

Valence School

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

Inspection dates

23/06/2017

Context of the inspection

This monitoring visit was undertaken following a judgement of inadequate which was given at the full welfare inspection carried out from 27 to 29 March 2017. The progress made in meeting the national minimum standards for residential special schools was assessed.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

A number of the national minimum standards which were breached at the full inspection in March 2017 are now judged to be met. Actions taken to address the other breaches will need time to take effect and these breaches are repeated at this inspection.

Leaders, managers and the governing body have understood and accepted the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. In the days following the inspection in March 2017, the principal and governors instigated audits across key areas of the school. The audits resulted in a comprehensive and detailed action plan which was shared with Ofsted, staff and parents.

Immediate action taken by leaders, managers and the governors focused on improving safeguarding systems and practice. The school sought external professionals to deliver a range of safeguarding training to all staff working at the school. As a result, the staff have an increased knowledge and understanding of identifying and reporting concerns or actual harm. In addition, managers with safeguarding lead roles are better able to make referrals to the appropriate safeguarding agencies. Training from Kent County Council safeguarding and educational bodies has supported the school in achieving this.

The governing body has reviewed its structure and implemented processes to gain a better oversight and improved monitoring of the management and practices in the school. In particular, the role and responsibilities of the safeguarding governor have increased. The recruitment of a suitably experienced assistant safeguarding governor has strengthened the oversight of practice.

Senior leaders and governors have reviewed and improved systems to ensure that they meet standards across the board. However, changes made have yet to fully embed. This inspection found that not all shortfalls had been met as some areas need time to fully have an impact.

Good-quality risk assessments, changes to staffing rotas and spot checks by senior managers have resulted in no child being left unattended during the night. Significant progress has been made in ensuring that complaints are noted, investigated and responded to in a timely manner. Systems for the management of medication errors continue to develop with good joint working between the school and NHS Trust.

Supervision of staff has not been as detailed or as regular as necessary. Increased levels of senior staff visibility and informal conversations are more readily available. Not all staff have regular supervision so opportunities to address practice and individual learning are limited. Despite this deficit, the staff say that they feel more supported and they have reacted positively to the numerous changes put in place. There has been additional staffing drafted in to support the management team to meet the actions required from the last inspection and to cover the absence of the head of care for the residential provision. While this has created extra work for all involved, the school has worked hard to ensure that they can keep the everyday life of the school going and keep parents, students and others informed. The interim management arrangements for the residential provision are suitable. Further changes are planned which will strengthen the management of the residential provision and safeguarding.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding (residential special) schools:

- NMS 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- NMS 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- NMS 13.9 The records specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- NMS 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

Inspection team

Liz Driver	Lead social care inspector
Ruth Coler	Social care inspector

Information about this school

Valence School is a maintained residential special school. The school caters for pupils who have physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs. Currently, 52 residential pupils aged between 11 and 19 years board. They live in eight bungalows. Accommodation is situated within the grounds of the school. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2017.

School details

Unique reference number	10038219
Social care unique reference number	SC041791
DfE registration number	119032

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 boarding schools.

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	52
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to 19
Headteacher	Roland Gooding
Date of previous boarding inspection	29/03/2017
Telephone number	01959 562156
Email address	rgooding@valence.kent.sch.uk

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