



Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Information Report

(Updated March 2021)

What are the kinds of SEN for which provision is made at Thames Valley School?

Thames Valley School ("The School") is a maintained day specialist autism school for students aged between 5-16 years.

As all the students have a diagnosis of autism, their needs will be complex and severe in the area of cognition and learning. These difficulties can arise through their autism diagnosis but can also arise from sensory processing disorder (SPD), pathological demand avoidance (PDA), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) and /or genetic disorders as described in the Special educational needs and disability code of practice.

Students may also have associated needs in the areas of emotional/social and communication and interaction through their autism diagnosis and/or psychological or mental health difficulties, processing, and/or speech and language difficulties. In addition, students may have sensory, or physical/motor difficulties, including cerebral palsy.

Thames Valley School aims to identify the learning needs for each individual student taking into account their barriers to learning and will put in place an appropriately paced and differentiated curriculum to help the student achieve the best possible results.

What are Thames Valley School's policies for the identification and assessment of students attending the school?

All students have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Students are assessed on entry for the level of support required. Students can be brought in on a standard or enhanced staffing level. Further information on the admissions process to Thames Valley School can be found on the Thames Valley School website.

What is the provision for students at Thames Valley School, and how is it evaluated?

Thames Valley is a through school and as such has a primary department of two classes. The Primary department is located at one end of the school to ensure a peaceful environment for the younger children as much as possible.

For the secondary students, the school operates a secondary model (as similar as much as able to a typical secondary school) but with subject specialist teaching.

We also have a bespoke nurture class. This is available to secondary students in Year 7 who find moving to different rooms for different subjects a challenge in accordance with a typical school secondary timetable. The use of this class aims to address any distress the student may feel with constant change and aims to reduce anxiety and promote productivity for learning.

The School has a cycle of continuous evaluation and improvement which includes:

- Termly and annual reports to the board of trustees
- Reports to the governing body
- School Improvement partner visits
- Lesson observations and learning walks
- Staff supervision
- Self-evaluation document
- School Improvement Plan
- Analysis of pupil progress data (termly and annually)
- Analysis of attendance data
- Analysis of behaviour data
- Pupil progress meetings

How the school reviews progress of pupils with SEN

The School adopts the NAS Quality of Life Framework for ensuring progress is fully monitored.

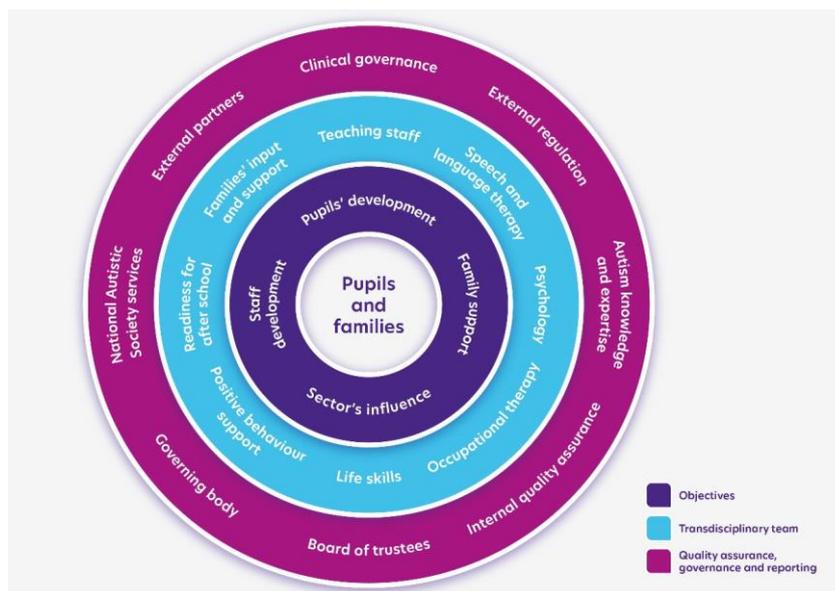
Every child is entitled to an education and every child deserves the best possible developmental opportunities so that they learn more and do more, preparing themselves for life after school. Our autistic pupils learn in happy and safe environments that are able to support their individual needs as autistic learners.

All National Autistic Society schools and Children's services follow our Quality of life (QoL) Framework. The major objective of this framework is to ensure we plan each child's education carefully and cohesively, shaping each pupil's provision around their EHCP and agreed developmental goals in order to develop pupils' knowledge and skills now and for the future.

Our QoL framework includes:

- putting the child and family at the centre of the assessment and planning process
- assessing our pupil's quality of life using a range of indicators
- combining support and development across academic, vocational, life skills, occupational health, psychological, speech and language, and pastoral inputs
- working with colleagues in partner organisations and Incorporating autism best practice to support individual development
- ensuring each pupil has a nominated keyworker who has the potential to change a child's life by being the key advocate for the pupil in school and key point of liaison for the parents.
- ensuring our curriculum supports pupils in developing the skills they need now and will need in the future to have the best possible quality of life.

Our QoL framework is built on the National Autistic Society's position that parents and young people need to be full participants in decision making and that we should be working together to support autistic young people to live the lives they want as they move towards adulthood.



All teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the students in their class, even where students access support from learning mentors or specialist staff. The teacher is to ensure that all information and data on each student in class is up to date and freely available to review and will take a proactive rather than reactive stance when it comes to the students progress or lack of it. Where a student is not making adequate progress, teachers (class teachers or form tutors), the therapy team and parents will collaborate on problem solving, planning support and teaching strategies for individual students.

How does the school support equality and inclusion?

The School is committed to providing an appropriate and high-quality education to all the students living in the local area and beyond. The School believes that all students, including those identified as having special educational needs or a disability have a common entitlement to a broad and balanced academic and social curriculum. By being a specialist school we are able to provide an accessible academic life as well as an inclusive school life.

We believe that all students should be equally valued in school. One way in which this is done is by holding achievement assemblies every week in school and we encourage parents to communicate to us about any achievement their child has had outside school, so that the whole school community can celebrate and learn from the experience. It is important for all students to feel a sense of community within their school and to feel valued and supported. We will strive to eliminate prejudice and discrimination, and to develop an environment where all pupils can flourish and feel safe. In order to achieve this, we aim to encourage an environment of tolerance and kindness to one another.

The School is committed to inclusion and we will aim to embrace diversity as this is another way for the student to learn about the world and expand their horizons

The School has an Accessibility Policy which is available on the school website.

The School's approach to teaching pupils with SEN

Thames Valley School uses a blend of autism-specific approaches:

- TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children). This is an evidence based service, training and research program for individuals of all ages and skills levels with an autism spectrum disorder . The School uses aspects of TEACCH in the way the environment is structured and how the School plans and organises students learning.
- The curriculum is delivered in line with the NAS **SPELL** philosophy. **SPELL** is a framework for support and intervention when working with children and adults on the Autistic Spectrum. It is an acronym which stands for:

Structure

Positive Approaches

Empathy

Low arousal

Links

How the School enables students with SEN to engage in the activities in the school together with children who do not have special educational needs.

All students at Thames Valley School have Special Educational Needs. All students benefit from inclusion in a wider sense, participating in class, group and whole school events and all students' access the local community for a range of purposes on a regular basis.

Some students may benefit from participation in a mainstream educational setting and individual schools may make inclusion arrangements for a particular student to visit and participate in a particular class within the mainstream setting where it is able to be demonstrated that the student would benefit from such participation.

Supporting emotional, mental and social development.

The School has its own Trans-Disciplinary Team ("TDT") and liaises with external professionals such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) teams. The TDT works closely with the teaching and care staff on a daily basis.

The TDT aims to familiarise themselves with each student and their individual needs so that they are well equipped to help them build their own communication, social and behavioural skills. As such, the Trans-Disciplinary team are not an isolated entity within the school, they are proactive and work directly with students and the teaching staff in the classroom and throughout the school. This approach means that all staff are constantly using therapeutic techniques in their work, so the student is supported at every moment of the day.

TDT also see students individually if this is required and will aim to give a student particular attention if they are having a difficult time. TDT also contribute to the student's assessments and reviews, looking at areas like social understanding, anger management and communication. The School runs groups which focus on specific skills such as communication, and use role play to teach social skills. The School also has approaches to help the student get used to being near others, to develop sensory awareness, to help them relax and reduce anxiety.

Vision, Mission, Values and Aims

Vision: A school that works for children with Autism

Thames Valley School's vision is to enable students who are currently not accessing effective or suitable education to access the highest quality specialist provision and to increase each student's choice, opportunity, and achievement.

Mission:

For students to be respected and empowered to make positive choices about their own lives. As a consequence, they achieve beyond what is expected and have rich and varied experiences and can fully participate within society.

For staff to have an uncompromising commitment to their students and to demonstrate outstanding teaching and learning which embraces the best practice in Autism and education keeping themselves informed of the latest guidance and techniques. Staff will positively promote creative and innovative practices and it will be common practice to share these with others, within the School, community and beyond.

Values:

- **We learn from real experience.** The School forms part of the National Autistic Society's Academies Trust ("NASAT"). The National Autistic Society ("NAS") has over 50 years working together with people on the autism spectrum. It is the largest Autism charity in the UK and as such no one has more practical knowledge of autism and all this experience and knowledge is filtered down for the benefit of the School. As the leading charity, for Autism, the NAS, NASAT and the School aim to "have their finger on the pulse" and are constantly seeking out new methods and theories and practices that would benefit the students.
- **We tell it like it is.** The School aims to share what it has learned about autism to as wide an audience as possible especially with parents and the immediate wider community. This is to promote understanding, knowledge and tolerance. We also aim to educate our students about their autism so that they can make better-informed decisions and lead full happy lives.
- **We inspire.** The School celebrates progress, aims to open up new possibilities and spur people into action and motivate change.
- **We are courageous.** The School will not accept ignorance or inequality. In addition, the School will also never stop pushing for more understanding, greater support and a better world for people on the autism spectrum.

Aims:

The School will:

- Have a distinctive ethos and philosophy: from the moment a person enters the building they will know this is a school where students are respected, achieve beyond what is expected, are empowered to make positive choices about their own lives and have rich and varied experiences.
- Build on students' strengths and capitalise on interests, giving them a reason to learn and instilling a belief in the importance of what they can achieve, not what they can't!
- Support students to achieve GCSE's and other recognised qualifications.
- Be mindful in creating a positive environment for all students and ensure that respect towards others is promoted
- Build on the extensive knowledge and experience of the National Autistic Society to be creative, pioneering and innovative in its approach to meeting the needs of these specific groups of students.
- Be regarded as a regional resource; a school where it is common practice to share practice with local schools, the community and beyond.

- Have a consistent understanding between staff and students that expectations are high.
- Recruit staff on the basis that they have an uncompromising commitment to demonstrating outstanding teaching and learning which embraces best practice in Autism and education.
- Establish a curriculum that enables students to overcome their barriers to learning, develop social skills and coping strategies and learn to manage their own behaviour.
- Place an emphasis on social skills and citizenship work, supporting students to achieve and make a positive inclusive contribution to their community.
- Provide bespoke education through carefully planned educational pathways, which are focussed on long-term outcomes and seek to improve the current and future lives of the students, their families and members of the local community.
- Be innovative in our inclusive approach, truly addressing the issue of personalisation and offering a menu of flexible packages that provide the education needed for the time that it is needed.
- Seek to be pioneering in our autism specific ICT provision.

Thames Valley School is unique both in the way these aims are achieved, and how the balance is accomplished between students' individual plans (such as Positive Behaviour Support and SPELL plans) and the other aspects of the learning environment. Every effort is made to discover the wishes of parents/carers regarding their children's education. These aims are met by creating a well organised learning environment that is challenging, stimulating and based on fun and enjoyment.

At Thames Valley School, we look at the whole person, planning realistic programmes to meet the intellectual, social, spiritual, moral, cultural, physical, emotional and therapeutic needs of every student. These needs are most effectively met by pursuing a student-centred approach that is undertaken by a team of talented professionals. Each professional makes a special contribution, brought about by specialised training and expertise, but all are united in the common pursuit of Thames Valley School's mission statement,

All staff have a responsibility to meet the needs of all the students at Thames Valley School.

School staff details are on the Thames Valley School website. The School contact details are also on the website.

Staffing levels are high so that students are usually taught in classes of up to 6 students, with a teacher, two Learning Mentors, and an appropriate number of additional Learning Mentors where necessary to meet the needs of the class group.

The School receives advice from a range of health professionals, in order to meet the needs of the students, as assessed by the appropriate professionals. We are working closely with our health and social care colleagues to implement the SEND Code of Practice, 2015. We will work closely to keep parents/carers informed of the changes and next steps for their families.

What training do staff have in relation to the needs of students at Thames Valley School?

The professional development of all staff is ongoing and continuous. A wide range of training opportunities related to care, education and developing expertise in the area of Autism are provided both in induction and beyond. These include:

- Skill sharing and the demonstration of teaching techniques and strategies organised within the School
- Extensive access to on line 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
- Other courses which are relevant to the work being undertaken. This can be generated by staff interest or can be undertaken at the request of the School.
- Progression through Autism Education Trust competency framework.

All staff have clear job descriptions, which detail the required qualifications for each post in the school. All staff have a core training programme related to their work within the School. This includes:

- NAS Ask Autism models
- Universal safeguarding
- Studio 3 managing challenging behaviour
- Health and Safety
- Manual handling
- Fire procedures
- Online safety
- Female Genital mutilation
- PREVENT
- GDPR / data protection

This is not an exhaustive list and specialist courses are additionally organised for specific roles.

How will equipment and facilities be provided to support students at Thames Valley School?

Currently Thames Valley School is a relatively new and purpose-built school, and is fully accessible for wheelchair users with a lift to access the first floor.

Our school is purpose-built for children with autism. It is the ideal place for your child to learn, be supported and feel safe. Our primary and secondary departments are on one site. The departments are clearly separated within the school however so that children of the same age learn and play together in a suitable environment.

In some classes, we have individual work stations, so that if a child finds it hard to work among others, they can have their own space within their classroom.

At the center of the School is our main hall, where we gather for assembly, do indoor PE and gym, and hold our shows.

We have a number of specialist rooms including:

- Sensory / spacious corridor
- Soft play
- Life skills
- Science
- Design and Technology
- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Art

We also use the adjacent community leisure for a range of sports activities.

Our outside spaces are well utilised with opportunities for playing outdoor sports as well as play equipment, outdoor gym equipment and a sunken trampoline.

All parents, families and associated professionals are welcome to visit Thames Valley School either on an open day or at an agreed appointment date prior to students attending the School.

What are the arrangements for consulting parents of students at Thames Valley School, and involving them in the education of their child?

Parents/carers are fully included in the process of working with their child.

This includes:

- Initial visits to the School.
- Introductory meetings
- Daily home-school book for information exchanges and key messages.
- Termly parent/teacher target setting meetings, including update from professionals.
- Annual Review of EHCP meeting
- Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings or Children In Need (CIN) meetings.
- Parent workshops and training.
- Coffee mornings.
- Open afternoons/evenings.
- Parental representation on the Governing Body.
- Parent involvement in changes in school, through informal and formal consultations.

What are the arrangements for consulting students at Thames Valley School about, and involving them in, their education?

All students at the School are treated with dignity and respect. There is full personalisation of the curriculum for every student, so that every student can access and experience success throughout their school-life. The School Council involves students, to contribute to and decide on aspects of school-life, relating to their needs. Every Annual Review of EHCP includes the individual student's views.

The school promotes a person-centred approach and understands that our students learn best when they are motivated and feel the learning is purposeful. Staff work closely with students to understand their ambitions and interests and tailor learning to suit this.

What are the arrangements made by the governing body for dealing with complaints from parents/carers of students in relation to the provision made at Thames Valley School?

The process for all complaints is made available in the complaints policy, which is available on the Thames Valley School website.

How does the governing body involve others - including health, social services, local authority services and voluntary organisations, in meeting the needs of students at Thames Valley School, and in supporting their families?

We have a wide range of staff working together within the School to support the students and their families. Some staff are employed directly by the School whilst other staff have different lines of management from external sources.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team, teachers, Family Support Worker, Learning Mentors, Autism Lead Practitioner, Assistant Psychologist, Administration team, Site manager and cleaner are employed directly by the School.

Other professionals work for the School and are in school on particular days or as necessary. The School has a school nurse, and a Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST), which includes the Educational Psychologist, the Speech and Language Therapist, the Occupational Therapist and the Massage Therapist.

The school / SENCO works with other external professionals including local authority employees, e.g. SEN Case Officers, Social Workers, Family Support Workers (FSWs), Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), as well as Autism advisory teachers, reintegration services/Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), organisations supporting families (e.g. Help for Families), respite carers, careers advisors (e.g. Adviza), Youth Offending Team workers, and drugs workers. All these professionals visit Thames Valley School to attend meetings (e.g. Annual Reviews of EHCP, or to deliver 1:1 or group sessions), or to work with Thames Valley School staff and students.

The Sensory Service staff including Visual/Hearing Impairment (VI/HI) advisory teachers are employed by the LEAs. They may provide staff training and advice on individual student's needs. Transport to school is organized by the LEAs, not the school. Transport staff are employed by the transport companies.

There are also social workers for some students, who are LA employees and are based within the Children Specialist Services.

What are Thames Valley School's arrangements for supporting students in transferring between phases of education or in preparing for adulthood?

All transitions are well planned for throughout Thames Valley School, as students move from class-to-class and phase-to-phase (e.g. primary to secondary). Parents/carers always have the opportunity to meet the new teacher and class staff. Students are increasingly supported in planning for their transition from school- to adult-life.

Staff from Adviza work with students in school, to get to know them and to advise both students, school staff and parents/carers on what is available after leaving Thames Valley School.

Where is the information on Reading's Local Authority local offer published?

There is further detail on our website on the Thames Valley School offer for SEND and this links to the Local Offer on Reading Borough Council website.

Contact details of support services

National Autistic Society Helpline: 08008004104 <http://www.autism.org.uk/>

National Autistic Society Education rights help line: 08008004102

National Autistic Society Parent to Parent helpline: 08008004106

National Autistic Society Information centre: 02079033599

IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Educational Advice): 08000184016

<http://www.ipsea.org.uk/>

Parent partnership services <http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk/>

Contact a Family's SEN National Advice Service 0808 808 3555 <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/>

Mencap 0808 808 1111 <http://www.mencap.org.uk/>