

# Valence School

Westerham Road, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1QN

**Inspection dates** 19–21 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- In relation to their starting points, pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress, particularly in their communication skills and personal development.
- Teaching is mainly good and some is outstanding. There are excellent and caring relationships between staff and pupils.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid progress from very low starting points.
- The sixth form is good. It ensures pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well especially through opportunities to learn and play sport with mainstream pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because they enjoy coming to school and want to learn.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Residential pupils feel safe and are confident in the knowledge that they can share any concerns they may have with staff.
- The headteacher and senior staff lead the school well. They robustly monitor standards and ensure that teaching continues to improve.
- The governors provide a good level of challenge and support to leaders. They ensure that government funding is well spent for the benefit of all groups of pupils.
- All staff, including residential, medical and therapy staff, work highly effectively to provide all-round care and support that fully meet the personal and learning needs of each pupil.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally activities go on for too long and teachers do not move the pupils on quickly enough to new learning.
- Sometimes teachers do not always set work at the right level for pupils, particularly those who are more able.
- Those in charge of subjects are not fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Support assistants are not always used effectively to support learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons and/or parts of lessons. Over two thirds were conducted jointly with the headteacher and head of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own surveys of parents' and carers' opinions and responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Meetings were held with various members of staff, parents and carers, and representatives from the governing body. Telephone discussions were also held with two parents or carers and the school improvement advisor. The inspectors spoke to many pupils, including residential pupils, and looked at behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- They also looked at documentation about pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and teachers' planning. The school's documents on safeguarding were scrutinised together with records of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors listened to pupils reading in lessons and looked at their work, both in lessons and in books.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school's website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

## Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Blount	Additional Inspector
Jan Hunnam	Social care Inspector
Thomas Webber	Social care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for physical difficulties. A significant proportion has complex medical, health and communication difficulties.
- Pupils enter the school at various starting points across all key stages. Pupil groupings vary in size from year to year.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes across the school due to the varying numbers in each year group.
- The majority of pupils are boys.
- A large number of pupils use the school's residential provision on week days during the school terms. Each boarder has a personalised package of time and support in the residential provision.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding from the government to schools, based on the numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in the care of the local authority and those from families in the armed forces, is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic backgrounds other than White British is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- There has been significant staff turnover since the previous inspection including at middle leadership level.
- The school has specialist status for sports.
- The school does not have an early entry policy for GCSE.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and further improve pupils' achievement through:
  - setting work that varies in difficulty so that all pupils are always given challenging work at the right level for their abilities
  - making sure that teachers move the more-able pupils on to new learning activities earlier in the lesson so that they can make faster progress
  - ensuring teachers give sufficient direction to teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.
- Strengthen further the quality of leadership and management, including in the residential provision, by:
  - providing more frequent opportunities for those staff responsible for different subjects to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of work to ensure progress for all pupils is consistently outstanding
  - implementing more robust and effective supervision arrangements for all staff who support pupils in the residential provision
  - ensuring more regular meetings take place in the residential living areas to ensure pupils have opportunities to formally put forward their views
  - improving the presentation of care plans to ensure they are accessible to pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Taking into account their different low starting points, all pupils make good progress and all achieve well whatever their individual special educational needs or disabilities.
- Teachers have received training in the use of a range of approaches to meet the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. As a result, many pupils are able to learn quickly and their rates of progress have increased since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' progress in communication is outstanding because all staff consistently use signs, gestures and facial expressions, as well as new interactive technologies very effectively, to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils make significant strides in improving their reading because they make good progress in improving their ability to 'sound out' letters and groups of letters when dealing with difficult or new words. This improves their confidence in learning in all subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in numeracy because teachers have good subject knowledge. Older pupils were able to use correct mathematical language appropriately during a lesson on angles. Younger pupils achieve well because teachers provide enjoyable practical tasks, which develops good problem-solving skills.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress towards some of the early learning goals given their low starting points. They develop effective early communication skills through the use of signs and symbols.
- By the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form, pupils develop relevant work-related skills and acquire a wide range of qualifications appropriate to their levels of ability, including at GCSE level.
- Progress in the sixth form is good. Pupils are very well equipped to cope as independently as possible in adult life.
- High quality medical, therapeutic and physical support provided on site by the health team enables pupils with specific health needs to not miss school through attending medical appointments. As a result, they achieve similarly to their classmates.
- Residential pupils make excellent progress in their independent living skills. For example, they learn to cook meals with minimal adult help. They also learn to keep themselves safe and spend money within a budget.
- The school uses its primary sports funding and specialist status highly effectively to ensure all pupils receive specialist teaching in physical education that has enabled some pupils to act as sports leaders to local mainstream pupils. Extensive opportunities to participate in a wide range of sporting and competitive events promote exceptionally well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Different groups of pupils make similar progress and there are no significant differences in how well they achieve. Those pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils in English and mathematics because the extra funding is used to provide additional activities and resources to meet these pupils' needs.
- On occasion, not all pupils make the best progress possible because work set by teachers is not always at the right level of difficulty and sometimes teachers do not move pupils on to new learning quickly enough. Teaching assistants do not always support pupils effectively to ensure they learn at a rapid rate.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching enables pupils to make good progress overall, and to make outstanding progress in their personal development and ability to communicate with others.
- Typically, teachers use a wide range of suitable resources, including the use of symbols, signing, sensory experiences and information and communication technology to enhance learning. They use questioning well, using visual communication cards where appropriate, to extend and develop pupils' thinking and understanding.
- In an excellent Key Stage 1 physical education lesson, sensory materials and music were used effectively by the teacher to develop pupils' understanding of following instructions. Each pupil was motivated to participate in an activity, which was fully adapted to their individual interests, so that all remained on-task and made excellent progress in their learning.
- Teachers mostly plan their lessons well and make sure there is a strong focus on the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In a highly effective science lesson, there was a strong focus throughout on identifying key words and breaking these down into sounds, when necessary, to improve pupils' reading skills.
- Teachers work exceptionally well with therapists and specialist staff to provide high quality intensive all-round support for pupils who have more complex medical, physical and sensory difficulties, so that no precious learning time is lost.
- Consistency between the school's work and activities in the residential provision ensures that pupils use skills learnt in school during the evenings, such as managing money and preparing meals. This supports pupils' progress very effectively.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is carefully planned and learning is accurately assessed. Staff listen and respond well to children helping them to remain engaged in their learning.
- Teaching assistants usually make good contributions to lessons but occasionally their expertise is not used well enough. This happens when they do not know what pupils are to learn or they do not have clear enough guidance about their own responsibilities.
- Good teaching in the sixth form means that pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their lives.
- Pupils with additional physical difficulties gain from the wide variety of physical exercise opportunities provided exceptionally well. For example, some pupils who use wheelchairs learn to swim independently and all such pupils thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to extend their muscles and bodies outside the normal limits they experience.
- Occasionally, activities in lessons are not always well matched to individual pupils' abilities and they are not moved on to new learning quickly enough to make the best progress possible.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school is a calm, orderly place and pupils behave well. Residential pupils make particularly strong improvements in their behaviour over time. Pupils are confident and show good attitudes to their learning. They want to do well.
- All staff have received training in managing behaviour so that the school is a peaceful place in which to learn. Pupils, parents and carers and the school records show that bullying is rare and there have been no exclusions over time.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils treat each other with respect. For example, in a meeting of residential pupils, they listened to each other, valued what each other said and made sure everyone had their say.
- Excellent relationships are evident throughout the school. Pupils benefit from very high quality interactions with adults, which go a long way in helping them to develop their self-image, confidence, communication skills and ability to cope with change. Those pupils with complex difficulties show that they are comfortable with the adults who look after their intimate care

needs.

- There are well-developed procedures to keep pupils safe in school and when they are off-site and in the residential accommodation.
- Pupils say they feel safe, well cared for and supported at school. They know what to do to stay safe, including when using computers. Bullying is rare but pupils understand some of the different forms it can take and what to do if it should ever happen.
- Older pupils, including in the sixth form and residential provision, develop a strong sense of responsibility. Independent skills learnt through outings, residential adventure trips and work-related learning opportunities stand them in good stead for the future.
- Parents and carers express confidence that behaviour and safety are good overall in both the school and residential provision.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the head of teaching and learning and wider multi-disciplinary senior leadership team, provides perceptive and highly effective leadership. Despite significant staff turnover and long-term absence, the school has continued to ensure that achievement for all groups is at least good.
- The school understands well its own strengths and where improvement is still required, and is effective in using this information to develop its priority action plans. Senior leaders rightly recognise that those leaders in charge of subjects do not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in their areas of work frequently enough to ensure weaknesses identified are resolved quickly to ensure all pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision are good, ensuring that all routines run smoothly, weaknesses are identified and action is taken to improve.
- School and residential leaders and managers maintain close links so that pupils' individual needs are met very well.
- Equal opportunities are effectively promoted because the school monitors progress and intervenes to ensure different groups do well. This has helped senior leaders to allocate resources effectively to ensure those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding achieve equally well as other pupils.
- The quality of teaching closely matches teachers' pay and the targets they are set. Regular checking of teaching by senior leaders has identified strong practice. Where teaching has been weak, this has been tackled rigorously. Staff benefit from good training to improve their practice.
- The curriculum, including that of the sixth form, offers a good balance of academic, practical and vocational subjects and high-quality personal learning programmes. Exciting outdoor and indoor activities, residential trips, and artistic, musical and sporting opportunities with local schools encourage pupils to test themselves in supportive situations. These activities and experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effectively in place in school and for off-site experiences. Child protection training is thorough and detailed including very good induction arrangements for new staff.
- The local authority contributes effectively through visits and monitoring and has an accurate picture of the school and its progress. It has supported the school with reviews of pupils' achievements and standards.
- Communication with parents and carers is very effective. Parents and carers explained how approachable and helpful staff are, not only in helping their children to make progress, but also in helping them to gain access to services for themselves and so better support their child.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body contains a range of expertise that allows it to carry out all its functions and legal responsibilities, including that for safeguarding, effectively. It has a good

understanding of the quality of teaching and how staff promotion is managed. Governors ensure that pay is related to teachers' performance. The headteacher's performance is similarly scrutinised, and governors make good use of an external adviser to ensure that his annual objectives are demanding and enable the school to move forward. Checking on how funding is used is effective. Governors ensure that the resources gained through the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and primary sports funding are used effectively for those for whom they are intended, promoting those pupils' engagement in learning and good progress. Training enables the governing body to understand how well the school enables pupils to achieve, and advance their personal development and behaviour.

<b>Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
<b>Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of boarding provision/Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>good</b>

- Pupils flourish in the residential environment. Staff are focused, enthusiastic and committed to providing the highest quality of care and a positive, beneficial residential experience for pupils.
- Pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem and look to the future with enthusiasm and are aspirational for example, one student wants to run her own beauty salon.
- Residential pupils have extremely strong relationships with staff who clearly put their needs and welfare at the centre of all their working practices. Highly individualised support enables pupils to make remarkable progress in developing their independence skills.
- Staff encourage pupils to convey their opinions and their specific needs, regardless of communication difficulties, which gives them confidence to make choices in all aspects of their lives. Although this is done on an informal basis daily, meetings in the residential living areas are not frequent enough to allow pupils to more formally put forward their views.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils adhere to the Valence Code and are kind, supportive and tolerant to each other. Physical intervention is rarely used due to the skills of the staff team who have been appropriately trained and are able to calm situations successfully.
- Arrangements for health care are excellent and pupils benefit enormously from the superbly resourced health facilities including the wide-ranging expertise of the on-site health care team.
- Pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities, providing them with new experiences and challenges that add significantly to their enjoyment of life.
- Well-designed, spacious residential facilities provide pupils with high quality living areas. A range of rigorous health and safety checks, fire safety checks and comprehensive risk assessments protect pupils. Safeguarding is very effective and staff recruitment processes are robust.
- The residential facility is very well managed. Rigorous monitoring by management, an independent visitor and governors maintains high standards.
- Care plans are detailed and thorough but are not pupil friendly and do not provide clear information for them to fully engage in their care planning process.



- Staff receive excellent training ensuring they are skilled and competent to support pupils with complex needs. Although new systems of supervision are in place to support staff, some staff who work part time in the residential provision have not been receiving regular supervision.



## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

<b>Boarding/Residential provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119032
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	41781
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	426559

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Foundation Special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	95
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	30
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	50
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Roland Gooding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20–21 January 2011
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