

# Valence School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	24 March 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Alex Turner
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Head of care</b>	Susan Jane Wilkins
<b>Head / Principal</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	8 October 2007

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Valence School is situated a short distance from Sevenoaks in Kent and is set within 40 acres of park and woodland. The school caters for students aged from five to 19 with physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs. Termly boarding is available to students aged ten years and over.

Services provided include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, a nursing team, alternative and augmentative communication support, and speech and language therapy. These services are all based on the school site.

### **Summary**

This was an announced visit. The quality of social care at Valence School is good. Appropriate action has been taken to meet recommendations included in the last report. Health is promoted. Student's welfare, rights and safety are protected. Students benefit from excellent opportunities to enjoy, learn, and develop. The quality of residential accommodation varies between outstanding and inadequate. There is a high standard of leadership and management which is demonstrably effective in maximising life opportunities for students.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school was asked to review nursing and therapy levels. Work has been completed to do so. An overall review of health care provision is also underway. These measures are serving to improve the organisation and delivery of health care services to students in the school.

The school was asked to review dietary provision and support. Action has been taken to do so. The steps taken help to ensure students are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.

The school was asked to take action leading to an improvement in the standard of residential accommodation. The school has responded effectively. Students now benefit from some excellent residential provision. Work continues to effect these changes in all areas where residential accommodation is provided.

The school was asked to improve the provision of training and supervision of staff. A structured induction and training programme is now in place. Supervision is regularly provided. These measures help to ensure students are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs and who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting student's welfare.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Young people's health is promoted. Physical, emotional and mental health needs are identified and actively promoted. Improvements have been made in relation to staff training and providing possibilities for young people to take a greater part in managing their own medication. New accommodation units provides students with more opportunities to be involved in preparing

their own meals. Individualised care plans now incorporate information and guidance in relation to eating and drinking that is used to inform day to day support. Students say they are encouraged to eat healthy. Young people benefit from an on-site multi-disciplinary health care team. The organisation of facilities and resources within the school and arrangements with visiting relevant health care specialists does much to provide young people with excellent access to health care services. Young people are given guidance, advice and support, appropriate to their age, needs, culture and wishes, in relation to health and social issues. Where possible, young people have opportunities to discuss these issues openly and honestly with staff and their peers. They are enabled to make choices concerning care and support activities. Medicines and treatment are managed safely. Practice is reflective and takes into account legislation, good practice guidance and up to date research. A clearer input for dietetic support is being established and nursing specialism for dietetic input is being developed. A review of health care in the school is currently underway to help identify how to further improve the way in which students' health is promoted and their care needs are met.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Students privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. The improvement of accommodation standards contribute to this outcome. Students say the school helps to keep them safe and that there are people who they can talk to about any upsets or problems. There is a robust safeguarding group for all safeguarding and complaint issues, and effective measures to counter any incidence of bullying. The way complaints are dealt with has improved. There are shortfalls in recruitment records however recruitment and induction of staff is thorough and helps to ensure only suitable people are employed to work with students in the school. Risk and hazards are carefully managed. This allows students to benefit from the resources, facilities and opportunities the school provides in a safe and enjoyable way. Behaviour management training for staff is provided. Individual Behaviour Management Programmes are formulated and inform practice where required.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Care staff and the school's residential provision and activities contribute a great deal to students educational progress. Students say they get plenty of support with their school work, have the equipment they need to do well and have an annual review to discuss targets, grades and future plans. Students benefit from integrated support which capitalises on learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. Residential, care and teaching staff work together to identify means of encouraging each student's personal, social and educational development and achievement. Transitions between settings is managed well.

Students receive a high level of individual support. There is excellent provision for students who use alternative forms of communication. Students have the opportunity to develop skills to confidently direct carers providing them with support. Opportunities to establish positive relationships with staff other than their key workers are intrinsic in the day to day delivery of care. Students have contact with people independent of the school to discuss personal problems or concerns.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Student's opinions are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Active steps are taken to enable students to make everyday choices and to maximise their opportunities for independence. Religious, racial, cultural, communication methods and linguistic backgrounds of students and their families are all taken into account in the planning and delivery of care and support. The school provides frequent and suitable means for students, using appropriate methods of communication, to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and treatment in the school.

Admission and leaving processes are planned. Students are provided with appropriate information and assisted to settle in. The school makes every effort to obtain all necessary information about students prior to admission. Where students are to leave the school on a planned date, they are prepared for leaving the school well in advance, and are given appropriate information and guidance to assist in the process of transition.

Students have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met. Students benefit from a key work system. Key workers provide individual guidance and support and help to ensure students receive the appropriate support and services they need to attain individual targets and make good progress. The school makes a positive contribution to statutory reviews and enables students to contribute to and understand any processes of review that apply to them.

Students are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school. Students have their own school email address and computers are readily available to them within the boarding areas. Staff contact parents regarding any welfare concerns relating to students at the school.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Students benefit from ongoing improvements to the standard of accommodation. Six brand new purpose built residential units have been completed. Each is equipped and furnished to a very high standard. The design of the units is in line with small group living arrangements, helps to enable students to move around freely and have much more control over the environment in which they live. In doing so opportunities have been created for students to further develop skills needed for independence. Plans are in place to refurbish an existing building used for residential purposes. Work to do so is scheduled to commence in Spring 2009 with completion anticipated in Winter 2009. Interim measures are in place to provide alternative residential facilities with the main school building whilst this work is carried out. The completion of this work is essential as the existing facilities are inadequate and failure to do so will result in an unacceptable disparity in the quality of residential provision.

Students are prepared for the transition into independent living or other suitable arrangements on leaving the school. Arrangements are in line with students' individual needs, circumstances and wishes. The school helps students develop skills of success from an early stage and throughout their time at the school. The daily life of the school provides excellent and frequent opportunities for all students to develop knowledge and skills needed by them for their likely future living arrangements.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Promotion of equality and diversity and its impact is good. Students are looked after by staff who are trained and supported, who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. The school's staffing levels by day and night are carefully considered and subject to ongoing review. This helps to ensure the needs of students are met and that safe levels of supervision are provided. Students benefit from staff of both genders providing residential care and support on a day to day basis. The school provides information which accurately describes what it sets out to do and the manner in which care is provided. The operation of the school is monitored and reviewed by the head teacher, senior staff, the board of governors and independent visitors. The school strives to achieve excellence and is effective in addressing shortfalls identified and enhancing standards of care and support provided.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the system for recruiting staff who will work with children in the school includes all of the elements specified in the standard, and that this is verifiable in recruitment records held at the school. NMS 27