

# Sidestrand Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	3 February 2009

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Sidestrand Hall School is a day and residential special school maintained by Norfolk County Council situated on the North Norfolk coast. The school has recently been re-designated as a complex needs school catering for children aged from seven to 16 years.

Set in approximately 10 acres, the site is in a conservation area and includes woodland and gardens, which are used by the children in their environmental science studies and accredited courses.

There are currently 110 pupils on roll; a maximum of 21 can board for up to four nights from Monday to Friday. However, the majority of pupils board for two nights each week. The residential provision comprises three separate units, one for girls and two for boys, situated in the main school building. The school aims to provide a small group living experience in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for those children where a specific need has been identified.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection and all key standards were inspected. A large proportion of boarders participated in the inspection and contributed their views.

The quality of boarding at the school is good, with three outcome areas judged as outstanding and three as good. The school meets nearly all key national minimum standards and exceeds a number of them in relation to being healthy, the individual support offered to pupils and the development of boarders' independence skills.

There is good leadership and a strong commitment to continuously improve the outcomes for all pupils. Boarders are provided with outstanding pastoral care and individual support. Their views are sought in relation to the day-to-day life of the school and they feel listened to.

Strong links are well established with a range of external professionals and these contribute to placement planning and positive outcomes for individual pupils. Staff offer boarders a range of activities and opportunities to develop new skills, both at the school and within the wider community. Recent changes within the residential care team have resulted in some alterations to the duty rotas at a time when the profile of pupils has become more complex and the demand for boarding is predicted to increase. However, the headteacher is keeping this under review to ensure staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of the young people.

Records and documentation are well maintained overall. However, the school's Statement of Purpose does not include up-to-date details of the professional qualifications of residential staff, not all residential files contain an up-to-date copy of pupils' behaviour plans and not all monitoring reports carried out by the local authority and governing body comment on the areas required. Recommendations have been raised in relation to these matters.

Two of the three recommendations raised at the last inspection have been acted upon. Work is progressing in relation to the third.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last inspection asked the school to clarify the role of the local authority visitor to boarders, ensure the completion of the staffing policy for the residential provision and provide regular formal supervision for all residential staff. Boarders are aware that the local authority visitor is a person who they may choose to speak to about any worries they may have. Documentation is being amended to reflect this and to remove the title of 'independent listener'. A staffing policy is in place for the residential provision, therefore informing interested parties of operational procedures. Progress has been made in relation to the provision of staff supervision for residential staff. However, records evidence that not all staff have received at least one and a half hours one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term as required. A further recommendation has been raised in relation to this matter.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of pupils continue to be promoted and supported extremely well in partnership with a range of other professionals including the local child and adolescent mental health team, community paediatrician and visiting school nurse. Pupils also receive advice, guidance and support on a range of health and personal care issues from care staff, the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education programme and the school nurse.

Health care plans, including details of known medical history, are compiled for each boarder, and parental consent to medical treatment is obtained. First aid training is provided to staff, regular updates are attended and qualified first aid staff are always available on duty. Staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication and receive external training. Medication records are kept to a very high standard and medicines are securely stored. Strong links are maintained with parents and health professionals regarding medication matters, including staff attendance at medication reviews. Children return home when unwell and residential staff keep in contact with families to support a child's return.

Significant emphasis is placed on a whole school approach to healthy eating and physical activity. This has been strengthened by the school's recent work with the Schools' Food Council and continued participation in 'Activate' by pupils and staff. The school provides pupils with a balanced diet, and systems are in place to monitor individual eating patterns. Pupils contribute to menus, and boarders are involved in planning, shopping and cooking their evening meal as well as helping to lay tables and wash up as part of their independence training. Drinking water is available throughout the day and evening, and hot drinks and toast are provided for all pupils on arrival at school as many travel long distances. All of the pupils who participated in the boarders' survey stated they liked the food. In discussions, a number of boarders spoke of their enjoyment of being able to shop and cook with staff.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Boarders' privacy is respected and information confidentiality handled. For example, staff maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality, records are securely stored and boarders report they are able to keep their belongings safe. Also, boarders are encouraged to be independent

and responsible for their own personal hygiene. Private telephone facilities are available for boarders to make and receive telephone calls in private. However, a number of pupils choose to seek the support of staff when using the telephone.

Complaint procedures are provided to parents, carers and boarders. Information regarding help lines and external agencies of support are also provided to boarders. No complaints have been received by the school since the last inspection, and no parent or pupil has contacted Ofsted raising concerns. Boarders identify a range of adults, both in school and the residential provision, whom they feel they can approach with any worries or concerns and are confident that staff will help them.

Policies and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils and all staff receive appropriate child protection training and regular updates. The head of care has also attended external training in his role of 'designated person'. Strong working partnerships with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children are maintained and continue to support the school's work with individuals.

Pupils do not identify bullying as a problem at the school and they have a clear understanding of what to do if someone is making them unhappy. Bullying is not tolerated and the school works hard to promote understanding and tolerance through assemblies, the curriculum, anti-bullying week and the operation of a playground buddy system. Care is taken to identify and assess any potential conflicts when allocating boarders to individual residential units. Boarders report that staff are approachable, listen and 'help sort things out when children do not get along'.

Staff are vigilant in their supervision of boarders and the monitoring of their whereabouts. There are no incidents of boarders being reported missing.

The management of behaviour is based on establishing positive relationships with pupils, communicating clear expectations and being consistent in approach. Staff receive regular behaviour management training including de-escalation techniques and the use of physical intervention. Individual behaviour management plans are in place and are shared across the school community. Residential staff are familiar with individual plans but not all boarders' files sampled contained the most up-to-date copy.

Very few sanctions are used by residential staff and physical intervention is extremely rare. Boarders are encouraged to discuss incidents involving the imposition of sanctions and the use of physical intervention and have their comments recorded. Strong emphasis is placed on the positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour, and a reward system is operated throughout the school community whereby pupils can earn credits towards rewards, including trips out and gifts from the token shop. Pupils have a clear understanding of this system and view it as fair, stating, 'we know what we have to do', and, 'everyone can get credits'. Some pupils, new to boarding, are particularly proud of the credits they have earned for adjusting to boarding routines and establishing good sleeping patterns.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for pupils and staff. Records demonstrate that regular safety and servicing checks are undertaken to fire, electrical, water and gas installations. Regular fire drills take place at different times and boarders are familiar with fire evacuation procedures.

Good procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff and the monitoring of visitors and contractors. A record of visitors is maintained and proof of identity is requested where appropriate.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides a stimulating and nurturing environment for boarders. Excellent opportunities are made available to develop boarders' life and social skills thereby supporting their educational progress. Boarders clearly benefit from their boarding experience and particularly enjoy spending time with staff, trips to the local community, woods and beach, and playing in the gym with friends. Other comments include, 'there's lots to do', 'it's like home' and 'it's fun'.

Care staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of boarders and actively promote boarders' engagement in education by listening to them read, providing support with basic skills such as getting organised for school, learning to tell the time and the development of independent life skills. Information is constructively exchanged between care and teaching staff on a daily basis and both staff teams contribute to pupils' annual reviews.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school and boarders receive outstanding individual support in line with their needs. The school works effectively with the local authority and a wide range of external agencies and professionals to the benefit of pupils, their families and the school. Boarders report and value that they can speak with a member of staff of their choosing and identify a wide range of adults across the school community to whom they would go with any worries.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are actively consulted and encouraged to express their views and contribute ideas to the development of the school community. Formal and informal opportunities are available. These include discussions at meal times, school council meetings, governor visits, use of surveys by the school and one-to-one sessions. Recent examples of changes made as a result of listening to pupils include the acquisition of additional equipment for the games room, development of a boys' group and plans to purchase more pictures for the residential units. Parents and carers are also consulted and their opinions sought in relation to the care of their child and the development of the school. Staff report greater parental involvement during the past year and an increase in attendance at school events and parent evenings.

Admission and leaving processes are planned and tailored to individual pupils wherever possible. The potential impact of a new admission into the boarding provision is carefully considered and monitored, and boarders report that staff help them settle in. A record of photographs, achievements and special events are collated for each boarder and support is provided for moving on.

Boarders' needs are assessed effectively and regularly reviewed. Individualised placement plans detail how these will be met on a day-to-day basis. The plans are regularly reviewed and updated in conjunction with parents, boarders and the local authority.

Boarders are supported to retain contact with their families and carers and have access to appropriate telephones. Staff maintain regular contact with parents and carers with regard to children's progress as well as concerns. Where appropriate, staff undertake home visits. The school has introduced a text messaging service to communicate with parents on a regular basis and this is reported as being successful in reaching more parents. In addition, the school has recently held a 'drop-in' event in the east of the county for parents who live a considerable distance from the school and find travelling difficult to parent evenings. These active steps promote the involvement of all parents and carers thereby contributing to positive outcomes for pupils.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarding accommodation is clean and suitably furnished and offers boarders a range of recreational areas. The programme of re-decoration continues and the use of some rooms is being reviewed in response to changing demands being placed on the residential units. Staff work hard to provide a welcoming environment for boarders and involve them in choosing colour schemes. Recent focus has been on the refurbishment of communal areas and the re-decoration of bathrooms and toilets. Further work is to be undertaken to the bathroom and shower room in Barclay Court and the bathroom in Poppyland to make these areas more inviting to children.

Set in approximately 10 acres, the site is in a conservation area and includes woodland, gardens and grassed and hard surface areas which are used by boarders for a range of organised activities. Indoor play areas are also accessible to boarders during evenings with supervision. Entrances to the main school building and residential units have coded entry systems to ensure the security of the school from access by unauthorised persons.

Positive links are promoted and maintained with the local community through a number of events and initiatives including the school fete and participation in local recycling projects.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

There is good leadership and a strong commitment to continuously improve the outcomes for all pupils. Boarders are looked after by very experienced, competent and highly committed staff who value children's individual differences. Staff understand the needs of the children in their care and help them to further develop and achieve.

The school provides parents, carers and pupils with a range of information in relation to the school and boarding provision. However, up-to-date details of the professional qualifications of residential care staff are not included as required. Pupils are positive in their comments about the information provided to them and particularly enjoy the illustrations and photographs used.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school acknowledges the individuality of all pupils and positively promotes their integration into the school and wider community.

Good training opportunities are made available to staff, including child protection, first aid, attachment theory and wider pastoral matters. Some staff are also about to commence National



Vocational Qualification training. External support is provided to the headteacher, and a system of staff supervision and appraisal is in place. However, records evidence that not all staff have received at least one and a half hours one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term as required. Staff report there is strong team support and daily opportunities to consult and exchange information with the head of care, in addition to regular team meetings.

A duty rota is followed in practice and boarders are made aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times. Boarders know the location of staff sleep-in rooms and are confident in what they should do if they need the assistance of staff during the night.

Recent changes within the residential care team have resulted in some alterations to duty rotas at a time when the profile of pupils has become more complex and the demand for boarding is predicted to increase. The headteacher continues to keep staffing levels under review in response to the changing role of the school and its Statement of Purpose.

Systems are in place for the monitoring of children's welfare and the operation of the boarding provision. Half-termly and termly checks of records are conducted by the head of care and a report compiled evaluating any trends or patterns that may emerge; the headteacher prepares a termly report to the governing body. Regular monitoring visits are conducted and shared by the local authority and designated governors and reports prepared. However, not all reports comment on the areas required.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure boarders' placement plans contain current copies of their behaviour management plans (NMS 17.5)
- update the professional qualifications of staff in the school's Statement of Purpose (NMS 1)
- provide regular formal supervision for all residential staff (NMS 30.2)
- ensure monitoring visits conducted by the local authority and designated governor include all matters detailed in national minimum standard 33.3. (NMS 33.3)