

Valence School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Sophie Wood
Type of inspection	Key

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Boarders thrive in an environment which effectively promotes and supports their health needs. A cohesive multi-disciplinary approach ensures boarders receive the nursing, therapeutic and personal care they need. Health plans are clear and prescriptive; they include the expressed wishes and preferences of the individual. Boarders say, 'the staff know how I like things done and this means a lot to me'. A dynamic, qualified nursing and therapy team provides the care team with ongoing training, guidance and support, which ensures that optimum standards of health care are being competently delivered. Wherever possible, independence is actively enabled, for example, self-medicating, subject to clear risk analysis. Boarders receive the guidance they need to make informed choices about their own health matters. Information is delivered in age appropriate formats, including topics such as diet, physical health, emotional well-being and sexual health. Recent developments, of benefit to pupils throughout the school, includes a thorough external review of meal provision. External dietetic input has increased and the boarding kitchen facilities are of an excellent standard.

Boarders feel safe at school. Safeguarding policies and procedures are understood and are competently delivered by all disciplines of staff. Lines of accountability with regards to child protection concerns are explicitly clear.

Boarders know how to make complaints, as do third parties, including parents and carers. Written records are comprehensive. Those viewed demonstrate satisfactory resolution. Boarders confirm they can contact external agencies privately, if they wish and they value the services of an external independent visitor.

Boarders describe bullying as 'not a problem here' and 'all of the staff and teachers would sort it out if it happened'. Written records further support such statements. Clear behaviour management procedures and strategies are underpinned by appropriate training. Hence, the use of approved sanctions and physical interventions are very rare within the boarding provision. Comprehensive records accurately describe when such techniques are deployed; these are scrutinised internally and through robust external monitoring. Boarders understand consequences and say, 'staff talk to you when you get it wrong' and 'if you're naughty, you do get told off'. Staff know the action to take in the event of a boarder being missing or absent

without authority; however, no such instances have occurred over a number of years. The school is fully aware of the nature of serious incidents which require notification to external agencies, including Ofsted, and it continues to operate in an open, transparent manner, in the best interests of the boarders.

The boarding premises provide safe and secure accommodation. Access to houses is suitably restricted and maintenance issues are swiftly reported and remedied.

Boarders are fully conversant with fire evacuation procedures; these are routinely practised. All equipment, including beds, hoists and mechanical aids are suitably covered through warranties and routine service arrangements.

Robust staff recruitment procedures serve to protect boarders. Care staff do not commence with their employment until all of the required checks, including Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB's), have been satisfactorily received. Volunteers directly recruited by the school receive the same stringent criteria and a small number of volunteers are also provided by an accredited external agency, for which there is a service agreement.

Boarders receive effective support from the care team with regards to the completion of homework. Their accommodation is suitably equipped with internet access, books and other appropriate resources. Care files include clear referencing with regards to educational targets and goals. Staff from teaching and care disciplines routinely liaise to ensure a joint approach is achieved through the care planning process. Individual care needs are integral to this process and a creative approach is flexibly used to ensure that boarders are given every opportunity to achieve academically, personally and socially.

Assessment processes ensure the presenting needs of prospective boarders are carefully researched, in order for meaningful and productive care plans to be implemented. Ongoing review processes ensure that progress and concerns are recorded and effectively responded to. Boarders say, 'I get the help I need' and 'the staff help me when I need it, but they know I need my independence'. Realistic goals and targets, combined with the staff's 'can do' attitude, enables boarders to take risks, make mistakes and mirror the learning experiences as experienced by youngsters without disabilities.

Boarders enjoy a wide range of leisure activities. Team leaders work hard to fully utilise the staffing levels in place, in terms of providing lone and group activities, with increasing access to local community resources. Consultation forums within the school and boarding houses ensure that boarders have a real and tangible impact upon the service provision. Changes happen as a direct result of boarder consultation, such as school uniform, decoration and the purchasing of leisure equipment.

Small living units replicate a homely living environment, which is equipped with the aids that boarders need to maximise their independence and ensure their comfort. Furnishings and fittings are of excellent quality and the ancillary team ensures that cleaning is maintained to an excellent standard, which the boarders appreciate.

Management systems are strong. Boarders, parents, carers and staff know what to

expect from the service because the information is clear and accurate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care plans reflect individual needs and preferences and these become integral to service delivery.

Staff receive the support, training and guidance they need and this factor positively impacts upon the boarders' safety and general well-being. A dynamic training coordinator works hard to deliver a comprehensive, relevant programme, which benefits the staff and boarders.

Stringent monitoring processes serve to ensure that the majority of policies and practices across the boarding provision are routinely reviewed and appropriately updated. Recruitment systems are not currently scrutinised as closely, therefore the monitoring in this area is not as stringent.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- review the current contract agreement with regards to volunteers (NMS 27)
- include staff recruitment records more clearly within the current monitoring systems. (NMS 32)