13 will have a mixed timetable of direct teaching, personal study time and tutorials. Depending on the subjects chosen, lessons may be taught directly by a Teacher of the Deaf at Heathlands, or some may be within our local consortium school and supported by a Communication Support Worker and live captioning.

Facilities

There are allocated Sixth Form areas which means students can access quiet study as well as communal areas throughout the day.

A structured programme of tutorials and progress monitoring helps students to fulfil their potential in chosen specialist areas.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care in the Sixth Form is seen as an extremely important part of our offer as students make the transition from GCSE to Post 16 study and then need full support to make key decisions for their next steps.

Dress code

The intention of the Sixth Form dress code is to maintain the smart appearance but allows a degree of flexibility, in acknowledgement of the role of the Sixth Former and their progression towards higher education or the world of employment.



Micah was held back by deafness, but in two years at Heathlands he is flourishing in every way

Natasha and Simon live in Thurrock and have a son, Micah, who is in Year 9 at Heathlands School.

A slow start

Micah lost his hearing at 2 years old after contracting meningitis. With the partial help of cochlear implants he was able to attend mainstream primary school but despite support from specialist teachers, it became clear that he was not able to make as much progress as his hearing peers.

Time to catch up

For that reason, Natasha and Simon decided to apply for a place at a secondary school for deaf children, and Heathlands was the perfect answer. Micah is now a weekly boarder at Heathlands and is catching up faster than Natasha could have hoped. "Micah had a slow start because his deafness was holding him back. He had started to learn BSL in primary school but not to a sufficient level to enable him to keep up as much as he would otherwise have done. Once he started at Heathlands, being immersed in signing meant that he picked it up very quickly indeed, and therefore his academic progress improved a great deal."

Total immersion

The decision to opt for boarding rather than day attendance was made for several reasons. Natasha says: "The travelling would have been a problem because of the distance and the fact that we had to take into account our other children's schools and our jobs. But more importantly, being completely immersed in a deaf community was far more beneficial to him in every way. Taking part in activities and a social life near our home would be difficult as there are very few resources to cater for deaf children and he would have missed out on a great deal."

A holistic education

Whilst Micah's academic progress is coming on very well, what Natasha greatly appreciates is the all-round development in terms of confidence and independence he has shown in the last couple of years. "Micah is learning that he has as many abilities as the next person, and that he has just as much to offer. He's no longer shy in a social setting and people gravitate towards him because of who he is."

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

Residential Support Workers work collaboratively with parents to ensure the best outcomes for boarders; focusing on communication, social skills, independence and preparation for working life, communication, social skills, independence and preparation for working life.

Residency: 'home from home'

We create a home from home atmosphere so the children and young people are actively involved in the planning and organisation of their environment. Pupils in residence are

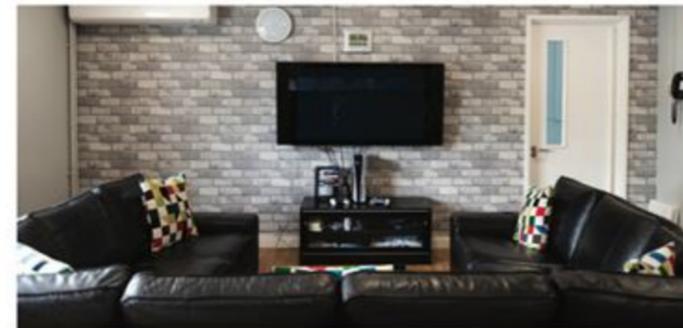
organised into groups according to age and gender. Boys and girls sleep in separate corridors on opposite sides of the building. Some have single bedrooms and some share with their friends. There are common rooms where boarders can mix and socialise, play games or watch TV. A domestic style kitchen allows 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.





Dhruvi is proving how being deaf in a hearing world is no hindrance to achievement and happiness, thanks to support from Heathlands School

Nilesch and Pushpa live in Kingsbury with their two daughters. Dhruvi is in Year 8 at Heathlands School.

To be the best

Every parent wants the best possible education for their children and it is clear when speaking to Nilesch that he believes he has struck gold with Heathlands. "We went to visit three schools for Dhruvi, looking for one which would best suit her needs, and it was clear immediately that Heathlands fit the bill", he says. "The staff were so welcoming, the facilities were impressive and, although it was quite a distance from our home, we had no doubt that it was what we were looking for."

Communication is key

There are many aspects to Heathlands that have impressed Nilesch since Dhruvi started there, but some in particular stand out. Very important to the family is the level of communication between school and parents. "We are kept in constant touch with Dhruvi's day to day activities; whether she has achieved something really good, whether she has had a bit of a problem with something, or just a general overview of her school day. It means that we are always aware of anything we might need to talk about at home. It is so reassuring to know that we are completely included in her school experience."

The confidence to shine

Furthermore, Nilesch points out that not only is his daughter receiving an excellent academic education, she is being taught how to hold her head up in the hearing world. "At Heathlands, deafness is not seen as a disability but as a challenge to be accepted. The children are taught, and motivated, to be confident. To understand that they are the equal of anyone and that their lack of hearing does not mean that they cannot play a full part in society. Deafness should not mean sitting on the sidelines and what they learn at Heathlands is the confidence to be the person they are without being defined by a perceived disability."

A wonderful community

One thing which was a potential concern to Nilesch and Pushpa was that of Dhruvi's ethnicity, as Heathlands is situated in a predominantly white British area, but this was very quickly dispelled. "As a family, we are just another child and her parents. Different faiths and cultures are respected and not a subject of diversity. The school puts on some great activities and events where we are able to foster good relationships with other families. Heathlands has created a wonderful community of people who wish to celebrate their children."

Bringing awareness to a wider audience

It is clear that Nilesch is extremely proud of his daughter, not least because she has become something of an ambassador for the deaf community. "When she was at primary school, Dhruvi appeared in videos for Sky, on CBBC and various other platforms, helping to promote to the hearing world how to effectively interact with deaf people. I credit Heathlands for further encouraging her, and her fellow students, and giving them the confidence to achieve. Dhruvi is never afraid to be part of the conversation, the party or in any aspect of life, and because of the motivation she has been afforded by her school, she is flourishing, just the way she is."



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, in sign language, 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 late diagnosis
- children who have come to Heathlands late, from other settings or having used other communication approaches
- deaf children with specific language impairment
- deaf 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 develop BSL skills, 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

We have a 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



Danijela's boys have grown up with several different languages, but now their first is BSL, thanks to Heathlands School

Danijela and Ivars have two sons, both of whom attend Heathlands School. Dylan is seven and Liam, four.

Passion for language

It's a good thing that both Dylan and Liam are passionate about signing as their family is multi-lingual, in English, Estonian, Latvian and Serbian, as well as in BSL, which the boys are learning at Heathlands.

Since joining the school, both children have picked up BSL very quickly and their parents are delighted with the way in which they have progressed. "They are bright boys, but we didn't necessarily expect that they would become proficient so quickly," says Danijela. "They absolutely love the way signing works, and now want to learn in other languages, too – even Chinese!"

No barrier

Having been born into a family which speaks several other languages, as well as with hearing relations, it was important to Danijela and Ivars that their children should grow up in England with English as their adopted language, and explains that while BSL is their first language, English is their second. For this reason, they needed to find a school which could not only support them academically, but in a way that addressed what could otherwise have been a language barrier.

It's a yes from me!

"We looked at several schools for deaf children, Heathlands being the last one we saw, and we would have been happy to move if necessary as the most important thing for us was to find somewhere we all felt happy with. As soon as we visited Heathlands, all other options were out of the window: Dylan in particular immediately said 'Yes!', having expressed doubts about the others, and we completely agreed."

No better place

There is no one reason that Danijela can put her finger on, only that everything about the school felt right. "The grounds are lovely, the prevailing positive attitude, and the staff especially, many of whom are also deaf, just made us believe there was no better environment for the boys. There is also a great local deaf community in the area and it just seemed to offer everything we wanted."

Strong relationships

And their instincts were not wrong. Both Dylan and Liam are extremely happy at school, having made close friendships and with a strong relationship with their teachers. "It's a very sociable community and we have also made good friends with other parents. It really makes the whole experience even better for the boys, and that's an added bonus."

Equal access

Danijela believes that being taught in a dedicated deaf school gives the children what she describes as equal access to education, in that every child is taught through the same means – that of BSL. "Once BSL has become their first language, there is no need for them to rely on translation and they can just focus on their lessons like any other child. Deafness does not have to be a barrier to learning, as long as the teaching methods are properly and effectively applied. At Heathlands, they certainly are."

Confidence and security

Although Dylan and Liam are bright and intelligent, Danijela doesn't think they would be at the level they are now if they were in a mainstream setting, or even one providing a wider range of special needs. "Being in a school where deafness is the norm makes learning much more accessible. It means the children feel comfortable in communicating with their peers and with the staff, and gives them a sense of security and confidence another school may not be able to offer."

"This is what a school should be"

Every parent naturally wants their children to have a good educational grounding; to be happy and to be fulfilled. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to say that their school can offer such an experience but Danijela has no doubt that Heathlands is as close as one can get. "To me and to my family, Heathlands has honestly been a fabulous choice. We all believe that it is precisely what a school should be, whether for hearing or for deaf children, and I am so happy that my sons are a part of it."

"Heathlands School is the best choice for my boys. It provides high-quality education, social activities, events, and oral communication skills and British Sign Language which is very important to me and my boys."

Admissions



Applications

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

If families 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

Families 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.

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.

A Heartfelt Farewell

Poem written by the parent of a Year 11 Leaver.

At just eight years old, with eyes wide and bright,
Heathlands stood waiting, a beacon of light.

A place where hands spoke and silence had song,
Where signing was strength and not something wrong.

Through these golden years, you blossomed with grace,
Each gesture, a triumph, a story, a place.

Heathlands gave you your voice, all perfectly planned,
Where language and love walked along hand in hand.

They taught you to sign, but you taught them too,
That strength doesn't shout, and resilience shines through.

Unyielding, such sass and a heart full of gold.

In every small moment, you were brave, you were bold.

Now sixteen, a new journey to tread,

The chapters are waiting, the path lies ahead.

With roots deep in Heathlands, and wings open wide,

They still walk beside you, just on the inside.

So, here's to you darling, with your laughter and light,

Go reach for the stars, go chase the next flight.

You grew in a world where hands held the key,

Yet you'll never forget where you learned to be free.



Heathlands School

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*Become the
best you
can be*

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