

Valence News

Smart Phones, Smart Choices: Our Approach at Valence

As you may have seen in the national news last week, schools across the country have received a letter from the Secretary of State for Education encouraging them to consider banning the use of mobile phones in school. I wanted to take this opportunity to update parents and carers on our current thinking at Valence, and to reassure you that this important issue is being given careful consideration at senior leadership level over the coming weeks.

At present, Valence operates a clear and well-established policy: mobile phones must be switched off and put away during lesson time, but may be used during break and lunchtime. Alongside this, we do a significant amount of work with our students around developing positive habits, responsible use, and understanding the potential risks associated with technology. Just as importantly, we also recognise the need for our young people to feel connected rather than isolated.

My own belief is a simple one: smart phones need smart users. A blanket ban on phones in school risks missing a wide range of valuable learning and support opportunities, particularly in a school like Valence, where our learners have diverse needs and abilities.

For many of our students, smart technology is not simply a convenience—it is a vital tool. Some of our learners communicate using devices that rely on the same connectivity as a smart phone, and we will certainly never take away a student's voice. Others benefit from specialised apps that support learning, organisation, emotional regulation, or independence. As technology continues to evolve, this will only become more common, and it is essential that any policy we develop reflects this reality.

That said, we are very clear-eyed about the potential dangers and poor habits associated with phone use, particularly around social media. It is positive to see that the UK government is considering restrictions on social media use for under-16s, similar to those recently introduced in Australia. We welcome this discussion and will monitor developments with interest.

I will also be the first to admit that, as a school, we can do more. Over the coming weeks, we will be reviewing all aspects of phone use at Valence carefully and thoughtfully. The recent letter does not make any changes mandatory, and this gives us the opportunity to assess the potential impact fully and to develop a revised policy that is right for our community. Any updated policy will, of course, be shared with you. If you have comments, concerns, or perspectives on the use of mobile phones at Valence, I would be very happy to receive them while we are in this period of review and you can email me at any time: mstrange@valence.kent.sch.uk

Valence is a school with a wide range of abilities and needs, and one thing is certain: there is unlikely to be a "one size fits all" solution for us. But that, ultimately, is our strength—and we will continue to ensure that our approach reflects the unique nature of our school and the young people we serve.

Have a good weekend.

Matthew Strange, B.Ed (Hons) NPQH | Principal

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PE & E-Sports

We've started 2026 at full speed! The PE curriculum is buzzing with activity, E-Sports is thriving, and students have already taken part in the first of two exciting competition experiences this term.

During Term 3, students have been focusing on target games, with a Paralympic focus on Boccia. This led to a fantastic opportunity for a small group of students, who represented Valence at a Boccia competition day held at Maidstone Leisure Centre this week. Competing against seven other schools, the team won all of their games — an outstanding achievement and a true testament to the dedication and hard work shown during PE lessons this term.



E-Sports continues to grow and now runs three days a week at lunchtimes. Students are currently forming teams of their choice and beginning structured training together in Rocket League. This football-themed game uses high-powered cars to score goals, while developing teamwork, communication and tactical thinking. Training takes place on Mondays, with plans to host our first internal competition in the summer term, followed by the exciting prospect of an external fixture against another school.

Looking ahead, next week a group of students will be travelling to Kent County Cricket Ground in Beckenham to compete in the Kent Table Cricket competition. They will face a range of schools in the hope of securing a place in the Kent play-offs. We look forward to sharing the outcome with you soon!

News from Hedgehog class

This term in Forest school Hedgehog class have been participating in activities linked to The Big Schools Birdwatch which takes place between January 8th – February 19th, 2026.

The students will survey the birds in our school grounds and our students' results will be put together with those of thousands of other schools across the UK to help show how birds are faring.

Students have become bird watchers during our forest school sessions and we have made Bird Feeders out of cheerios, to encourage more birds to Valence. Then we chose suitable places to put them around the school grounds.



The Big Schools' Birdwatch



Helps the RSPB to create a "snapshot" of how birds are doing across UK schools.



Having 25 years' worth of **data** means that the numbers of birds seen by school pupils can be compared each year.



The number of birds seen during the Big Schools' Birdwatch gives scientists an idea of how **other wildlife** is doing.



Importantly, it also helps schools learn more about the species that are attracted to their grounds and helps them monitor year-on-year data. Schools can get an **indication of the biodiversity** of their grounds based on the birds that visit.



Last year over 100,000 pupils and teachers took part...

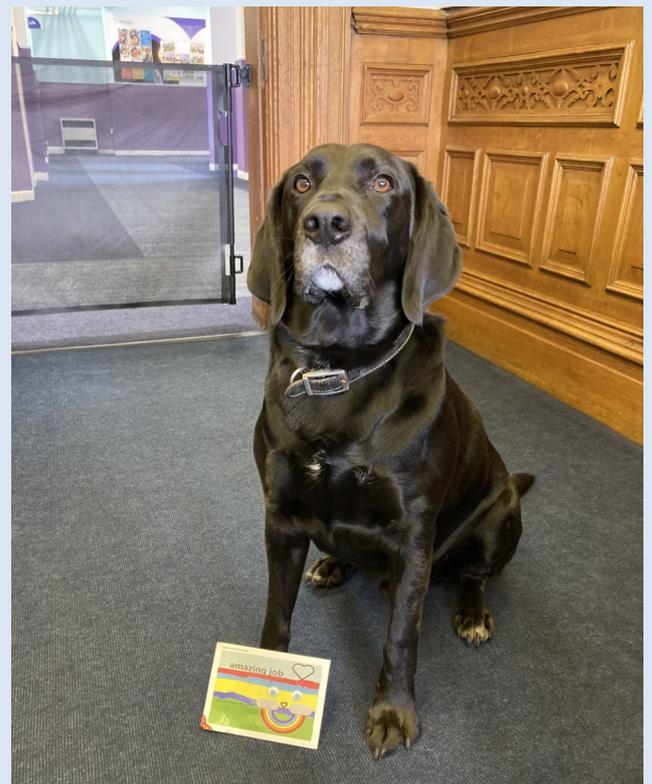
...and the Woodpigeon came top with an average of six recorded per school.

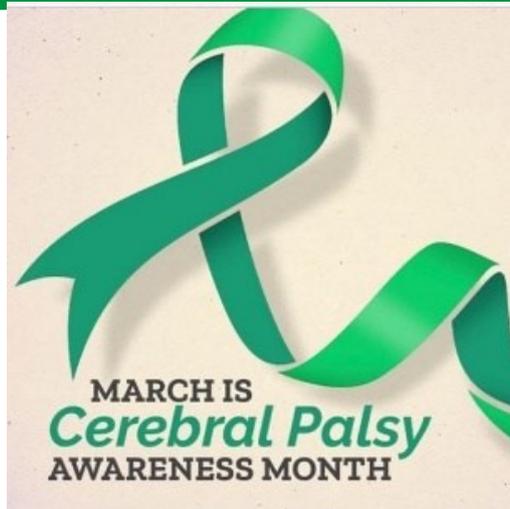


Blackbird and Carrion Crow came second and third.



Ernie is very proud of his
praise postcard
from Hawkings1





Dear Parents and Carers,

As part of our Health Awareness programme, we are planning to support **National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day 2026**.

On this day, we will be holding a range of activities to help raise awareness and promote understanding among our students:

- **A morning assembly** with age-appropriate discussion and education for all students
- **A lunchtime information stand**, where leaflets will be available and questions can be answered by our Valence Nursing Team

Wear Green” Day on 25th March 2026

Students and staff are invited to wear green in exchange for a voluntary donation to **The Cerebral Palsy Trust**, with all funds raised going directly to the charity

As always, we carefully consider the impact of awareness days on our students and families. If you have any questions or concerns, feel your child may need additional support, or would rather this event didn't take place, please contact **Sophie Haigh, Nurse Manager**, at shaigh@valence.kent.sch.uk.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Valence School Nursing Team



*Friends of
Valence presents
Musical
Bingo!*

Join Friends of Valence for an afternoon of musical bingo, fun for all ages! Fully inclusive fun for all the family, prizes to be won, refreshments available. Get ready to sing along if the mood takes you!

SUNDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2026

1PM-4PM

Location: Valence School Hall

Adult entry £8, child entry £2, bingo cards £1 each on the day. To purchase entry tickets and arrange payment please email friends@valence.kent.sch.uk.

Limited spaces so book early to avoid disappointment! (Advance booking only)

Senior Staff On-call Rota from 30th January 2026

Matt Strange **07894 483673**
Lisa Kavanagh **07912 124724**
Jo Chivers **07896 905095**

Date	Day	Time	DSL	DSL
30/01/2026	Friday	09:00 To midday	Jo Chivers	Closed
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
02/02/2026	Monday	07:30 To midday	Matt Strange	Lisa Kavanagh
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
03/02/2026	Tuesday	09:00 To midday	Lisa Kavanagh	Matt Strange
		Midday to 4pm	Matt Strange	
04/02/2026	Wednesday	09:00 To midday	Matt Strange	Jo Chivers
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
05/02/2026	Thursday	09:00 To midday	Jo Chivers	Lisa Kavanagh
		Midday to 4pm	Jo Chivers	
06/02/2026	Friday	09:00 To midday	Lisa Kavanagh	Closed
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	

January Winners

- 1st—Kerry Rogers
- 2nd—Matt Strange
- 3rd—J Mortimore

