

## Thames Valley School

### Special Educational Needs Report 2023-2024

#### Thames Valley School

Thames Valley School is a maintained day specialist school for young people aged between 5 and 16 years, who have an EHCP and diagnosis of autism.

We work to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential, personally, socially, emotionally, physically and academically.

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 and supportive learning environment make our school a great place to be. We are encouraging and supportive, and always celebrate achievement. We ask pupils to work hard, and help them to enjoy the success that this brings.

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 5 and 16 years, who have an EHCP. All pupils are referred by their local authority and they must have an Education, Health and Care Plan which states their 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.

Alongside this, members of 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.

Pupils access the National Curriculum, which is suitably adapted and paced, acknowledging that some pupils require the adaptations made at Thames Valley School in order to access and engage with learning opportunities.

Our pupils work at broadly age-related levels of attainment and we anticipate that they will gain a range of qualifications, including GCSEs and Level 2 Qualifications.

#### 2. Identifying pupils with SEN and assessing their needs

All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which has been co-produced by the local authority in which the pupil resides, with contributions from the individual's parents/carers and relevant academic and clinical professionals. Thames Valley School

works closely with local authorities including but not limited to; Brighter Futures for Children (Reading), West Berkshire, Wokingham and Hampshire.

Members of our staff and onsite Trans Disciplinary Team work collaboratively with families and other professionals to assess and understand pupils' emerging needs through embedded therapeutic provision. Members of the 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.

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.

Pupils are provided with opportunities to contribute towards the annual review process via the communication method of their choice. They are also encouraged to attend, 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.

### **4. Consulting and involving parents**

Parents and carers are always included in the process of working with their child. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Initial visits to and tours of the school
- Introductory meetings and consultations
- Regular communication via email or phone to share information and key messages
- Weekly communication with the form tutor or keyworker
- Three parents' evenings a year
- Twice yearly written reports

- Annual review meeting and report
- Open evenings
- Parental representation on the board of trustees
- Formal and informal parental consultation where school changes may take place
- Parental workshops and training
- Coffee mornings

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.

## **5. Assessing and reviewing pupils' progress towards outcomes**

We follow the graduated approach and the four-part cycle of assess, plan, do, review. 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 adequate progress, teachers (class teachers or form tutors), the transdisciplinary team and parents will collaborate on problem solving, planning support and teaching strategies for individual pupils.

## **6. Supporting pupils moving between phases and preparing for adulthood**

Pupils 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.

Preparation for adulthood is a large part of our curriculum, delivered through Life Skills, PSHE and Personal Development lessons. These lessons involve careers education, independent living, personal safety, relationships and sex education. Pupils receive careers advice and participate in work experience to develop their understanding of the options available as they plan for their transition from school to adult life. Young people and their families are also supported using Person Centred Planning tools, such as, Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) to provide insight into each individual's hopes and ambitions for their future.

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 pupil's differing needs.

We adopt the SPELL framework to proactive support ensuring school is (S)structured, staff utilise (P)positive approaches, are (E)mpathetic towards pupils, adopt a (L)low arousal approach and maintain (L)inks 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.

## **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, 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. This includes but is not limited to alternative methods of recording, coloured overlays and visual aids.

We make reasonable adjustments to our curriculum to ensure all pupils are able to access their learning opportunities, for example, by grouping, 1:1 work, teaching style, content of the lesson, adapting resources, giving processing time, pre-teaching of key vocabulary and consideration of ways information is presented (verbal and visual).

## **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

## **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 aforementioned 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 approach 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.

We have a broad and balanced PSHE, Life Skills 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](mailto: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>