Thames Valley School

Special Educational Needs Report 2026-2027

Thames Valley School

Thames Valley School is a maintained day specialist school supporting autistic young people aged 5 to 16 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In addition to our main site in Tilehurst, we also operate a satellite provision, in collaboration with Reading Borough Council, TVS Hill Brow, designed to provide a nurturing, structured learning environment for primary pupils in Key Stage One and Two. This extension allows us to meet a wider range of ages and developmental needs for those whom a mainstream environment is not suitable.

At the heart of our school is the Quality-of-Life Framework, which guides our holistic approach to education. This framework ensures we consider each pupil's emotional wellbeing, personal growth, relationships, autonomy, and aspirations alongside their academic progress. It underpins our ethos of placing the child's whole experience at the centre of everything we do. We take enormous care to give our pupils the support they need to learn well and to develop their confidence and independence. Small classes committed and experienced specialist teachers, and a structured, supportive learning environment make our school a great place to be.

We ask pupils to work hard and help them enjoy the success that this brings. The same ethos extends to our Hill Brow site, ensuring that the same high standards of care and educational quality are maintained across both locations.

We are specialists in autism, and our aim is for our pupils to lead successful, fulfilling lives in society. Our doors are open to all our families, and we want them to feel as much a part of our school community as their children.

1. The kinds of SEN that are provided for at Thames Valley School

Thames Valley School is a maintained day specialist school for autistic young people aged between 4 and 16 years, who have an Education, Health and Care Plan. The Hill Brow site is specifically tailored for Key Stage One and Two pupils, supporting pupils with more complex needs, with a strong emphasis on developing communication, independence, and learning-to-learn skills to prepare pupils for adulthood and future learning. Our Tilehurst site supports those from Key Stage 3to Key Stage 4. In addition, we have an Upper Key Stage 2 class for pupils following an adapted National Curriculum, designed to support a successful transition into secondary school.

All pupils are referred by their local authority, and they must have an Education, Health and Care Plan which states they have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder/ Autism

diagnosis (or are awaiting diagnosis with a referral having been submitted and are recognised by professionals as being likely to receive a diagnosis of autism). Pupils may have additional diagnoses, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils may also have associated communication and interaction, as well as sensory, processing or physical needs that require reasonable adjustments and additional supporting provision.

Alongside this, members of classroom-based staff and our Trans Disciplinary Team work collaboratively with families and other professionals to assess and understand our pupils' emerging needs through embedded therapeutic provision. Our Hill Brow site mirrors the curriculum and therapeutic approaches of the main school, ensuring a seamless provision across both sites.

Pupils access the National Curriculum, which is suitably adapted and paced, acknowledging that some pupils require the adaptations made at Thames Valley School to access and engage with learning opportunities. Our pupils work at broadly age-related levels of attainment, and they work towards a range of accredited qualifications, including GCSEs and Level 2 Qualifications. At Thames Valley School, we recognise that successful learning is built upon strong foundations. Early learning principles continue to be important throughout the primary years, particularly for pupils with SEND and those working at earlier developmental stages. Our Primary Curriculum reflects this, providing pupils with the communication, independence, self-regulation, and learning-to-learn skills that underpin future success within the adapted National Curriculum and beyond.

2. Identifying pupils with SEN and assessing their needs

All pupils attending Thames Valley School have an EHCP, developed in collaboration with the local authority in which the pupil resides, with contributions from the individual's family, and relevant academic or clinical professionals. These EHCPs identify the pupil's primary and additional needs and set out the provision they require. Thames Valley School works closely with local authorities including Brighter Futures for Children (Reading), West Berkshire, Wokingham, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire to support appropriate placements.

Assessment of pupil's needs is a continuous, collaborative process that includes formal reviews and informal observations by teaching staff and the Trans-Disciplinary Team, which supports both our Tilehurst and Hill Brow sites. Our team includes a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, educational psychologist, assistant psychologist, assistant therapists, behaviour lead and behaviour coordinators. Members of this team utilise various methods of gathering pertinent information in order to assess and understand the young person's presenting needs and ensure appropriate support or intervention is provided. This approach allows us to remove or overcome barriers to learning and contributes to the holistic development of our pupils. Pupils may begin their time with us on an integration timetable, building up their time in school to full-time attendance, depending on their previous school experiences and the wider support needed for the class group and the individual.

For our youngest pupils at Hill Brow, a carefully tailored transition process, including home visits and assessments, ensures that each child receives the necessary support from the outset. This process is designed to gather important information about each child's communication style, sensory profile, and social preferences. Further information on the admissions process to our school can be found on the Thames Valley School website in our Admissions Policy.

3. Consulting and involving pupils

At Thames Valley School, pupil voice is integral to each individual's journey, from admission to graduation. A fundamental component of initial transition to Thames Valley School involves encouraging and empowering the young person to share their thoughts and feelings, so that they feel listened to and understood. This creates the foundation upon which our Quality-of-Life Framework is built, with the young person at the centre. Pupils are allocated a keyworker with whom they work closely to identify their strengths, what is important to them, and enable them to work towards their individual targets. A range of methods are utilised, such as encouraging pupils to express their preferences through visual supports and other communication methods that suit their developmental stage.

Pupils are supported to contribute meaningfully to their annual reviews, whether by attending meetings, creating presentations, or sharing their thoughts through supported interviews or visuals, or share their views with their keyworker who may advocate on their behalf.

We also have an active school council who are consulted with regularly on a wide range of school, and Academy Trust, decisions, providing further opportunities for pupils to influence school life. School council meetings take place regularly and include representation from all Key Stages. We also recognise that pupil voice may look different across our provision. For pupils at Hill Brow, opportunities to make choices are often most meaningful when they are concrete, immediate, and embedded within their daily routines. As a result, opportunities for pupil voice are embedded within daily routines, enabling pupils to make decisions about activities, learning experiences, leisure opportunities, and other aspects of their school day.

4. Consulting and involving parents

We place high value on our relationships with families. From the point of enquiry through to admission and placement, we work closely with parents and carers to build trust and ensure a shared understanding of each child's needs and strengths.

Parents are invited to visit and tour the school, attend introductory meetings, and participate in support planning from the outset. Once a child is on roll, families receive weekly updates from keyworkers or form tutors and have access to regular phone and email communication to share information and key messages. We host three parent evenings a year and provide written reports twice annually in addition to the annual EHCP review.

Members of the Trans-Disciplinary Team will also work closely with you to ensure your child's holistic needs are met to enable them to effectively access their learning.

Workshops, training sessions, and family events offer opportunities for parents to learn more about autism, therapeutic strategies, and ways to support their child at home. In addition, we also hold school open evenings and have active parental representation on the board of trustees.

At Hill Brow, a keyworker is allocated to each family for regular updates, and parents are invited to participate in workshops and consultations, alongside school events, including open evenings and parents' meetings, just as they are at the Tilehurst site.

5. Assessing and reviewing pupils' progress towards outcomes

We follow the graduated approach and the four-part cycle of assess, plan, do, review. We take a multi-layered view of progress, considering academic development alongside emotional wellbeing, communication, independence, and life skills.

For some pupils, this includes developmental assessments aligned with the adapted curriculum, which has been created with input from curriculum specialists. The class or subject teacher carries out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs, drawing on:

- The pupil's own views
- The teacher's assessment and experience of the pupil
- Previous progress and attainment or behaviour
- Teachers' assessments, where relevant
- The views and experiences of parents
- Advice from external support services, if relevant
- Reports from the school's Transdisciplinary Team

All teachers and support staff who work with the pupil will be made aware of their needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided, and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required. We will regularly review the effectiveness of the support and interventions and their impact on the pupil's progress.

All teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the pupils in their class, ensuring that all information and data on each pupil in class is up to date and freely available to review. Where a pupil is not making expected progress, teachers (class teachers or form tutors), the transdisciplinary team and parents will collaborate on problem solving, planning support and interventions for individual pupils.

6. Supporting pupils moving between phases and preparing for adulthood

Transitions are approached with care and planning, recognising the importance of predictability for many autistic pupils. As such, they are prepared for planned transitions that take place between phases to ensure these are 'expected changes' that they have time to process. Pupils receive visual supports such as, social stories, providing information about what to expect and are provided with opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings with key staff. As part of this, they may participate in visits or complete tours of any new areas they will be using, as well as meeting members of staff.

The transition into Hill Brow for the appropriately aged pupils is carefully planned, with phased introductions to the new environment. This may involve home or current school/nursery visits, familiarisation with visual supports, and short initial visits to the setting, building up over time. As pupils move through phases, we provide structured transitions between the Hill Brow and Tilehurst sites, or other educational settings if most appropriate.

Preparation for adulthood is woven into the curriculum from an early stage. Through Preparing for Adulthood, PSHE, and Personal Development lessons, pupils learn about independent living, relationships, self-advocacy, personal safety, sex education and the world of work. Careers guidance, work experience, and person-centred planning approaches like Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) help young people and their families plan future pathways in a meaningful, aspirational way.

Relevant and supportive information is provided to new schools or colleges with agreement from parents and families as to what is shared, to enable a successful transition to new settings.

7. Our approach to teaching pupils with SEN

Teaching is of a high quality that has clear aims, uses effective methods and suitable resources, which is matched to our cohort's needs.

We adopt the SPELL framework to proactive support ensuring school is (S)structured, staff utilise (P)positive approaches, are (E)empathetic towards pupils, adopt a (L)low arousal/Levels of regulation approach and maintain (L)links with families, relevant professionals and other stakeholders.

The Trans-Disciplinary Team embed therapeutic provision into the pupil's school day to ensure their needs are met holistically. This may include input from an educational psychologist, a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, assistant psychologist, behaviour co-ordinator and assistant therapist.

Hill Brow adopts the same high-quality, individualised teaching approaches as the Tilehurst site. Our Primary cohort benefits from the redeveloped Primary curriculum, which is tailored to meet the specific needs of young autistic pupils. The teaching staff at Hill Brow are trained in autism-specific strategies, including the SPELL framework, Attention Autism,

and Intensive Interaction, ensuring that the provision is fully suited to the pupils' unique requirements.

8. Adaptations to the curriculum and learning environment

Thames Valley School has been specially designed to meet the specific needs of our autistic pupils. The environment and building have been designed to be deliberately considerate of our children's sensory sensitivities, including muted colours, minimal visual clutter, wide corridors and access to side rooms and quiet areas.

Pupils have access to resources and adaptations they require to support their needs as stipulated in their EHCPs, or as recommended by professionals i.e. speech and language or occupational therapists, visual impairment specialists. This includes but is not limited to alternative methods of recording, coloured overlays, visual aids and use of assistive technology.

We make reasonable adjustments to our curriculum to ensure pupils are able to access their learning opportunities, for example, by grouping, content of the lesson, adapting resources, giving processing time, pre-teaching of key vocabulary and consideration of ways information is presented (verbal and visual).

The Hill Brow site has been specifically designed with the sensory and developmental needs of the intended year group's pupils in mind. The younger cohort has access to a separate, outdoor space and specialised facilities. The curriculum at Hill Brow mirrors that of the Tilehurst site, with additional adjustments for younger children. All pupils have access to resources stipulated in their EHCPs, and staff use adapted teaching methods and resources to ensure pupils can access the learning environment successfully.

9. Expertise and training of staff

All staff participate in a robust programme of continuous professional development and access a wide range of training opportunities related to autism, SPELL approaches, safeguarding, behaviour support, trauma-informed approaches and mental health.

These include:

- An extensive induction programme for new members of staff
- Skill sharing and the demonstration of teaching techniques and strategies organised within the school
- Access to online training
- Professional development sessions and one-off sessions on relevant subjects provided by SEN specialists
- Attendance at courses offered by external providers, accredited and non-accredited, as part of the School's Performance Management process

Staff at Hill Brow bring additional expertise in early childhood education and development and receive further training in early communication methods and sensory support. They receive the same comprehensive training as staff at the main Thames Valley School, including Autism Education Trust training, and trauma-informed approaches. In addition, Hill Brow staff have been trained in strategies, such as Attention Autism and Intensive Interaction, to ensure they are fully equipped to support the developmental needs of their pupils. Ongoing training is central to maintaining high-quality, responsive teaching across both sites.

10. Evaluating the effectiveness of SEN provision

Staff maintain accurate pupil progress documentation including, one-page profiles, provision maps, behaviour support plans and individual Autism Education Trust (AET) frameworks. These documents allow staff to review pupils' progress towards their individual EHCP targets.

The Trans-Disciplinary Team monitor and review the impact of interventions and therapeutic support (after 4 weeks) to ensure these are effectively supporting the individual to make progress.

We also ensure the young person is at the centre by capturing pupil voice through regular school council meetings, questionnaires and weekly keyworker sessions. The afore mentioned is collated and discussed with all stakeholders as part of the annual review process.

11. Support for improving emotional and social development

We integrate our Quality-of-Life framework into our everyday practice to support your child's social and emotional development. We identify a keyworker and put relationships with both young people and their families at the centre of all that we do. We recognise the benefits of staff engagement with pupils and their parents/carers by being attentive and responsive, reliable and predictable, anticipating and meeting needs.

Alongside weekly keyworker sessions that are individually tailored to each child's needs, pupils are supported by the Trans-Disciplinary Team. They therefore receive universal, targeted or specialist input from the school's Assistant Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Wellbeing Lead and Mental Health First Aiders.

All pupils receive specialised support for their emotional and social development, with individual keyworkers and therapeutic input tailored to their developmental stage.

We have a broad and balanced PSHE, Preparing for Adulthood and Personal Development curriculum that effectively contributes to the pupils' learning about themselves, their relationships, their emotional health and wellbeing.

12. Complaints about SEN provision

Please refer to our school's complaints policy and procedure which is available on our school website:

https://www.thamesvalleyschool.org.uk/page/?title=Policies+and+Procedures&pid=22

Paper copies are available upon request, to all parents and professionals.

The parents of pupils with disabilities have the right to make disability discrimination claims to the first-tier SEND tribunal if they believe that our school has discriminated against their children. They can make a claim about alleged discrimination regarding:

- Exclusions
- Provision of education and associated services
- Making reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services

13. Contact details of support services for parents of pupils with SEN

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) provides advice and information to young people, and parents whose children have Special Educational Needs. They provide impartial and factual support on all aspects of the SEN framework to help parents and young people play an active and informed role in their child's or their own education. They can be contacted in the following ways – Tel: 0118 937 3421 or email iass@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Families may also receive support from Parenting Special Children https://www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk/

14. The local authority local offer

We maintain links with external organisations to ensure holistic support for children and their families, such as alternative provisions, therapeutic professionals, CAMHS and primary mental health services, social care and accessing the local offer.

Our contribution to the local offer can be found on the Thames Valley School website.

Our local authority's local offer is published here:
https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/service.page?id=n1-oXAajaO8