SUPPORTIVE LEARNING
LEARNING FOR INDEPENDENCE & FUTURE EMPLOYMENT
Supporting you into adulthood
"Outstanding.

Staff use very effective processes to identify learners' starting points which are understood comprehensively by staff, parents and carers. Staff use the information very well to provide individual care packages and to tailor learning programmes for learners with complex needs, both within their specialist centre and in the Supportive Learning area."

- Ofsted
I am delighted to welcome you to the Learning for Independence & Future Employment provision (L.I.F.E). We are very proud of our learning environment here at Oaklands College and the high standards of achievement reached by our learners.

We are very proud of the learning environment we have established within our provision and of the successes our learners achieve during their time with us.

Our aim in L.I.F.E is simple - to be an outstanding provision where our learners receive the very best support and education possible.

We offer a variety of full-time Pre-Entry/Entry Level through to Level 2 courses and are able to meet various special educational needs across the 3 areas within our provision. Whether our learners begin with us in Springfield, Supportive Learning or Employability Skills, our courses aim to help our students become more independent at home, in the community and encourage those who wish to progress into meaningful and lasting employment.

I hope that you find this booklet a useful guide to understanding more about our Supportive Learning area.

Roxanne Lowe
Head of Learning for Independence & Future Employment
WELCOME TO SUPPORTIVE LEARNING

We believe that every young person can succeed in life if challenged and inspired appropriately. A strong functional approach to our curriculum, supported by outstanding personal development, helps Supportive Learning students develop their independence, communication and their ability to self-regulate their emotions.

Our blend of traditional values combined with creativity and innovation offers a rich and stimulating environment for progress. The quality of teaching and breadth of our curriculum supports learners to consistently achieve and often exceed their potential.

The development of young people is central to our ethos and culture within Supportive Learning. Two examples of this include the level of support our learners are given by our team of student support staff. The second is the opportunities afforded to our learners, enabling them to experience a wide variety of activities designed to enrich the learners experience. Supportive Learning continues to make a difference to young people and we are very much looking forward to welcoming new learners to the learning area.

Tom Gore
Senior Curriculum Coordinator
Supportive Learning
Supportive Learning is based on our St Albans Campus.

Set within over 300 acres of beautiful farmland, yet only a stones throw away from central St Albans, Oaklands College has some of the best facilities of any modern further education provider and is one of the best places in the Home Counties for our learners to gain access to a wide variety of different learning areas that will help enrich their lives during their time with us.

In 2018, building work began on redeveloping much of the current college. The new state-of-the-art, £62 million campus will further enrich our learners experience when completed.
“We felt that we were working in partnership with the college and that our views and ideas were valued and listened to, and our suggestions were implemented where appropriate.”

- Parent
We believe in developing students’ capacity to learn in all aspects of their journey into adulthood, so that they can become more independent as they progress through Supportive Learning. Students are encouraged to develop their academic and social skills within college and at home. Through a social care package, we recommend that students are continuing their learning outside of college, accessing community clubs and other extra-curricular activities outside of our provision in order for skills learnt at college to be applied in their local communities.

Students are offered appropriate internal work experience opportunities. Where employment is a possible outcome for the individual, external work placements in the community will be provided. This principle underpins our teaching and learning across Supportive Learning and drives our belief that no matter a students' disability, they can achieve their potential and live an enriching life as they move into the community from education.

The staff within Supportive Learning incorporate a wide range of learning approaches into their teaching and support, based upon the needs and requirements of the individual. Staff undertake regular training to ensure they consistently deliver an outstanding level of support and follow the best, current practice. Most importantly, the strength of relationships between students and staff allows everyone to succeed in their development and learning.
“Highly trained staff focus adeptly on developing the communication skills of learners who have complex communication needs. They make effective use of Makaton, visual communication signs and specialist information learning technology so that learners can express their thoughts and feelings and make well considered choices.”

- Ofsted
We aim to provide a curriculum which:

- Stretches and challenges students in a progressive and positive way
- Promotes independence at all times, encouraging students to make their own choices and decisions
- Is as rich and broad as possible to allow students to widen their opportunities in adulthood
- Is well designed, inclusive and carefully tailored to provide students the very best chance of progression
- Enables students to learn transferable skills through functional sessions and practical life-skill activities

FUNCTIONAL LEARNING

We offer a functional curriculum that consists of a varied and exciting range of activities designed to meet the needs of all of our students.

Our curriculum consists of a varied and engaging range of activities both academic and practical. Everything we do has been carefully designed and tailored to meet the individual outcomes as recorded within the EHC plan, and the ever-changing needs of our students as they progress with us.

We take pride in personalising the curriculum for each student to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the individual are met, even before they start with us; liaising closely with our feeder schools, parents, carers, the local authority and other professionals that support the growth and development of the student, working together to give the student the very best start in Supportive Learning.

To deliver the appropriate levels of stretch and challenge, students are taught in groups that are based upon social and educational needs, with each group tailoring their approach and support to the individual.
“I have had good support going through tough times, with advice and back up regarding medical issues and behaviour issues. Staff and nurses have always been available to talk.”

- Parent
Students in Supportive Learning are able to access a large and equipped modern multi-purpose kitchen suite, that offers them the ability to cook a wide variety of meals that encourage healthy-eating and independence, enabling them to prepare and cook their own meals.

We believe that all students, regardless of their past cooking ability, should have access to suitable learning facilities, in order to develop their skills and independence in a wide variety of ways.

Students will learn about different foods and healthy-living through choosing their own meals to cook. They will develop an understanding of the importance of healthy foods.

Students benefit significantly from this valuable life-skill and often develop a willingness to try new foods as well as giving them the ability to experience a real kitchen environment.

Communicate In Print:

Many students may need additional support with written instruction. If we feel it is appropriate or if it is required as part of the students EHCP then we can produce written documents in Communicate InPrint format which combines words and pictures to describe a task or an instruction.

Normally this is for those transferring from school to our Pathway 1 learning area.
Learners develop an excellent range of English and mathematical skills and gain qualifications in both.

- Ofsted
English and mathematics are embedded in all activities throughout a student's time with us. During a session, tutors adapt English and mathematics tasks to suit the abilities of their students and integrate each into tasks during the session.

The English and mathematics skills of our students are assessed throughout the first term within Supportive Learning. At the end of this term, a panel of teaching staff decide whether or not to enter a student into formal examinations. The decision is made based upon the student's ability to meet the criteria of both the English and Mathematics qualifications.

For some of our students, sitting formal exams may be a source of anxiety and cause distress. If this is the case, we would review whether it would be appropriate for our students to sit formal qualifications. All of our students are given the opportunities to consolidate and develop their functional English and Mathematics skills.

Qualifications Guide:

In Supportive Learning we offer Maths and English qualifications ranging from Entry 1, 2 & 3 and Level 1.
“Teachers and support assistants are expertly trained, highly skilled and passionate about enhancing their learners’ experiences and skills.”

- Ofsted
Students access a wide variety of programmes that encourage community access and engagement, independent living skills, personal health and well-being as well as work experience.

Many of our students come to us with the need to develop their independent life-skills, opening up their abilities to become more self-sufficient in many ways such as personal hygiene; brushing teeth, washing and dressing.

We also offer our students the opportunity to access the community, engaging in a productive and important way with members of the public, using public transport, shopping in supermarkets and visiting historical places of interest. This is to encourage self-confidence and expressive communication skills as much as it is to promote independence within the community.

**Coronavirus:**
Covid-19 has changed the way in which all of us interact with each other. Our curriculum will adapt and change according to the most up-to-date guidance from government which may mean we are unable to offer all of the above. Our priority is keeping students and staff safe.
“It has been a wonderful experience. Staff are ready to help, support, advise, suggest what’s best for the student. Have always responded to any queries or concerns I may have.”

- Parent
HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Our aim is to ensure students are fit, healthy and understand the importance of their personal hygiene.

Staying healthy and keeping fit is one of our core values in Supportive Learning. All of our students are encouraged to focus on healthy living and exercise throughout their education with us. In addition, many of our learners are encouraged to engage with community sports and activity clubs outside of college to maintain their health and fitness.

Being a part of a large Further Education College, we have access to facilities that offer a broad range of outdoor and indoor activities such as football, badminton, physiotherapy, swimming (students have access to the University of Hertfordshire Sports Village pool and may also decide to take advantage of local community swimming pool facilities), walking, yoga, dance and performing arts.

Our belief is that offering a broad range of physical exercise and promoting healthy living through our curriculum, enables all of our students to develop a healthy outlook on their lives and encourages them to express themselves in more proactive and productive ways.
“Staff have established a highly skilled, flexible and responsive team of specialist support staff. These include speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and nurses. They work well and collaboratively to provide outstanding support so that learners make the best possible progress. Managers liaise efficiently with local authority and social care staff to enable them to identify and prioritise learners’ key learning needs throughout their college life.”

- Ofsted
Our team of dedicated speech and language therapists work very closely with families, carers, college staff, physiotherapists and a student’s previous SALT workers.

At Oaklands, for students who have speech & language therapy specified within their plans, we strive to ensure that we carry over already established communication strategies, although within the context of transition, needs may change and with team agreement these may be appropriately modified.

We use a range of alternative and augmentative communication methods to support and encourage functional communication development. These are not used in isolation, and a student may use several of these methods. The methods we currently use at college are:

- Makaton signing
- Symbols and photos
- A diverse range of communication aids
- Communication books, passports and objects of reference

Our aim is to ensure a seamless transition from school to college and from college to future provisions. Our team will liaise with all relevant professionals, parents and/or carers prior to a student starting their education with us and throughout their placement within the L.I.F.E provision.

With our students, we aim to develop means of communication appropriate to each of their individual needs. This is done in a collaborative and functional way with those involved with the development of the students education and well being.

We also try and deliver opportunities for communication to be appropriate throughout their education, that enable our students to understand and communicate to the best of their ability in every and all environments.

We ensure that each individual student’s communication strategies are embedded functionally across their curriculum in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them. We do this by supporting our colleagues within the class room through robust communication and through the training staff attend.
“We are so grateful for the support provided to us during our daughter’s education at College. The staff are always willing to help and go that extra mile.”

- Parent
PATHWAY ONE

Our Pathways are tailored to the individual needs of our students and provide the best possible way for an individual’s development.

Pathway One provides visual assistance and timetables in order to support our students in managing any change in activity and/or expectation.

The emphasis here is on students focusing more on physical activities and tasks such as leisure, community access, sport, cooking and other enrichment activities rather than traditional learning practices.

We encourage our students to express themselves when communicating and developing their communication skills, supporting students in making well-informed choices of their own volition.

Our aim is also to support students in their integration into the wider college community, accessing many of the facilities on offer. We believe that by increasing a student’s internal discipline and processing skills, they are able to access the college environment in a manner that is relevant to them and meets their personal and academic needs.

Progression Route:
Students could progress onto Pathway Two if appropriate for their social, emotional and educational progression.

PATHWAY TWO

Pathway Two offers our students the chance for them to develop their own independent thinking and processing skills with an emphasis on increasing a student’s autonomy. Students are also encouraged to reduce any behaviours or anxiety that may hinder participation and progress. Many of our Pathway Two students will be supported on a one to one basis, but it may be that Pathway Two students work better in small groups, supported by an allocated member of our support team.

Students in Pathway Two work towards their individualised outcomes, based upon their objectives set within their Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP). Students will access the community and take part in a variety of functional activities, such as using money, developing road safety awareness, public transport travel skills and accessing a number of facilities and venues within the St Albans community. At college we emphasise the importance of being healthy, happy and active with many of our students participating in sports, performing arts, gardening and other activities within the college as and when available.

Students are encouraged to work together with their peers.

Qualifications Available (if suitable after initial assessment):
If appropriate, students can undertake English and Mathematics qualifications.

Progression Route:
Students could progress onto Pathway Three or move into our Pathway 2D class depending on what is deemed appropriate for their social, emotional and educational progression.
“Our son’s transition to college was a huge change after nearly 10 years at the same special school. The staff went out of their way to make that transition as smooth as possible and continue to do so, keeping in touch with us via email and the school diary and using visual cues and timetables to prepare him for his regular routine and any changes. On occasions, when behaviours have been challenging at home, the tutors have been quick to show their support to us and have endeavoured to find a way to discuss these situations in the classroom. Their speedy responses have been invaluable.”

- Parent
Our Pathway Three Programme is designed to meet the needs of students who are starting college who already demonstrate a significantly higher level of independence and communication skills, or for those who have develop those skills during their first year with us in Pathway 2.

Students focus on developing their independent living skills, addressing their identified objectives. These objectives and the desired outcomes could be based around skills within the home environment, the community or within an independent or supported living environment. In addition, students are taught to identify and develop employment-related skills by taking part in internal enterprise schemes and by beginning to explore aspects of work such as the interview process, personal presentation and customer service skills.

By developing these life-skills, we aim to raise our students awareness of employment and the skills required to progress into adulthood effectively.

**Progression Route:**
Some students either progress onto an Oaklands College mainstream course (see College prospectus for details) or they progress onto our Pathway Four, Employability Skills and Supported Internship Programme.

*For more information on Pathway Four, please contact: life@oaklands.ac.uk*
“We feel that our child really enjoys going to college. All the staff members give 100% and more to the young people and help to nurture them to become more independent. Thank you!”

- Parent
We know how difficult it is for many of our students to transfer successfully into college. Students are assessed before they arrive at college and get to meet our Transition Support Workers at school. From that initial assessment, students are placed into the appropriate class at college.

When new students arrive with us, we employ a settling down period, giving our students the time they need to settle into college life. During this six-week period, we are continually assessing students to ensure the class placement is meeting their holistic needs to make sure that they have been placed into the right class to meet their needs.

If it is determined that an alternative class may be more suitable, a discussion is had between the tutor, Senior Curriculum Coordinator, the Transition Support Workers and parent, as well as any other relevant party responsible for the welfare of the student to decide on where best to place them within Supportive Learning.

YOUR TRANSITION INTO L.I.F.E

Our Transition Support Workers (TSW) ensure that new students are transitioned into the L.I.F.E provision as smoothly as possible.

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“Managers and staff monitor meticulously the progress of learners across all programmes.”

- Ofsted
Our Supportive Learning and L.I.F.E leadership team are always happy to provide you with any support, guidance or advice you need in applying for bursaries and paying the materials and life-skills fees we request at the start of the year. The following should be seen as a guide only as the bursary and financial support can change year on year.

Vulnerable Person Bursaries:
The college requires the following evidence from you to begin the process:

- Household income, including the total money received by all household members aged 18 and over, income should include all salaries and/or benefits received. The total income must be below £29,250
- Tax credit award for the current financial year. Provisional tax credit award letters are valid for initial assessment and awarding of bursary, but the confirmed tax credit must be received by 31st October for payments to continue
- Child tax credit (provided you are not entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of less than £16,190, assessed by HMRC
- Working tax credit

The Vulnerable Person Bursary will only cover 50% of the materials fee.

Key Financial Information

We aim to provide financial support and advice in helping your son or daughter start with us.

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- Working tax credit

- Council tax benefit (excluding single person allowance)
- Copy of the guarantee element of the state pension credit
- Benefit letter - income support, ESA, JSA (must be dated within 3 months of application)
- Universal credit - this must be your three most recent monthly award notices printed from your online account. Your take-home pay and UC payment for each month must be totalled to assess your household income, your net earnings must be less than £7,400 (pa)
- Proof of earnings in the household - this must be your three most recent payslips and/or your P60 for all parents in the home

To apply for the Vulnerable Person Bursary, please make contact with your students tutor or the Senior Curriculum Coordinator along with the above information requested to begin the process.

Materials Fee:
We ask that parents make payment by card via Wisepay. If this is not possible, we are able to accept a cheque or cash and provide a receipt. The cheque should be made payable to Oaklands College.

The cost of materials per year is always subject to change. On average for a student attending 5 days a week, the cost is £125.00 per year. This covers the 36 weeks our students should be in attendance. Students who attend fewer than 5 days will pay less per year. For those attending 4 days: £100.00, 3 days: £75.00, 2 days: £50.00. As the cost of materials does rise year on year, parents should be aware that the above costs are based upon the academic year 2020/21.

The Vulnerable Person Bursary will only cover 50% of the materials fee.
“Learners receive high-quality advice and guidance to take the next steps from college into adult life.”

- Ofsted
We appreciate that leaving education for our students can be a daunting time. The Supportive Learning programme is designed and tailored to meet those vital needs in enabling students to develop skills that will support them after they finish their time with us.

Our team of coordinators and tutors continue to support students transitioning on from college into adulthood and ensure that students who are leaving us are fully prepared for their next steps in their lives.

We have strong relationships with the Local Authorities we work with and also Youth Connections who provide extra support for young people leaving college after their time with us. We also work with the relevant social care teams to ensure a smooth transition from College into any future placements.

Supportive Learning students make good progress whilst with us. Learning life-changing skills, developing confidence and their own independence.
Speech and language therapists have trained teaching staff and support staff to reinforce learners’ communication plans throughout their programmes.

- Ofsted
MEET OUR TEAM

Our highly-trained management, teaching and support staff are excited to welcome you to Supportive Learning.

Our team is comprised of a skilled team of professionals who understand the needs and requirements of our students. We also have physiotherapy, speech and language therapists and a nursing team who develop strong working relationships with both staff and students in order to help those who require it further develop their own skills and coping strategies.
“On behalf of our family, I want to say thank you so much for the immeasurable contribution and benefit you have made to our son’s progress and well-being.”

- Parent
YOUR NEXT STEPS

Whatever your question, we’re here to help. Please contact us using the information below and our friendly team will work with you on your next steps from school.

The L.I.F.E Provision is lead by Miss Roxanne Lowe and Supportive Learning is overseen by our Senior Curriculum Coordinator Mr Tom Gore.

For further information on anything related to Supportive Learning, please call:

01727 737198

Alternatively, you can email us direct:

tom.gore@oaklands.ac.uk
david.ellis@oaklands.ac.uk
life@oaklands.ac.uk

For all other information related to Oaklands College, please visit:

www.oaklands.ac.uk/school-leavers/sen
L.I.F.E (Learning for Independence & Future Employment)
Head of Provision: Roxanne Lowe
Senior Curriculum Coordinator for Supportive Learning: Tom Gore

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