

# Valence School

Valence School, Westerham Road, Westerham, Kent TN16 1QN

<b>Inspection dates</b>	14 March 2016 to 16 March 2016
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<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
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How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2
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## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils receive an outstanding quality of care. They make good progress with their personal and social development. They are exceedingly positive about their boarding experience. Accommodation is of an excellent standard.
- Safeguarding arrangements within the school are good, residential pupils feel safe.
- Independence is consistently promoted throughout the school. Residential pupils successfully gain life skills which support their transition into adulthood.
- A multi-disciplinary approach ensures that the unique needs of each residential pupil are identified and fully met. Feedback from external professionals, and parents and carers is extremely positive.
- Areas of improvement include the consistent implementation of the recruitment policy. Actions from safeguarding investigations are not always followed up and recorded in a timely manner. Oversight of medication administration records and medication errors needs strengthening.

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards (NMS) for residential special schools.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced the morning of the inspection and the social care inspector was on site three hours later. Half of the eight residential bungalows were visited. Mealtimes were shared with residential pupils and evening activities were observed over two nights. Interviews were undertaken with the head of social care, residential manager, key workers, members of the healthcare team and the safeguarding governor. Observations of the student council interviewing prospective staff took place. Parents and carers contacted via telephone gave feedback on the quality of care. Documents relating to the safety and welfare of residential pupils were sampled.

## Inspection team

Anna Williams

Lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

Valence School is a maintained residential special school that caters for pupils with physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs. Currently, 53 residential pupils aged between 11 and 19 years board. They live in eight bungalows situated within the grounds of the school. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2015.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the recruitment policy is consistently implemented.
- Ensure that identified actions from any safeguarding investigations are fully complete and recorded on relevant files.
- Review monitoring systems for medication errors and medication administration charts.

## Inspection judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Good**

Residential pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their boarding experience. One pupil said, 'It's like a home away from home here.' Safeguarding arrangements within the residential provision are good. Leaders and managers have a good awareness of the strengths and development areas, there are suitable improvement plans in place to address these.

Positive relationships exist between residential pupils. Their behaviour is extremely friendly, kind and encouraging toward each other. A residential pupil commented, 'Coming to this school, I have built confidence to be the person I want to be. I didn't show people who I really was before'. Strong friendships exist between pupils who board, one residential pupil said, 'I stay in the bungalow with my best friend. I socialise with friends in the evening. At school, I can talk about my emotions and feelings with people like I have never done before'. Interactions between staff members and residential pupils are warm and supportive.

Residential pupils successfully acquire independence skills through the boarding experience. Some pupils now travel independently on public transport after support and planning with their keyworker. Budgeting skills are learnt through shopping trips where residential pupils use cash and bank cards to pay. Food is ordered for the home living areas by residential pupils, who check stock levels and complete a form. Cooking and baking is a popular evening activity. A parent commented, '[My child] has to learn how to plan a trip to the cinema. They have to book the minibus, research the film times, budget and organise it all. I think that's a brilliant way for them to learn practical skills'. This successfully prepares residential pupils for adulthood.

Residential pupils communicate in a variety of ways. Staff skilfully listen to and effectively communicate with all pupils. In discussions, residential pupils respectfully wait their turn to share their views. Feedback on residential time is actively sought through regular home living area meetings and annual surveys. Currently, residential pupils' views on the new sensory bathroom are being sought. This demonstrates to pupils that their thoughts and ideas are valued and responded to.

Residential pupils show that they think about others through charitable fundraising. Achievements are celebrated in weekly school newsletters. Outcomes folders capture photos, mementoes and records of each residential pupil's personal progress. Academic, healthcare and residential staff work closely together to track carefully the educational and social development of residential pupils. Regular contact with parents and carers takes place which keeps them informed of progress. A parent commented, 'The whole school is wonderful. I get weekly updates about any issues and achievements [my child] has made'.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

New residential pupils are warmly welcomed into their residential home living areas. A

child-focused guide to the boarding provision clearly describes routines and expectations. A residential pupil commented, 'I found the boarding staff and everyone here to be very helpful and supportive when I started.' Another said, 'I would tell a new student that you might feel nervous, but everyone is here to help you and reassure you. That's what happened to me'. As a result, new residential pupils settle quickly into both school and boarding time.

Residential pupils' support plans comprehensively describe the unique needs of each young person. This document clearly captures all aspects of caring for and supporting the individual to develop and progress. A residential staff member said, 'We follow the students' needs. It's their home and their future'. A multi-disciplinary approach to the creation of support plans means that the healthcare team, education and residential staff all contribute. Young people and their families are encouraged to, and do, add to and amend this key plan. A parent commented, 'Key workers ask me about [my child's] care. I suggest things and they incorporate them into [my child's] care plan. I feel involved'.

Support plans identify suitable personal goals which help residential pupils to progress. Occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech and language professionals all spend time working directly in the residential houses, outside of the learning environment. This assists in tracking pupils' well-being and progress. This method of working also supports staff in effectively implementing personalised programmes. Residential staff work within education time. A staff member stated, 'As key workers, we see the children in the living areas and in classes. We see all aspects of their curriculum and how they are progressing and what they need help with'. This ensures that key workers are up to date with how residential pupils are achieving academically and socially.

Following training and testing of their competency, many residential pupils take on varying levels of self-medication. Some pupils prompt staff when medication is required, other pupils store, administer and record their own medication on personalised charts. Annual refreshers take place to ensure that residential pupils continue to follow safe guidelines. This successfully provides residential pupils with an important life skill.

Residential pupils successfully maintain contact with family and friends. This is through FaceTime, telephone calls and emails. Residential pupils and parents confirm that arrangements in place are effective.

Residential accommodation is of an excellent standard. Each living area is highly adapted to meet the needs of pupils who stay. Adaptations are discrete with the environment presenting as child friendly. Wall displays celebrate achievements and contain photos of residential pupils taking part in events. Residential pupils personalise their own rooms, expressing their own identity and interests. Mealtimes are social events where residential pupils sit together and share their daily news. Staff sensitively support pupils with eating and drinking as required. Food is plentiful, nutritious and meets individual pupils' requirements.

Residential pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. On-site activities include power chair football, bowling, cooking and karaoke. Drama club, cinema, and shopping are examples of community-based trips. These provide residential pupils with opportunities to try new sports, and to access local facilities and clubs. Self-

esteem is built through the supportive atmosphere, which exists across all aspects of the school. A residential pupil commented, 'The best thing about the school is that everyone is different. You don't get teased. Everyone accepts you for who you are. They just try and help you'.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Good**

Residential pupils feel safe, feedback from external safeguarding professionals is positive. Comments included, 'safeguarding remains a very high priority and in my view that includes safe practice for staff in addition to their huge commitment to the welfare of all of their students'. Weekly safeguarding meetings involving the senior leadership team take place. These successfully focus on individual pupils' circumstances and sharing significant information. Allegations against members of staff are taken seriously, consultation with external designated officers takes place. Actions following subsequent investigations are not always completed in a timely manner, and not recorded fully on relevant files. This does not impact directly on residential pupils' welfare, however, it does not demonstrate prompt responses to and complete record-keeping of safeguarding matters.

Recruitment processes for new staff members is rigorous. The school council influences the appointment of potential staff through interviewing and scoring candidates. This ensures that the voices of young people are actively considered when recruiting staff who will support them. The school recruitment policy also applies to volunteer posts. For one volunteer, the implementation of this policy was not consistently applied. This weakens an otherwise robust vetting process.

No residential pupils have been reported missing within residential time. Physical interventions are rare. These include interventions by staff members to power off a wheelchair if the young person's driving is putting themselves or others at risk. Staff physically intervene to promote the medical welfare of some young people. Such events are monitored by the head of social care. Consequently, a small number of residential pupils have behaviour support plans, which are suitably reviewed as a result of incidents. Sanctions are not used. Residential pupils earn merits as part of a school-wide reward system, which includes recognition for acts of kindness towards others. Bullying is not identified as an issue by residential pupils. They speak positively of friendships built through the boarding experience.

Risk assessments are detailed, up to date and accurately reflect the individual risks of each residential pupil. Residential staff demonstrate good awareness of the vulnerabilities of pupils who board. Residential pupils learn how to keep safe online and in the community through focused key working sessions. Health and safety routines across the school are good. The extensive grounds are well maintained and safe.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Good**

The senior leadership team is stable. The senior leaders are suitably experienced and qualified in residential childcare. The statement of purpose is followed in practice, in particular, residential pupils are actively encouraged to develop their life and social skills.

Weekly checks relating to each home living area take place. These identify any deficiencies and action points for the week ahead. These checks are effective at maintaining a consistent quality of care across all the separate accommodation areas. Governors provide additional robust scrutiny of safeguarding practice. During frequent visits, the safeguarding governor focuses on monitoring child protection matters including complaints, recruitment and incidents. Areas for improvement are identified and followed up.

Oversight of medication administration charts and medication errors is less robust. Three charts sampled contained omissions in record-keeping. While these were rectified during the inspection the shortfalls had not been highlighted through internal checks. Medication errors occur and are reported to the on-site nursing team, which reports them externally via an online system. Records of these referrals are not kept. The lack of a centralised medication error record means that it is difficult to identify any patterns and trends, and linked actions or learning.

The previous points to improve have been addressed. New support plans and outcome targets now contain clear success criteria for residential pupils to follow. Any recruitment anomalies are recorded clearly in prospective candidates' records. However, a further point to improve regarding the consistent implementation of the recruitment and retention policy has been set.

New staff members receive structured induction training. Probationary periods include regular supervision and induction checklists, which test newer staff members' understanding and learning. In addition, a buddy is provided for all new members of the residential team. This provides a supportive mentor to assist them to settle into their new role. All staff and volunteers receive regular and recorded supervision. These sessions are reflective and child focused. Training opportunities are good. Staff members receive instruction in safe caring topics such as safeguarding, moving and handling, food hygiene and first aid. Residential staff members feel well supported by senior staff. They enjoy their job roles and speak positively about working in the school.

Complaints raised since the previous inspection have been investigated including suitably engaging the local authority. External visits to the residential provision take place as required. These visits involve residential pupils, scrutinise safeguarding arrangements and identify areas for improvement. The annual welfare report considers how the school is meeting the residential NMS. This report highlights suitable development goals to improve further the outcomes of residential pupils.



## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact that the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean that children and young people are not protected or that their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119032
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC041791
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/7021

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential special school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	53
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr R Gooding
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	4 February 2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01959 562156
<b>Email address</b>	pkniveton@valence.kent.sch.uk

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