

# Valence School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Sophie Wood
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	24 March 2009

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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**

The school 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 announced inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. All of the key standards were inspected and the one recommendation with regards to recruitment records made from the previous visit was followed up. The school has addressed this, albeit minor shortfalls remain. Pupil safety is not compromised.

Pupils and parents give excellent responses and are particularly pleased with the recent developments to their accommodation.

Staff continue to benefit from additional training and this positively impacts upon the quality of care provided.

The senior management team is strong and inclusive; plans to further develop and improve school facilities are in place.

Four outcome groups are judged to be outstanding and two are good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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

One recommendation was made at the previous inspection. This concerned minor gaps within staff recruitment records, however, such omissions did not compromise pupil welfare. Positive steps have been instigated but minor shortfalls were identified during this inspection.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit by having their health and medical needs thoroughly assessed and met. Initial assessments clearly identify the nature and extent of the interventions needed to promote good health; this information explicitly informs care plans.

Pupils benefit from an on-site multi-disciplinary health care team. They receive the services they need to maintain good health. Nurses and therapists deliver a coordinated approach and oversee the interventions being delivered by the care team.

New care staff spend a good amount of time with the nursing and therapy team as part of their initial induction in order to familiarise themselves with this key element of service provision. Hence, a clear understanding of the importance of this aspect of care is established early on.

All of the nurses and therapists receive regular clinical supervision. They benefit from excellent training opportunities. Specialist courses are actively encouraged, such as epilepsy and gastro-feeds, which positively impacts upon the quality of care provided to the pupils.

Nursing cover is provided until 10pm on weekdays. Outside of this, and during weekends whereby some pupils remain resident, there is no formal nursing cover. The majority of the care team is trained in first aid and they confirm that, in practice, the nurses do provide on-call cover and telephone advice whenever this is needed.

External health care services are delivered on-site, including physiotherapy clinics and consultant appointments. This saves pupils from extensive travelling time and avoids totally disrupting their school day. Comments received from visiting professionals include, 'It is a delight to visit Valence School and conduct a clinic there.'

The residential care team receives on-going training, guidance and support from the nursing and therapy teams. This includes the management of epilepsy and safe medication administration. A clear system ensures staff competencies continue to be monitored after such training has been delivered. Care staff are enthusiastic about their training and the lead nurse states, 'It is a joy to teach the care staff, they really want to learn.'

Assessment and care planning processes actively seek input from individual pupils. Such documents clearly indicate their preferred methods of receiving intimate care support. Personal cultural values and wishes are evidently explored and provided for.

The quality of meals has significantly improved. Pupils comment very positively with regards to the refurbishment of the school dining room and choices on offer, but even more so in terms of the excellent provision now in place within the new residential accommodation. Kitchen areas are well-equipped, pupils are enabled to budget and shop for breakfast and tea time meals, and independence is now maximised in terms of individuals being enabled to make their own meals, snacks and drinks.

The lead nurse routinely reviews menus with the catering team and regular external dietetic input is now in place. A good number of pupils have significant needs with regards to weight and nutrition. These are being clearly met through a coordinated and well informed approach.

Allergies and special dietary requirements are known and provided for. Physical assistance is discreetly and appropriately provided, and the school council routinely provides ideas and feedback to the catering team.

Mealtimes were observed to be relaxed, social occasions whereby pupils were enjoying not only the food provided, but also the social contact with their peers.

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

The provision is good.

Confidential information about pupils is suitably protected and shared appropriately. Staff demonstrate competence in working to clear policy and procedural guidance. The new accommodation lends itself to protecting privacy and dignity to an excellent standard.

Parents, pupils and outside agencies are clearly informed of complaints procedures. These are all taken very seriously and prescribed timescales are met on every occasion. Detailed notes of investigations are confidentially held, showing actions taken to address the issues raised. Although instances of using formal routes remain rare, recent examples record complainants as being satisfied with the outcomes. Pupils spoken with say they usually receive a satisfactory response to their issues by talking with staff, without actually needing to use the formal procedure.

An excellent understanding of safeguarding issues is displayed by all members of the residential care team. The deputy head of residential care and safeguarding retains a lead role on this topic and is knowledgeable, well-informed and keenly motivated to ensure safeguarding is a constant theme throughout staff induction, training and practice. All staff know who to report to and under what circumstances in terms of having child protection concerns. Senior staff have undertaken external safeguarding and safer recruitment training; all other staff receive annual updates with regards to child protection training. Every staff member is required to sign up to the school's code of conduct, which is underpinned by safeguarding guidance and whistle blowing procedures.

Pupils report very low levels with regards to isolated incidents of bullying. These manifest themselves as 'fall outs' between friends and occasional instances of name-calling. A clear anti-bullying procedure is understood and implemented by the staff team and the topic is routinely covered through assemblies and residential house meetings.

There have been no recent significant events occurring at the school which necessitate reporting to Ofsted. However, policies and procedures are in place, should such an event occur. Neither has there been any instance of unauthorised absence or a pupil being deemed to be missing.

Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with the residential care team. Positive behaviour is warmly and appropriately rewarded. Staff are excellent role models. Training with regards to behaviour management is in place and appropriate written logs clearly detail the methods of any sanctions and physical interventions used to manage inappropriate behaviours. These records are closely monitored by senior staff, governors and the external standard 33 visitor.

Recruitment practice provides good safeguards. However, some gaps remain in terms of the practice accurately reflecting the written procedures held by the school. The omissions identified do not have an immediate impact upon pupil safety.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision actively and positively contributes to pupil's educational progress. Current systems ensure excellent levels of communication between teaching and residential teams. Hence, educational targets are incorporated into residential care plans and therefore have the maximum opportunity of being achieved.

Key workers provide the support needed to complete homework assignments and pupils have excellent access to school resources, including the internet outside of the school day. Clear liaison between teaching and residential teams in preparation for annual review meetings ensures targets for educational and social areas are complementary.

Staffing levels have increased since the last inspection. This, alongside the acquisition of additional vehicles, has increased activity levels on and off-site. Pupils enjoy attending after-school clubs and there is much freedom on the campus to visit friends in other bungalows. Pupils enjoy making spontaneous arrangements, for example, two young men (over 18) were able to make last minute arrangements for an early supper in order to try out a local pub for the evening.

Pupils enjoy excellent levels of individual support, which includes different forms of communication aids and adaptations. Appropriate referrals are made to outside agencies with regards to all types of health needs, including emotional well-being. An independent visitor is available to the residential pupils on a monthly basis and the school also contracts an external counsellor, to whom pupils can self-refer.

An established key working system is embedded. Pupils talk very positively of these relationships and genuine affection is observed. Care plans record explicitly clear details of pupil preferences in terms of how they wish for their own personal care needs to be met and these wishes are honoured.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Meaningful forums enable pupils to effectively influence the ways in which the school is run. An effective school council canvasses ideas and requests from all year groups and plays a valuable and active role with regards to staff recruitment.

Initial assessment information seeks the views of parents and pupils, and is chiefly concerned with discovering the preferred communication methods of the pupil. Speech and language therapy provision is currently under review.

Care plans and on-going targets are derived from a multi-disciplinary approach. Excellent monitoring and reviewing systems ensure pupils are working hard towards achievable targets. Clear and effective liaison between all staff disciplines ensures a cohesive and consistent approach is in place for the benefit of the individual pupil. Where applicable, the school actively participates with statutory review processes for those pupils who are 'looked after' by their local authority.

Communication between school and home is reported through returned surveys to be of an excellent standard. Parents and carers feel very well informed of their child's progress, academically and within the residential environment. The majority of pupils return home at weekends. During their time at school they have easy access to email, the use of telephones in private, and the majority have their own mobiles.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are able to change into their own clothes as soon as the school day has ended and can easily obtain the personal requisites they require. Increased staffing levels and additional vehicles provide good access to the local towns in order for pupils to spend their pocket money.

The overall quality of accommodation is outstanding. Recent capital expenditure has transformed the accommodation, which now meets the complex care needs of the pupils.

Bedrooms and communal areas are spacious and fitted with equipment which maximises independence and protects privacy and dignity. Furniture and fittings are of exceptionally good quality and all living areas are cleaned to a very high standard.

Pupils are extremely proud of their accommodation and value the changes that have occurred as a result. Quotes include, 'I love cooking on my own. I can do it now because I can reach everything and don't have to keep asking for help' and 'There is much more privacy, it's important.'

Pupils preparing to leave the school receive excellent support in preparation for this transition. Some plan to move on to independent living arrangements and others apply for college placements. The school is currently undertaking its own research into the successes and disappointments experienced by its leavers over recent years in an attempt to address the difficulties some have encountered and to take preventative measures for current and future pupils. Such good practice is demonstrative of the school's commitment to its pupils beyond their leaving age.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Written literature for all stakeholders is informative and clear. A regularly updated website also provides accurate and up to date information with regards to the services offered by the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Pupils benefit from receiving the care and support they need from staff who are trained and supported to meet their needs. The gender mix of the care team ensures pupils receive personal care from staff members of their own choosing. Religious beliefs, customs and a variety of faiths are actively celebrated through assemblies, food and personal, health and social education.

Newly recruited staff members receive a thorough induction, which incorporates mandatory training courses and liaison with all key personnel attached to the school. Beyond this, supervision meetings occur regularly and all staff members receive annual performance reviews.

Senior team members are suitably qualified and experienced. The school continues to strive to meet the target of having 80% of its care team possessing the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in childcare. Team leaders are qualified NVQ Assessors.

The school ensures staffing levels throughout the day and evening meet the needs of the pupils.

The school has good monitoring systems in place, which effectively regulate and review the practice in respect of the residential provision. Leadership is strong and there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability. The senior management team is inclusive and values the staff team. Pupils benefit because the school strives to improve and constantly looks to develop. Recent examples include achieving sports college status and the research work undertaken with regards to pupils leaving the school.



A dynamic individual school governor has designated responsibility with regards to monitoring the residential provision of the school.

## **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 all staff personnel files include evidence of all pre-employment checks as being completed (NMS 27)
- review the staff recruitment policy and procedure to ensure it is a true reflection of the practice of the school. (NMS 27)