

	Heathlands School Progress Report and Self-Evaluation Summary March 2026
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Heathlands is a Community Special School for Deaf children aged 3-18 maintained by Hertfordshire County Council. It serves as a regional centre of expertise and at the start of the 2025/ 26 school year had pupils on roll from 36 education authorities. Heathlands is currently funded for 151 planned places and the demand for places continues to be higher than funded places.

Heathlands caters for children who need a Total Communication approach to access learning and have the requirement for sign language or sign support in their Education, Health and Care Plan. Heathlands is a school for Deaf children and like many mainstream schools, has some children on roll who have needs in addition to deafness such as learning difficulties, language delay, social, emotional or mental health needs and sensory or physical impairment.

In September 2012 the school became an all-age school on a single site having previously been located across three locations. Extensive building and re-modelling of the premises has ensured the suitability of the teaching accommodation for the full age range.

Heathlands works collaboratively with other local schools and in September 2017 joined other local secondary schools and academies in a mutually supportive Umbrella Trust with St. Albans secondary schools. The school is also very active within the national Deaf community. The school has built new classrooms to accommodate the growing community in the school. The focus in 2025—2026 academic year is continuing to maintain an outstanding school, continuing to develop language and communication, maintain age-appropriate learning and an outstanding mainstream specialist provision.

CONTEXT



Heathlands School has a culturally diverse school community. The largest single group is children from white British backgrounds. In addition, there are very large groups of children of Eastern European and Asian Heritage.

67% of pupils are from deaf family backgrounds with sign language the main language at home or often have deaf siblings.

36% of children have needs in addition to their deafness. For some this is a medical condition whilst for others this may be a physical and/or sensory disability or a learning difficulty however Deafness remains their primary need.

Currently 35% of children are eligible for free school meals.



Distinctive Features.

- A small , outstanding weekly boarding base for up to 20 children.
- A large number of staff and parents are deaf themselves making excellent role models for Heathlands' pupils.
- Language rich environment through Total Communication.
- All pupils can communicate fluently and fluidly inside and outside of the classroom.

- Cohorts are sometimes small, numbers are unpredictable and learning needs vary. Regular reviews of the curriculum offer ensures it is appropriate and individualised.
- Curriculum offer ranges from life skills up to the full range of GCSEs for different groups of learners.
- Some parents and families struggle to learn BSL at the level needed to support their Deaf children.
- Many pupils live far from school. They have long journeys to school, and leaders think creatively about how to connect with parents.
- The high number of Local Authorities placing children at Heathlands means we work hard on partnerships and administrative issues.
- Challenges to recruit staff that have the level of skills and language to meet students' needs.
- Benchmarking with other specialist deaf provisions identified Heathlands as the lowest funded provision nationally.

Ofsted Inspection

“Effective use of books, regular practice and a relentless focus on extending pupils’ vocabulary mean that pupils improve their reading fluency and accuracy quickly.”

Heathlands had its last full inspection in September 2017. In February 2023 the school had an ungraded inspection. The inspection concluded that Heathlands continues to be an outstanding school. The residential Heath House inspection was completed in March 2026 and was again judged to be good in all areas.

Ofsted Inspectors said.....

Leadership

“Leaders’ and governor’s ambition for all pupils to be ‘The best they can be’ regardless of their starting points, is deeply rooted across daily life in the school.”

“Leaders value the skilled staff team. They are mindful of work load and well-being, so they consult staff when changes are proposed.”

Teaching

“Staff know their pupils exceptionally well.”

“The curriculum is challenging, and very effectively implemented by skilled staff.”

The high level of staff fluency in BSL and the ‘no limits’ culture combine with these other important elements to ensure that pupils achieve exceptionally well.”



Personal Development and Behaviour

“Pupils behaviour is exemplary.”

“All pupils, including children in the early years, thrive in Heathlands inclusive nurturing climate of high expectations. They wear their uniforms with pride, share their learning and school experiences enthusiastically with visitors. Pupils are polite and welcoming.”

“Exceptionally positive relationships are reflected in all aspects of daily school life. Pupils are responsive to the expectation that they will work hard, behave well and be kind.”



Residential Ofsted inspectors said

“Children enjoy their time in the residential provision and make good progress during their stays”

“Children enjoy a wide range of social, educational and recreational opportunities”

“Parents, in the main are positive about the school and the experiences their children have.”

“Staff make effective use of the safeguarding system to report any concerns”

“Staff are proud of their roles and of the progress that children make. They can readily describe how the residential experience benefits children and the added value it provides.”

School Vision: Aspiration and Achievement for All

“Become the best you can be”

At Heathlands our pupils are at the heart of all we do. We aim to equip our young people for life; to be flexible, adaptable, resilient and to relish a challenge. Pupils are supported to develop respect, tolerance and all the skills necessary to make a positive contribution to their communities. Heathlands aims to create a learning community where everyone is valued as an individual.

We want our pupils:

- To have broad learning opportunities and work towards appropriate accreditation.
- To develop learning habits which will ensure future success: teamwork, the ability to be reflective, independence, confident to take risks and accept feedback.
- To develop social skills, to support those who are vulnerable, and to lead others.
- To learn how to manage change, innovation, and deal with the pressures of a modern world, e.g. advancing technology.
- To feel good about themselves, secure in their own identity and to embrace differences in others.
- To know they are part of the Heathlands community.

We want our staff:

- To be valued and included
- To have high expectations and develop their full potential
- To be innovative, creative and influential
- To be supported and nurtured as a staff team.

We want our school community:

- To support and educate students in preparation for adulthood and lifelong learning
- To embrace and engage all families within our school community.
- To be included in national and international developments in education.
- To be recognised as a Centre of Excellence.
- To enrich the community with BSL.



Whole school curriculum intent.

At Heathlands we want to equip and empower students with knowledge, understanding and skills so they aspire to become the best they can be both in school and beyond, in order to be independent and responsible citizens.

We want:

To foster a love of school and learning, a determination to succeed and the confidence to embrace new challenges.

Students to become independent thinkers and gain inspiration for lifelong learning.

For all students to become effective communicators.

Students to have a secure identity, resilience and have positive mental health.

A language rich environment with strong expertise in literacy development of Deaf children.

A broad curriculum adapting and evolving to be personalised and challenged year on year.

A Total Communication policy which is child centred and underpins the ethos of the school.

Exposure to deaf role models, quality first reading and nurturing pastoral support.

Opportunities for students to present, develop and lead their ideas within the school community and beyond.



Quality of Education – Key Stage 1 & 2

Intent.

- To deliver a child centred curriculum which is adaptive to small groups and mixed age cohorts
- To deliver language and communication rich learning especially tailored to the needs of Deaf pupils who sign.
- To ensure access to the pupils' National Curriculum entitlement; developing pupils' skills to become lifelong learners.
- To be aspirational for every child.
- To develop from individual starting points, developing knowledge and understanding of the world and the ability to communicate learning.

Implementation.

- Delivery by specialist Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and other specialist staff with the relevant skills and experience.
- Four-year topic cycle—cross curricular covering History/ Geography/ Art and Design and DT allowing children to contextualise and 'join up' learning, building their general knowledge and enquiry skills as well as their communication, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Discrete subjects allowing for skills development: Computing, Science, Maths PSHE, RE and PE.
- English curriculum based on contextualising learning in real books, developing language, vocabulary and comprehension skills. Teachers and staff recognise English is a second (or third) language for our pupils.
- Formative and summative assessment feed into planning to ensure that all pupils are progressing at their full potential.
- Specialist learning support assistants are deployed in classrooms with skills in sign language.
- Close links are fostered with the Speech and Language therapy team.
- Children with needs in addition to deafness are closely monitored by the SENCo team using a range of assessments, tools and strategies to understand and support their needs in the best possible way.
- Pupil premium is used well to deliver additional reading and literacy sessions, provide enhanced adult support in classes as well as a mentoring programme.

Impact.

Children develop language and communication well from their varied starting points.

For pupils who arrive at school late and /or with little language / school experience significant progress can be shown.

KS2 SATS 2025

There were eight year 6 pupils who were assessed at the end of KS2 in May 2025.

One pupil was assessed on PKS (Pre Key Stage) teacher assessment standards across all areas and did not take the exams.

Seven pupils took the SPAG exam. Two pupils achieved age related expectations. The remaining five came in just below age related expectations with scaled scores between 96 and 99.

Five pupils took the reading exam. One pupil achieved age related expectations. The remaining four pupils achieved scaled scores between 88- 99.

In writing 5 pupils were Working Towards the national standard while three were assessed using the PKS (Pre Key Stage).

In Science, six pupils were working at the Expected standards.

One pupil achieved at least age-related expectations for all areas.

Seven pupils took the maths exam. Four pupils achieved age related expectations. The remaining three pupils achieved scaled scored between 91-97. This puts 50% of the pupil cohort achieving age related expectations for maths.

Teacher Assessment pupil progress Tracker data Summer term 2025

69% of pupils made good or outstanding progress in English.

78% of pupils made good or outstanding progress in Maths

71% or pupils made good or outstanding progress in other learning.

88% of pupils made good or outstanding progress in communication.

Quality of Education – Key Stage 3 & 4.

Intent.

KS3 Intent.

To ensure language is continuously and consistently developed across the curriculum.

To ensure broad, ambitious and individually tailored access to the National Curriculum, constantly adapting and evolving to remain challenging, flexible and personalised.

To be aspirational for all learners ensuring that they are on a learning path that is ambitious, age appropriate and delivered at an individualised pace.

To ensure learners SEMH needs are addressed to enable consistent learning.

KS4 Intent.

To ensure all students gain nationally recognised qualifications at a level appropriate to their ability.

To ensure all students are following an ambitious and driven curriculum path that meets their individualised needs.

To ensure all learners are prepared for adulthood and ready to take their place as responsible citizens.

To promote and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning to ensure all learners reach appropriate destinations on leaving KS4.

Implementation.

Curriculum delivery by subject specialist teachers who are qualified Teachers of the Deaf and fluent in sign language.

Delivery incorporates ongoing assessment both formative and summative to effectively inform subsequent lesson planning.

Courses are selected and tailored to individual or group needs in terms of level, content and accreditation at end of KS4.

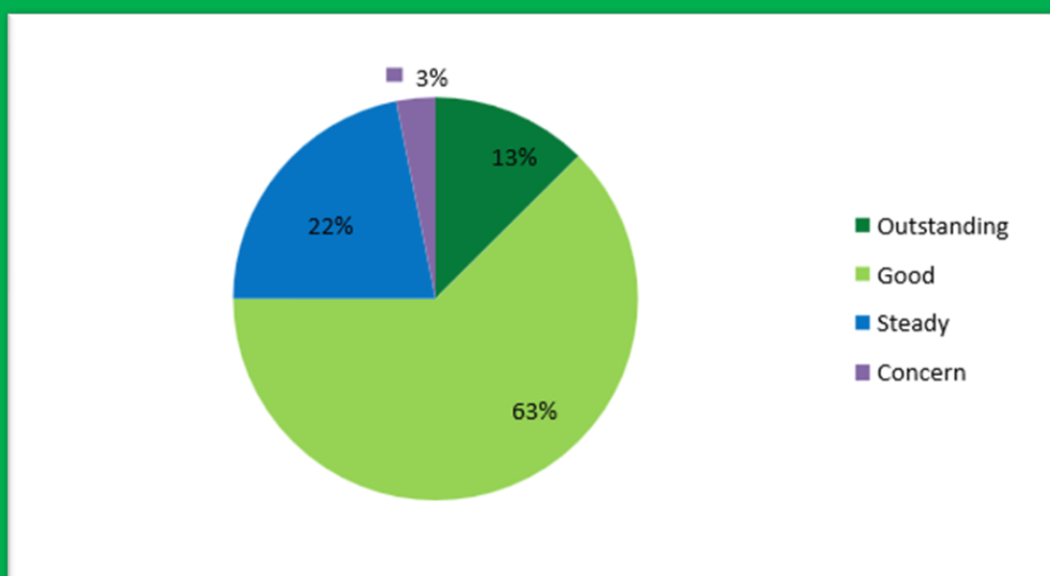
Low teacher to pupil ratio enabling flexible set arrangements where organised groups of students learn at an appropriate pace and some small groups of students receive targeted support in order to attain higher grades.

Impact.

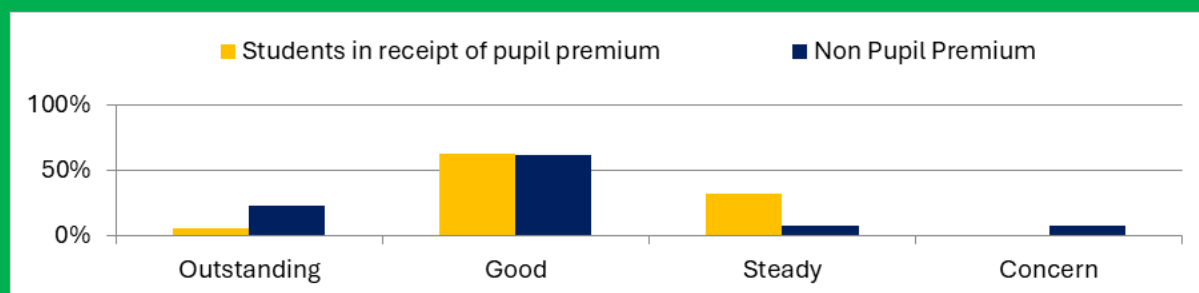
Key Stage 3.

The Heathlands Tracker is used to record and measure progress for students in KS3 across all subject areas. The tracker shows progression in both skills and knowledge.

76% of students in KS3 made Outstanding or Good progress in learning.



There is no significant difference between PP and non PP students making 'Good' progress and it is pleasing to see that there are no PP students recorded as a concern for learning.



End of Key Stage 4 (External Qualifications)

There were 18 students in year 11. Students in this cohort took a mixture of Entry Level and GCSE qualifications. Three of the 18 students were not entered for any GCSEs due to their SEN or medical needs.

For most subjects, the cohort was divided into 4 groups:

- The first group studying mostly GCSEs (4 students)
- The second, studying mostly Entry Level 3 Qualifications (5 students)
- A third group studying a mix of Entry Level 2/3 qualifications (7 students)
- A fourth group of 2 students worked alongside our SEN mixed year group who followed Unit Awards and Entry Level 1 qualifications

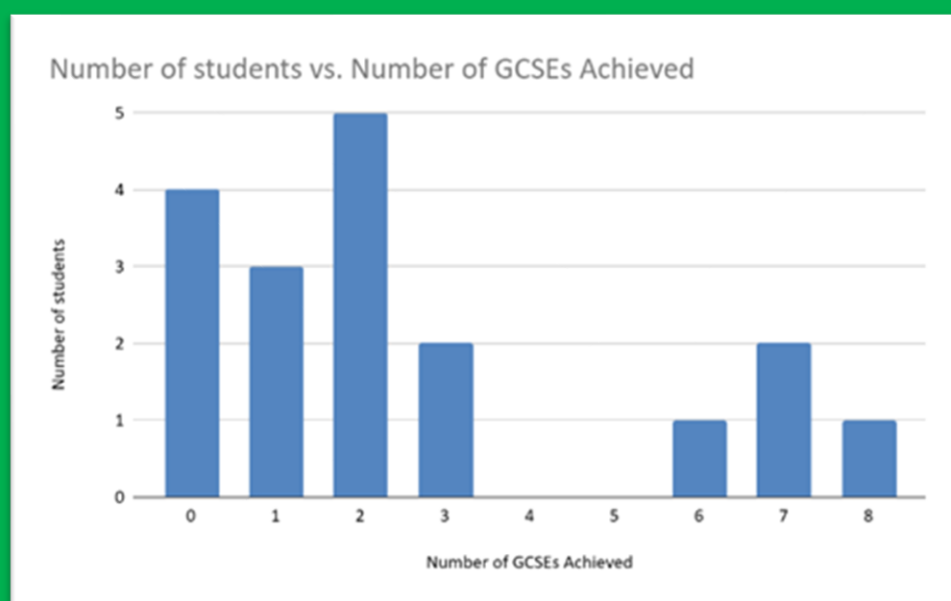
Subject specialists worked in collaboration with Curriculum Lead Teachers to ensure that

- Syllabus content provided appropriate challenge for individual students.
- Students were able to achieve a 'nationally recognised qualification',

(particularly in core subjects; English (Step Up, Functional Skills and GCSE) and Maths (Entry Level and GCSE) where possible.

The average number of GCSEs entered across the whole of year 11 was 2.89.

(3.47 if those for whom GCSE was not an appropriate level of study are not included).

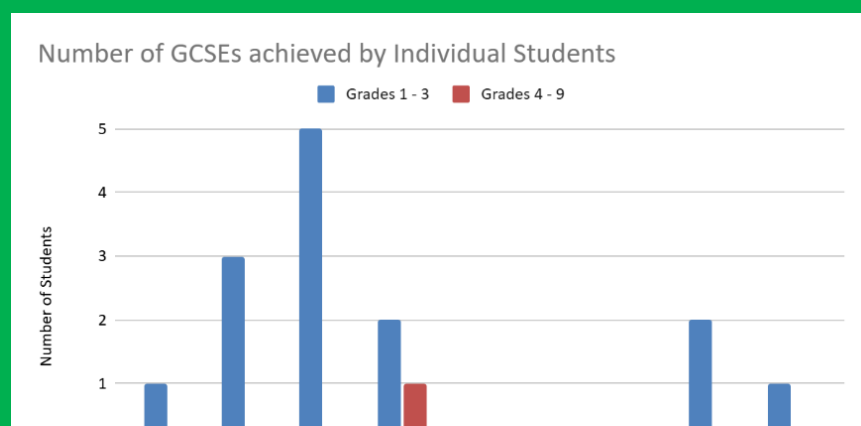


Two students achieved 5 GCSEs.

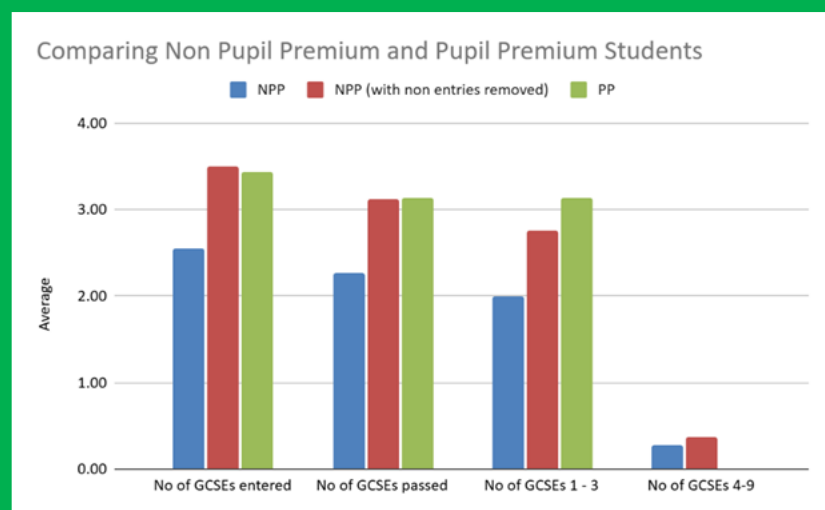
All students, except one, achieved a pass in all the GCSEs they entered. The one student who failed to achieve his Maths GCSE achieved Entry Level 3.

One student achieved a 4-9 pass mark (considered a 'good' pass) in three subjects.

It is not possible to compare our students' results this year with other Deaf Schools as the government has not calculated or published the scores for this cohort as this cohort did not take their KS2 tests due to COVID-19.



It should also be noted that there were several students in this cohort who were admitted to Heathlands late in their secondary education from other schools or as 'school refusers' and having significant emotional or learning needs. With the success of the support available and mentoring they were able to achieve the results shown above, despite some experiencing poor attendance and work ethic and this is testament to the dedication and support offered by the staff at Heathlands in ensuring courses were completed and coursework submitted on time.



There is negligible difference between the performance averages for pupil premium (PP) and non-pupil premium (NPP) students with regards to the number of GCSEs entered and passed, with PP performing slightly better, but with the small number of students involved it is not appropriate to make generalized statements.

Heathlands was the highest attaining school for deaf children nationally in 2024, with a **progress 8 score of 0.93**. This excellent progress score means that our Year 11 pupils on average, achieved almost one GCSE grade better progress, than pupils across England with similar attainment at the end of KS2.

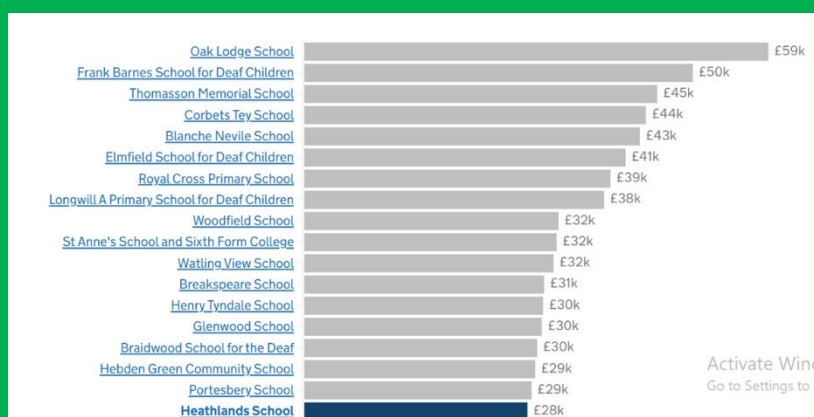
Heathlands was the only school for deaf children to achieve a progress score within the highest category of '**well above average**' and this concurs with the **Ofsted (2023) 'Outstanding'** rating and statement that "pupils achieve very well from their different starting points". Heathlands is the highest attaining special school in the UK (No. 1 of 1718) and the only special school in the 'well above average' band.

Heathlands is ranked at No. 107 out of 6542 schools in the national schools progress 8 table.



When comparing the spend per pupil, Heathlands are spending less than half the top spending deaf school (£28,000 compared to £59,000) but achieving the best results.

Comparison of expenditure per pupil



Key Stage 5

Intent

To challenge students to become fully independent learners, challenging them to think critically and analytically.

To ensure all students achieve Level 3 qualifications in their chosen subjects to ensure they can move on to university, apprenticeships or professional careers.

To continue to prepare them for the wider world and become fully active citizens.



Implementation

Curriculum delivery by subject specialist teachers who are qualified Teachers of the Deaf and proficient in sign language.

Delivery incorporates ongoing assessment both formative and summative to effectively inform subsequent lesson planning.

Courses are selected and tailored to individual or group needs in terms of level, content and accreditation at end of KS5.

Low teacher to pupil ratio enabling flexible set arrangements where organised groups of students learn at an appropriate pace and some small groups of students receive targeted support in order to attain higher grades.

Joint working with a local mainstream secondary school (Marlborough Science Academy) to ensure that a wide range of subjects can be offered by specialist teachers.

High level CSW to support KS5 students in lessons at Marlborough.

Impact

This is our first cohort of 6th formers. There are 7 students altogether. 4 students are taking 3 A levels and 3 students are taking 2 Level 3 BTEC Courses and BSL Level 3. At the end of Year 12 the end of year assessments showed excellent progress for all students.

All the A level students equalled or exceeded their target grades, 2 students by 2 or more grades. All have worked hard to create a solid foundation for Year 13 and excellent results next year.

Exceeding by 2 or more	2
Exceeding by 1	3
Equal	7
Below	0

The students taking a mix of BSL and BTEC qualifications had external exams at the end of Year 12 and all passed with one student achieving Distinctions in both Sport and Business. The students continue to work on completing their coursework requirements. The BSL students have moved onto studying Level 4.

BSL Level 3	BTEC Sport	BTEC Business
P	M	M
P	D	D
P	P	M

Key Action Points

- All Departments to create Action Plans with short term and long-term goals which are linked to the DSP.
- Where possible to split year groups to allow for targeted interventions and appropriate challenge.
- To target students working at Grades 3–4 to improve their chances of achieving at least a grade 4 or above.
- To continue encouraging students to complete independent study by creating revision cards, mind maps, and practising past examination questions.
- To ensure lower attaining students will complete Step Up (English) and Entry Level (Maths) qualifications as a back up to being entered for GCSE.
- To continue to evaluate the suitability of courses and units of work for all groups.
- To organise coursework submissions so they can be submitted early (January) to avoid the intense pressure on staff and students in May/June
- To continue to promote our 6th form to external applicants to add to our small cohorts in the next few years.

Communication and Language at the heart of learning.

Speech and Language Therapy

At Heathlands language and communication is at the centre of all we do. Language is the key to unlock all other learning: thinking, reasoning, understanding and literacy. Heathlands teachers are additionally qualified to work with Deaf children so have a high level of expertise in this respect.

In 2024/ 25 we improved our provision for Speech and Language therapy by:

- Providing training and support for new staff members and to trainee TODs around supporting students' speech, language and communication needs.
- Establishing the use of communication whiteboards in lower school classes to share targets with both staff and pupils and promote generalisation of skills within the classroom.
- Creating and developing 'play and sign' packages to go home to families to promote language and communication skills.
- Establishing strong links with residential to ensure continuation of SaLT targets
- Developed a KS3 SaLT self-assessment for students to have more influence on how their therapy was directed.
- Rolling out radio aids within KS3 and identifying students in KS4 for further usage
- Developed staff training on daily listening checks and basic trouble shooting so minor issues are quickly resolved.
- Purchasing soundfield system for the school hall
- Continuation of music lessons within school.

Heathlands Provision to develop our pupils' language and communication

Speech and Language therapy

- Pool of experienced Speech and Language therapists and therapy assistants
- Child centred programmes based on assessed need.
- 1 to 1 and group therapy.
- Close collaborative work with classroom staff.
- Provision of programmes such as smiLE, Live English and Lego therapy.
- Clear and concise student communication profiles



- Inclusion opportunities
- Modern sensory room



Specialist Teachers

- Qualified Teachers of Deaf children
- Specialist and experienced staff delivering the National Curriculum appropriately for deaf pupils.
- Signing skills allow fluent two-way communication between child and adults in the classroom
- Language development at the core of all teaching
- Speech targets embedded across the curriculum
- Total Communication approach matches the communication needs of the child while developing the child's signed language and their speech/ lip-reading.

Audiology

- On site audiology clinic
- Specialist audiology assistant
- Visits from county educational audiologist
- Daily hearing aid and implant checks
- Training for children to be independent users of ALDs
- Impressions for ear moulds taken on site.
- Liaison with child's local clinic/ implant centre.
- Repairs co-ordinated.
- Individual Roger radio aids and soundfield systems
- Optimum acoustic conditions in classrooms

Learning Support Assistants

Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) within class groups providing a range of

- Academic support
- Language development
- Maintaining of assistive listening devices (ALDs)
- Emotional support
- Support for developing social skills
- Encouraging independence
- Mentoring

Behaviour and Attitudes.

Strengths:

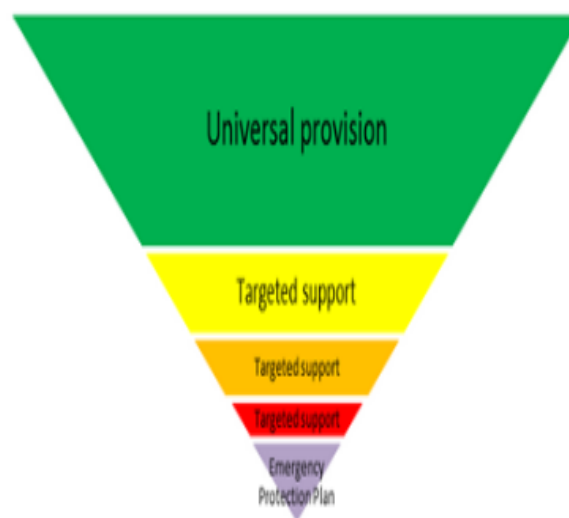
- ◆ Targeted support for all young people
- ◆ Strong pastoral system
- ◆ Strong attendance monitoring.
- ◆ A 24-hour curriculum
- ◆ A resilience program incorporated into student life
- ◆ Student leadership
- ◆ Preparation for adulthood

Universal provision is the general behaviour policy which is applicable to all students. For the vast majority of pupils this impacts positively. This will include:

- ◆ Working on Work (Wow) Procedures
- ◆ Tutor support and mentoring
- ◆ House Points
- ◆ Classroom expectations
- ◆ Uniform Code
- ◆ Reporting systems
- ◆ Consistent implementation of Charlie Taylor's list "getting the small things right"
- ◆ PSHE lessons
- ◆ Effective communication with parents
- ◆ Other specialist programmes offered to groups e.g. "Health Minds", "Safe" and group input from other agencies e.g. Sign Health and Deaf Hope.

Targeted support will be in addition to the above for the few pupils who have identified needs. Planning will be pupil focused thus responsive to individual needs. Targeted support might include:

- ◆ Assessment of SEMH risk and protective factors, information gathering e.g. "roots and fruits" to understand child's experiences
- ◆ Individual Behaviour Plan and use of CSD to monitor progress.
- ◆ Response of calm > reflect > repair
- ◆ CAMHS involvement if mental health considered to be an issue
- ◆ Adapted curriculum
- ◆ Regular team review
- ◆ Regular parental contact
- ◆ Planned involvement of LINKS behaviour support team
- ◆ Intervention of other specialist agencies
- ◆ Good co-ordination and consistency amongst staff
- ◆ Risk Assessment and risk management
- ◆ Consideration of and plan for restraint if appropriate
- ◆ Emergency protection plan



Targeted support can be offered at three levels depending on the pupil's needs as assessed against the criteria below.

Progress and impact of interventions are reviewed half termly in a step up or step down approach.

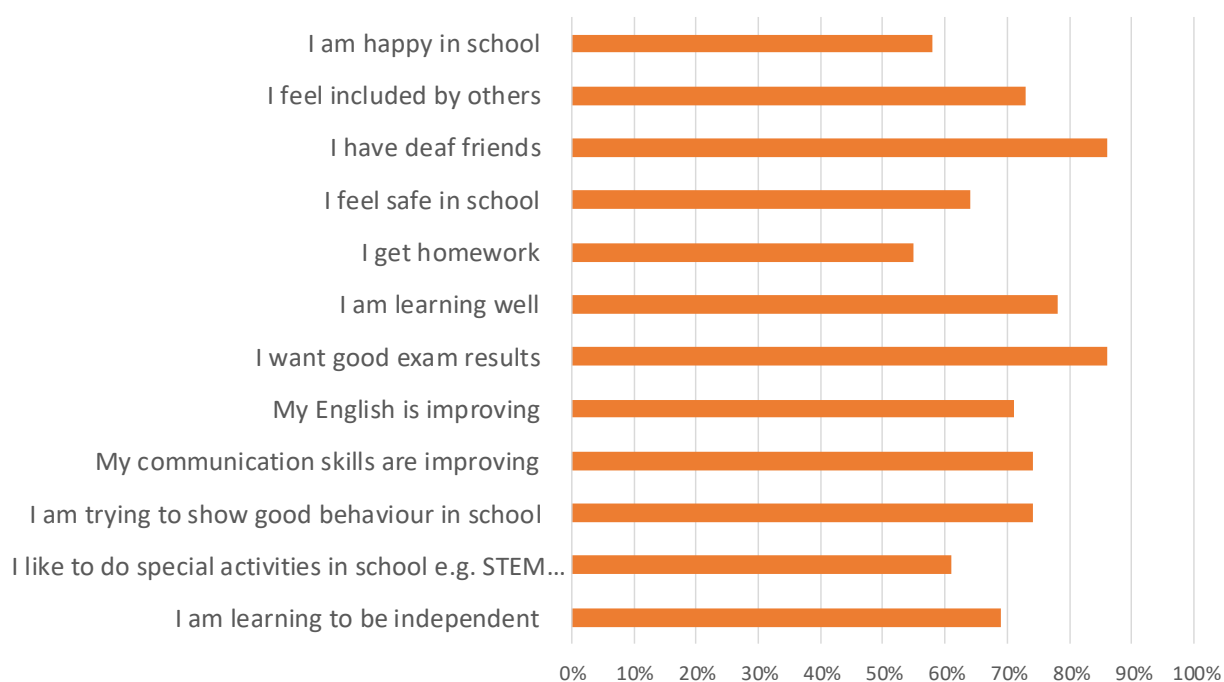


WHAT OUR STUDENTS THINK

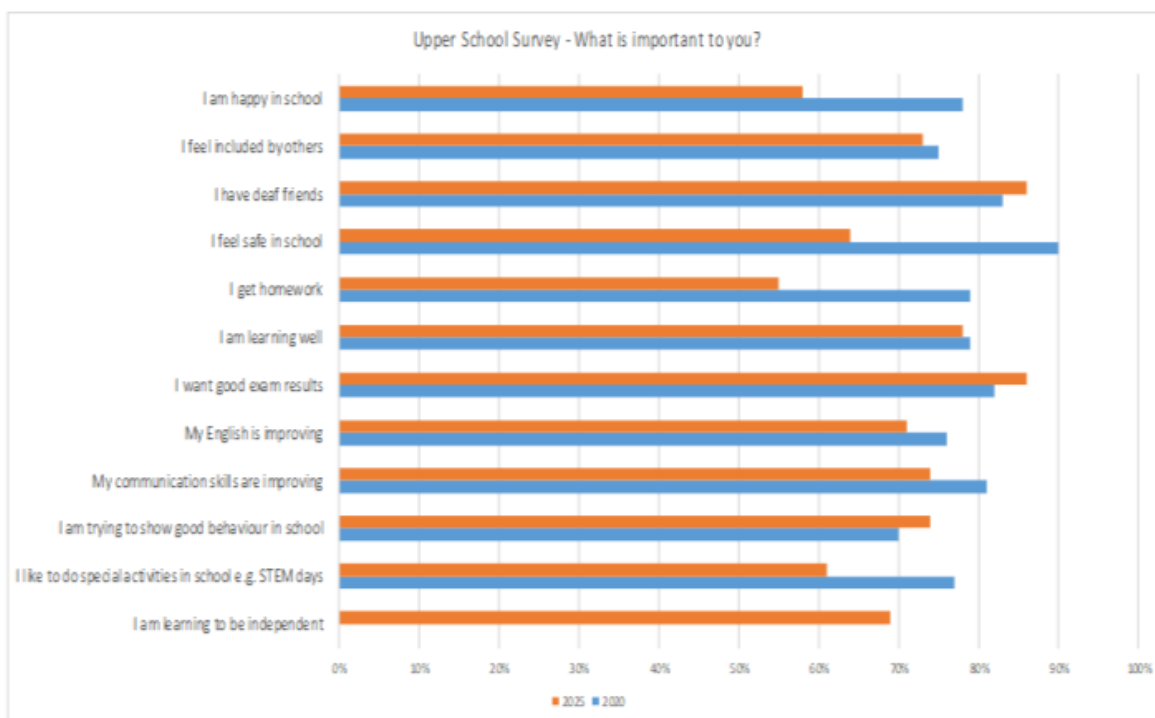


In February 2025 Upper School students completed a survey. We wanted to capture how it felt to be a student at Heathlands.

Upper School Survey 2025 - What is important to you?



Results comparison from 2020 & 2025

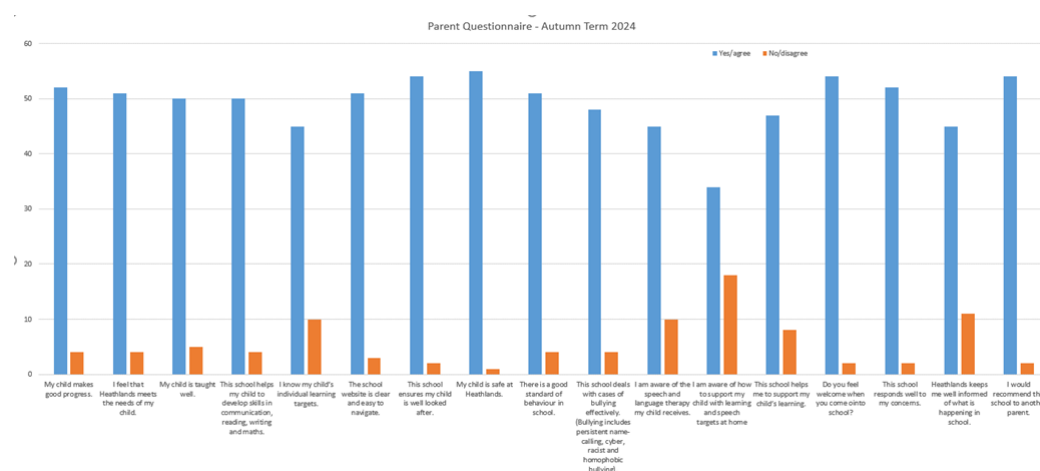


WHAT OUR PARENTS THINK

During the Autumn Term 2024 we asked our parents to complete a survey about their experience at Heathlands.

In total 56 forms were returned, some from families with more than one child in school. Parent responses were overwhelmingly positive but also highlighted areas of concern.

We have analysed the results as shown in the graph below.



The first set of questions asked about children's enjoyment of school and how well they are learning. Overall parents were happy with the learning in school and felt that their child was making good progress and that staff were aware of the individual needs of their child. Parents thought that their child was taught well and that pupils were developing skills in communication. The area for improvement identified was parents being aware of their child targets. This is addressed in the annual review; it is also addressed in the parent consultation meetings which occur frequently throughout the year. Teachers maintain good communication with parents, should parents need to discuss targets at any point there are opportunities available.

The second group of questions were all about behaviour, safety and attitudes the majority of parents showed that their child is well looked after and kept safe at Heathlands. Parents indicated there was a high level of behaviour and that behaviour at Heathlands is good. They felt that any incidents of bullying are dealt with by staff.

We asked about communication, some parents indicated that they were not aware of the speech and language that their child receives and that they do not know how to support their child at home. Speech and language targets are discussed at all annual reviews in addition to the number of hours allocated. Speech and language therapist are available to be booked for meetings, at parents' evenings and are contactable through the school office. School will ensure that parents are made aware of this.

Heathlands organise parent information sessions, sessions with the head teachers, twilight learning and pass any relevant parenting courses to parents. Heathlands are committed to supporting parents with learning so that they can effectively support their child at home.

Parents felt that Heathlands responds well to parent concerns and would recommend Heathlands to other parents of deaf children.

Personal Development

We want Heathlands' school leavers to have the skills to be active and positive contributors in their communities. We want them to be independent and able to manage the pressures of a modern world. In the 2024 / 25 year we continued to improve our provision to prepare children for adulthood in four key areas of; Employment, Independent Living, Community Inclusion and Health. Progress is monitored through COMPASS+ which shows we are achieving over 90% in all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks (with 6 at 100%) which is above the national average in all areas.

Heathlands aims to develop the careers programme with a range of inspiring activities happening across the whole school. Activities last year included:

- Careers talks and visits including many role models from the deaf community including Harrow College, Sailing, Art and First Aid workshops.
- The Student Leader Programme continues to develop student skills preparing them for the future.
- Personalised PSHE programmes, mentoring and the school counsellor.
- Opportunities to participate in local events and national deaf community events e.g. BDA Art Competition, National Deaf X-country, swimming and football tournaments, International Battle of the Books, local Rotary technology tournament and British Science Week.
- Activities to develop respect, tolerance and consideration for others e.g. charity fundraising, assemblies
- Bespoke work experience placements for the Year 11 leavers including Groundwork East Project for the Life Skills Group.
- Independent individual guidance interviews.



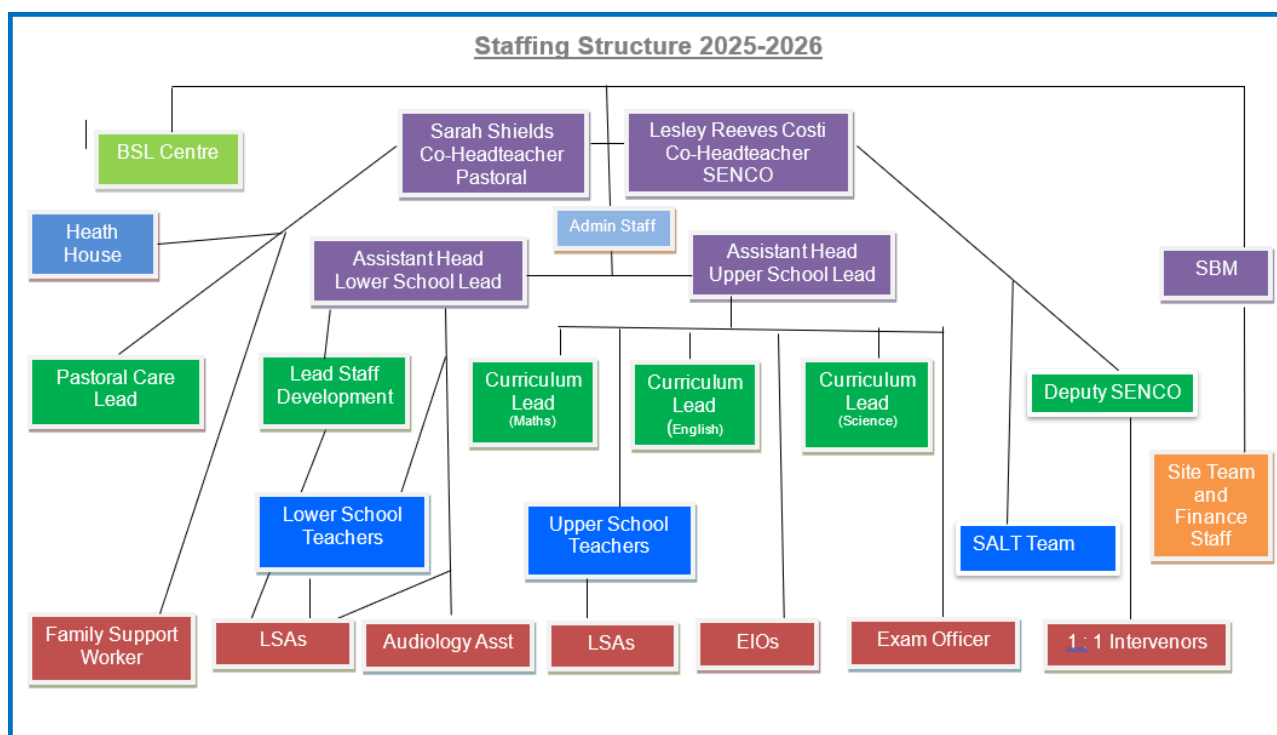
NEXT STEPS

- ◆ To continue to use COMPASS Plus to track students PfA learning journey and evidence how our activities meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and individual needs.
- ◆ To develop links with our EA (Enterprise Advisor) and Deaf Professionals to create an exciting careers programme year on year.
- ◆ To analyse the tracking data from the last 3 years to better understand the destinations and course completion of our students.
- ◆ To ensure our careers section on the website is accessible to all stakeholders including parents and students.

Students at Heathlands



Leadership and Management



The school vision, *Become the Best you can Be* is applied to the whole school community. Heathlands has maintained and developed a strong team of teaching and support staff who are committed to the school's vision, ethos and delivery of good outcomes for all pupils.

This year we have four members of staff undertaking training to become Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and a number continuing to achieve high levels of BSL qualifications. The staff team are valued and being conscious that our skilled staff are hard to replace, we continue to develop our staff wellbeing provision which is particularly needed in the current challenging pandemic.

Heathlands foster the approach that training is important to thrive as a school community and as well as attending appropriate outside training we have robust in-house training and encourage our teams to share their wealth of knowledge with colleagues.

Leaders are proud of

Providing a curriculum that is academic, individualised, ambitious yet flexible.

A strong sense of pride amongst pupils and staff.

Attitudes towards learning which are consistently positive.

A developing Leadership team, who support those teaching outside of their subject areas of expertise.

An ethos of ongoing professional development.

Strong policies in place to create coherence and consistency

Leaders acknowledge

That regular opportunities are given for lower and upper school colleagues to discuss curriculum content, sequencing of skills and knowledge.

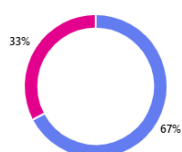
That all staff benefit from on-going and specialist training.

Heathlands is a vibrant and lively learning environment. Children are at the core of all planning and decisions made. Careful consideration is given to how the school can continuously develop and ensure we are becoming the best we can be.

Heathlands recognise that staff are conscientious and very hard working, they are dedicated and committed. Well-being is at the heart of the school community, and we recognise the need for positive mental health. We discuss well-being regularly and ensure that staff are represented in these conversations.

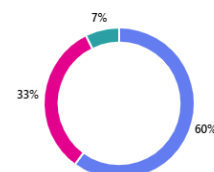
2. I am proud to be a member of staff at the school

Strongly agree	37
Agree	18
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Not applicable	0



20. I would recommend the school as a great place to work

Strongly agree	33
Agree	18
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	0
Not applicable	0



Safeguarding.

Heathlands is committed to ensuring the welfare and safety of all our children in school and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We believe that students have a right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment, which includes the right to protection from all types of abuse, where staff are vigilant for signs of any student in distress and are confident about applying the processes to avert and alleviate any such problems. We have Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place. All our staff have Level 1 Child Protection training, and all staff are appointed in line with safer recruitment protocols.

The DSP team consists of four members who work closely and collaboratively, the school liaises with multi agency teams to support young people and promote children's welfare and understanding. Staff training is regular and up to date, the school covers training in addition to the basic training to cover STEPS, gangs and county lines, FGM, online safety and radicalisation.

All staff (including supply staff, volunteers and Governors) must ensure that they are aware of these procedures.

Safeguarding is about ensuring that everyone is safe from harm – safe from bullying, safe from people who could abuse, safe from discrimination or harassment – and that we all feel safe in our environment.

The school has close links with the National Deaf CAMHS team and which enables students in need to access this provision quickly. An in-house counsellor is funded by the school which allows students at a lower-level prevention therapy to prevent an escalation.

Pupil Premium

The Pupil premium is a school- level grant that gives schools extra resources to help meet its challenges, including those arising from deprivation. The needs of all students, eligible and others, should be assessed and the grant used to make maximum impact in the school. All students receiving pupil premium at Heathlands have received at least two interventions to further their development. All interventions are individualised and based solely on the learning needs of each child. The pupil premium allocation was supported by 'self-generated' income in order to provide further intervention opportunities for students.

Interventions include but are not limited to:

Mentoring, specialised therapy, extended day provision, homework club, clubs and activities, enhanced staffing levels, equipment, medical support and BSL tuition.

EYFS.

Intent.

The EYFS is tailored to the needs of Deaf sign language using pupils.

It provides a language rich, child- centred curriculum, delivered through Sign Language as part of a Total Communication approach to develop the whole child in order to achieve their potential.

Language and concept development is fundamental across the seven areas of learning in the curriculum.

The environment is safe, stimulating and accessible to encourage independent learning and personal skills.

All pupils are, regardless of their background, circumstances and needs (including those with needs in addition to their deafness) provided with a curriculum to enable them to learn, develop and thrive in all areas.

Close and supportive links with families address the needs of the whole child.

Implementation.

All staff are fluent in sign language and communicate effectively with pupils. Language and vocabulary development takes place throughout the curriculum.

Teachers and specialist support staff have experience and understanding of the needs of EYFS deaf pupils and the developmental needs of young pupils.

Staff are attentive to the needs of pupils and take every opportunity to develop their communication, language and understanding.

High staff/ pupil ratio.

On site audiology assistant and daily maintenance of hearing aids/ cochlear implants.

Acoustically favourable listening conditions and support for development of listening skills.

The 3-year topic cycle has recently been fully revised to address the changes to the EYFS curriculum. This develops skills and knowledge logically, progressively and systematically.

Wider community links through activities such as 'Sign and Play' and 'Secret Storyteller' engage both pupils and parents with learning.

Vibrant, visual and engaging environment including strong provision for outdoor learning within an

Impact.

Behaviour in the setting is good, with children understanding rules and routines and keen to attend.

Children begin to manage their own feelings and behaviours from starting point.

Children demonstrate engagement through playing and exploring, active learning, creative, critical thinking and increased independence.

Children develop and display very positive attitudes to learning and develop a love of books and reading.

Significant progress in communication and language development is evident from starting points. This is particularly seen with children who arrive with limited or no language

Pupils make good progress from a wide range of starting points (progress, including photo evidence, is recorded for each child in Electronic Learning Journals).

Children are prepared for moving into year 1 with the skills needed for more formal learning.

EYFS.

Full access to best EYFS practice, adapted appropriately for deaf pupils.



Language and communication -rich curriculum.



Specialist staff team including experienced, qualified teachers of the deaf other specialist staff and learning support assistants with BSL skills.



Close links with parents and families.— working together with parents as partners in their children's learning.

Child centred



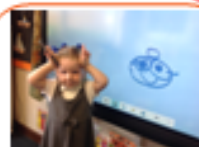
Deaf, signing peer groups. Access to peer learning.



Close collaboration with the on site Speech and Language Therapy team.



Community links—sign and play for pre- school pupils and their parents/ carers.



Electronic learning journals for every child.

Recent initiatives:
Secret Storyteller.
Regular inclusion visits to Willows farm.



Attractive and well resourced environment inside and out.

Children make outstanding progress from starting points.



What the parents say:

I have seen a big difference in Z. from when she attends Heathlands Nursery setting as compared to her previous mainstream nursery setting. For instance, now I hear from my daughter who she has played with and what happened every day as she has full access to the names of the other children and what is happening around her. A big thumbs up!



I can see first how my child has benefited from a full rich and stimulating experience in EYFS. It's been highly motivating, jam packed with things to do and very enjoyable for her. It is crucial that she has the right provision that matches her needs and she certainly has had that alongside great role models and peers around her.



Since the first day at the nursery she still is happy, confident and learning so much from everyone in the school. I can see from such a positive start to school that E's future education at Heathlands will set her up for whatever she wants to do in the future.



SPECIAL ACTIVITIES and ENRICHMENT 2024-2025



Hoopoe Class prepared and cooked their own dishes, ensuring they included carbohydrates, protein, dairy and fruits/vegetables, following the 'Eatwell Plate' guide.



Some year 5 and 6 pupils visited the **V&A museum** to take part in a wonderful D-Live drama project. They enjoyed visiting the 'Disability and Design' exhibition before using their favourite exhibits as a basis for a short performance. They then performed this to another school. The pupils also enjoyed cooling off in the paddling pool during their lunch break.



Cuckoos and Hoopoes had a visit from Lithuanian students before half term. They enjoyed presenting and learning about each other's cultures and they all developed fantastic communication skills. They ended the day playing board games and friendly chats. Some of our Heathlands pupils used their Lithuanian Sign Language and BSL skills to support with communication during the day.

Cuckoo, Hoopoes and Swift class visited Kew Gardens where we consolidated our learning on the South American rainforest. The children learnt about the types of plants that are found in the rainforest as well as experiencing the heat and humidity found there. The children were glad to get back to the UK spring temperatures. They also saw the worlds most rarest and most smelliest plant, but (and stink) for the next couple of weeks! The Titan arum plant smells so bad that it is said to smell like rotten meat! It is so rare that it only opens every 7-10 years!



plant, but (and stink) for the next couple of weeks! The Titan arum plant smells so bad that it is said to smell like rotten meat! It is so rare that it only opens every 7-10 years!



Lower school have incubated & hatched chicken eggs this term.



23rd-29th June was **Deaf blind awareness week** and both Upper and Lower school learnt the Deaf blind manual alphabet. One of our SENCOs attended a great presentation by an ex pupil on living with Usher syndrome. Check out the helpful tips [#deafblind-awarenessweek](#)



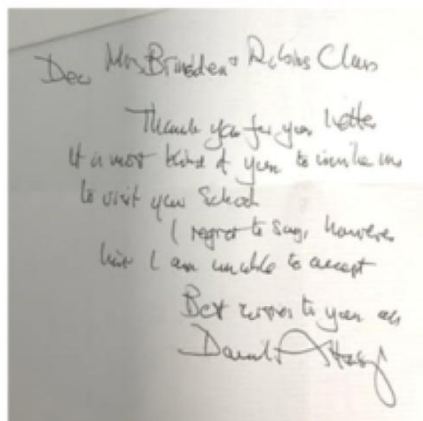
Magpies and Kingfishers have been really enjoying music lessons together with Miss Rachel. They have been practicing different percussion instruments and taking turns to lead action songs. It is lovely to see their confidence and creativity growing each week!



Children from year 2 were lucky enough to visit Whipsnade Zoo! Children saw lots of animals including hippos, penguins and lions, had a fantastic ride on a steam train and finished the day with ice cream! Big thank you to the generosity of the **Rotary Club St Albans**, who funded this trip, the children had a brilliant day!



Robin class received a letter from David Attenborough in reply to the birthday cards and letters they sent him.



Some year 5 and 6 pupils had a fantastic day at the **Hertfordshire Food and Farming School's** day. They had the opportunity to meet Her Royal Highness Sophie The Duchess of Edinburgh. The children learnt about food from farm to their plate and enjoyed tasting a range of foods. Some of their favourite activities included eating biscuits made from locusts, making their own smoothies with the smoothie bikes and learning how to bandage and give CPR to animals. They also watched a dancing sheep show.



Alpha and Beta classes attended their second Pickleball session, led by a Deaf instructor. The children showed great enthusiasm and made fantastic progress, learning more about the different techniques involved in the sport. Their performances reflected a strong understanding of the game, and they all did incredibly well! We may have a couple of future Pickleball stars in the making!



Year 5 visited the **Science Museum** in May. They enjoyed the Wonder Lab and were engaged in a hands on approach to a range scientific topics. They also went to visit the Space Exhibition to support their learning on Space this term.

In May, we ran an **Art competition** to find a new design for the front cover of our student planners 2025-2026. We received many fabulous entries, it was a challenge to pick the winning design. A Year 10 student won the art competition with his design celebrating Heathlands upcoming 50th year. Congratulations to him and to the other entries. This design will be on our front cover of our student planners, from September. All the entries are being displayed within the art department for students to enjoy.

**CELEBRATING
SINCE 1975**



Flying Seagulls Circus group

Lower School had a fantastic visit from the circus. Learning circus skills. They had a lot of fun trying to spin plates, walk on stilts, juggle and tightrope walk.





Sailing Club - During April & May some students enjoyed learning to sail. New skills included wind awareness, rope work, capsize recovery, sailing on all points of sail, positioning yourself in the boat, steering, tacks, gybes, mooring and launching. Utilising their great communication skills, whilst improving their organisation, space awareness & balance more with every session! 6 students completed sailing stage 1. The potential future of GBR Deaf sailing team.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
12-18 MAY 2025



As part of **Children's Mental Health Awareness week** Upper School students considered the ways we can support positive mental health in our school community by being kind.

Epsilon held an Afternoon Tea for staff on Wednesday 25th June. Mrs Reeves-Costi, Miss Jackson, Ms Bury, Miss Deighton and Miss Broughton looked like they enjoyed the experience.



Epsilon visited The Grove Hotel, Watford to learn about different jobs that are there. They made chocolate truffles & learnt some tips on how to make a bed properly & quickly.



Some **Y12 students** had a presentation and question and answer session with one of our parents to learn about career pathways in interpreting. We are grateful to this parent for giving his time to support the careers education of our students.



SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025/26

Every year the school evaluates its work and sets new targets for development which are contained in the School Development Plan. Heathlands' vision statement "Become the Best you can Be" runs through all aspects of the development plan. All outcomes are focused on securing the best possible outcomes and experiences for pupils.

Upper School

To ensure students are active participants in their learning, with good knowledge of their progress and next steps

To achieve Curriculum Action Plan Targets

Lower School

To improve pupil behaviour across the department – specifically at and following playtimes and 'unstructured times.

To share and collate good practice and in class resources to further enhance teaching across the department.

Leadership and Management.

To enhance the assessment process for potential new pupils to effectively measure if Heathlands meets need.

To guide Heathlands through the new SEND Strategy and Specialist Provision Review to ensure best outcomes.

To increase sixth form applications and enrolment by improving the visibility, communication, and appeal of the school's post-16 provision to internal and external stakeholders.

Pastoral Care and Heath House

Develop the leadership opportunities for students as part of their preparation for adulthood.

Embed consistent positive behaviour management and the behaviour curriculum across the school aligning with our therapeutic philosophy.

Develop students independence targets by enhanced working with SaLT.

To develop students' contributions within Heath House

SEN and Accessibility

Expand the Executive functioning skills and strategies across the school.

Ensure the school offers accessibility for visually impaired students.

To support EYFS classroom staff members' self-awareness and use of interaction strategies to promote student's emotional regulation, communication and language skills.

To create a sensory calming environment in Early Years including access to a sensory room.

Summary for 2025.

Heathlands had its last full inspection in September 2017. In February 2023 the school had an ungraded inspection. The inspection concluded that Heathlands continues to be an outstanding school. The residential Heath House inspection was completed in March 2026 and was again judged to be good in all areas.

The inspection reports comments on the progress students make from their starting points, the high quality of care from the staff, excellent staff role models and the quality of leadership.

The inspector stated that *“Children’s educational progress is impressive. Bedtime reading and other educational activities support the children’s learning. Residential staff provide children with support and encouragement with daily homework sessions. Staff from the residential provision work well with school staff to help the children make educational progress.”*



SLT Review of Overall Effectiveness.

The SLT team have spent time developing new and middle leaders. The leadership within the school is strong and expertise is shared out among professionals. This has driven forward the aims and outcomes of school, whilst keeping expectations and core values embedded in the daily practice.

As leaders we are secure that the quality of learning is ambitious and outstanding for all learners with a curriculum that is designed and implemented to the specific needs of each teaching group and needs of individual students. High emphasis is put on wellbeing and emotional resilience with mentoring and therapy in place for students in both upper and lower school. As a school community the focus is on language, literacy and communication as deaf learners. The progress students make from their starting points is outstanding. Focus remains on *becoming the best you can be* with the aim that when students leave school, they will be well rounded and educated citizens ready for the next stage in learning and life.

As a school community we continue to feel proud of our achievements and the continued standards of excellence set within the school. We recognise how hard our staff teamwork and how much they contribute to the development of learning at Heathlands.

Achievement	Exceptional
Inclusion	Strong
Curriculum and Teaching	Exceptional
Personal Development and Wellbeing	Exceptional
Attendance and Behaviour	Exceptional
Leadership and Governance.	Strong

