

# Sidestrand Hall School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspection date</b>	03/02/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Dorrit Andrews
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<b>Setting address</b>	Sidestrand Hall School, Cromer Road, Sidestrand, CROMER, Norfolk, NR27 0NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01263 578144
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Norfolk County Council Children's Services
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Sarah Macro
<b>Nominated person</b>	Sarah Macro
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	09/02/2010

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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 19 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**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection and all key standards were inspected. A large proportion of boarders participated in the inspection and contributed their views. Outcome areas for being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are all judged as outstanding. The remaining area, economic well-being, is judged as good.

Leadership and management are very strong and there is a clear vision of the purpose and benefits of boarding. Staff remain highly committed to their role and continue to provide outstanding pastoral care and individual support. Pupils' views are actively sought in relation to the day-to-day life of the school and they feel listened to by staff who know them well. Parents and carers are regularly consulted and their opinions sought in relation to the care of their child. Positive links are also promoted and maintained with the local community through a number of events and initiatives.

Considerable refurbishment of the boarding areas has taken place since the last inspection and is on-going. Pupils are very proud of the changes made to date and are enjoying being actively involved in the project by choosing colour schemes and accessories.

Pupils are provided with a stimulating and nurturing environment and excellent opportunities are made available to develop their life and social skills. Care and

education staff work closely together and the school's boarding provision actively supports and contributes to pupils' educational progress.

Pupils say they feel safe at the school, they are dealt with fairly if they break the rules and they enjoy boarding.

The recommendations raised at the last inspection have been have been addressed.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure boarders' placement plans contain current behaviour management plans and update the professional qualifications of staff in the Statement of Purpose. These matters have been addressed. Boarders' placement plans now contain current behaviour management plans and the Statement of Purpose reflects the professional qualifications of staff to date. The school was also asked to provide regular formal supervision for all residential staff and to ensure that the monitoring visits conducted by the local authority and designated governor reported on all the required areas. These matters have also been addressed. Regular formal supervision is provided to residential staff and external monitoring reports cover all required areas.

### **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 other professionals including child and adolescent mental health teams, a visiting school nurse and social work teams. The school's nurture programme also provides targeted individual support to pupils where specific emotional needs are identified. Pupils benefit from staff who are confident in discussing a range of health and social issues with them. Such matters are also addressed through the school's education programmes.

Health care plans are compiled for all boarders and parental consent to first aid and 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. Excellent systems are in place to ensure all escorts of transport drivers are provided with a pen picture of individual children's health needs and how to respond in an emergency. This information is communicated on a strictly need to know basis. Escort and transport staff also receive first aid training.

All residential staff and designated school staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication and receive external training. Medication records continue to be kept to a very high standard and medicines are securely stored. Boarders sign to indicate they have received their medication. Specific medical plans are in place to manage particular health needs, such as diabetes and epilepsy. These are monitored and reviewed by the school nurse in conjunction with parents, staff and pupils. Pupils return home when unwell and

residential staff keep in contact with families to support a child's return.

Significant emphasis continues to be placed on healthy eating and helping pupils to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Posters and displays throughout the school, residential and dining areas reinforce these messages and inform pupils how to make positive choices. Work in this area has been endorsed further since the last inspection by the greater involvement of the catering team in the dining room and their interaction with pupils. The re-decoration of the dining room since the last inspection, together with new furniture and bright accessories has greatly enhanced the dining provision. The school's 'Activate' programme of exercise continues to be enjoyed by pupils together with other initiatives such as the 'golden mile'.

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 pupils comment favourably on the provision of food. Their comments include 'I try new things', 'you are able to have seconds' and 'it is really good'.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff have access to a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidance to support them in keeping pupils safe and promoting their welfare both at school and in the community. All staff and members of the governing body continue to receive safeguarding training relevant to their role and refresher training is provided both internally and externally. A range of safeguarding work is conducted with pupils through the curriculum, residential activity programme and individual key worker sessions. Matters include personal, gender specific and general safety issues. Effective working partnerships with other professionals and monitoring of identified child protection concerns contribute to the safeguarding of pupils' welfare. Records of work conducted are kept and securely stored.

Pupils' privacy is well respected. All boarders are encouraged to be independent and are responsible for their own personal hygiene with prompts and reminders from staff. All pupils who participated in the boarders' survey and in the inspection stated they can keep their possessions safe and have enough privacy. Private telephone facilities are provided for pupils to make and receive telephone calls. However, many pupils seek the support of staff when using the telephone.

Pupils know how to raise any worries or concerns they may have. Information regarding the school's complaint procedures and external support services are provided to parents, carers and pupils. Particularly good information is provided to pupils and is also displayed on notice boards. However, the contact details supplied for Ofsted require updating. Pupils comment that staff listen, are 'good to talk to' and

help them to resolve any worries or problems they may have. No complaints have been received by the school since the last inspection and none have been received by Ofsted.

Pupils and staff 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 any incidences of unpleasant remarks or unkindness between pupils are taken seriously and addressed. Work is conducted to promote understanding and tolerance through assemblies, the curriculum, anti-bullying week and tutorials. Care is taken to identify and assess any potential conflicts when allocating boarders to individual residential units. Pupils report 'we get certificates for being kind and helpful' and 'children are kinder here than at my last school'. Staff are vigilant in their supervision of boarders and the monitoring of their whereabouts. There are no incidents of boarders being reported missing.

Pupils are encouraged and supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Strong emphasis is placed on recognising and praising positive behaviour and kindness. Boarders benefit from clear established routines, expectations and individual targets. The school's reward system is liked by pupils as it enables everyone to achieve rewards, including individual reward time doing an activity they really enjoy. Staff continue to 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 to ensure consistency of approach. Few sanctions are imposed by residential staff and the use of physical intervention is extremely rare. Good records are maintained of incidents and pupils' comments are recorded following discussion with staff. Pupils report that the rules are easy to remember and that staff regularly discuss these in school and in boarding.

Safety matters are taken seriously by the school. Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. 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. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety matters affecting them. For example, pupils are able to explain the importance of using equipment safely and why they have to keep within the school's designated recreational areas.

Robust procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff and the monitoring of visitors and contractors. A record of visitors is maintained both in the main school reception and residential office. These practices reduce the potential risks to the welfare of pupils.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils continue to benefit from the school's nurturing and stimulating environment both in terms of the excellent pastoral support they receive and the range of opportunities made available to develop their life and social skills. A purposeful and fun evening activity programme supports pupils' learning and thereby contributes to their educational progress. For example, pocket money, shopping, planning healthy meals and keeping score when bowling all add value to their learning. Pupils particularly state they 'love going out on trips', 'have made friends' and they have 'peace and quiet to read and play games with staff'.

Pupils benefit from staff who know them well and continue to receive excellent individual support in line with their needs. Effective communication across the school contributes highly to the monitoring of pupils' welfare and well-being. Information is constructively exchanged between care and education staff on a daily basis and both staff teams contribute to pupils' statutory reviews. Residential staff are timetabled to work in school supporting both day and boarding pupils and an increasing number of education staff undertake evening duties in the boarding provision. These practices support and strengthen the school's 24 hour curriculum.

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 are confident they will receive support when needed.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils' views are actively sought and valued in relation to planning for their future and in developing the school community. Formal and informal opportunities are available and includes consultation with local authority representatives and governors. Pupils are particularly enjoying the opportunities to shape the current refurbishment of the residential areas and have been actively involved in choosing new furniture and accessories. Great emphasis continues to be placed on the involvement of parents and carers in relation to the care of their child and the life of the school. Parental attendance at school events has continued to increase since the last inspection and a further 'drop-in' event has been staged in the centre of the county to take a parents' information evening to those parents and carers who live some considerable distance from the school. These practices actively promote and contribute to positive outcomes for pupils.

Clear arrangements are in place for the admission of pupils and these are handled with care and sensitivity in relation to individual circumstances and the existing group of boarders. Comprehensive information is provided to parents and pupils, and parents are encouraged to visit the residential provision before their child



commences boarding. Preparation for moving on continues to be facilitated in conjunction with individual pupils, parents and appropriate agencies.

Boarders' needs are assessed effectively and regularly reviewed. Comprehensive placement plans detail how individual needs will be met on a day-to-day basis with a number of targets linked to the residential activity programme. The plans are regularly reviewed and updated in conjunction with parents, pupils and relevant agencies.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with their families and carers and can make and receive telephone calls in private. Staff maintain effective communication with parents and carers with regard to children's progress as well as concerns. A variety of methods are used including home/school diaries, home visits and a text messaging service.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

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.

Considerable refurbishment of the boarding areas has taken place since the last inspection, is on going and greatly valued by pupils.

Boarding accommodation is pleasantly decorated, furnished and clean and continues to offer boarders a range of recreational areas. Sufficient showers, baths and toilets are available to boarders; separate facilities are provided for staff.

Each residential area has its own communal space and dining area for breakfast and evening meals. However, a number of events throughout the school term regularly bring boarders together to celebrate special occasions in addition to participating in major elements of the evening programme together.

Positive links continue to be promoted and maintained with the local community through a number of events and initiatives including the school fete, participation in local recycling projects and links with local schools.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management are very strong and contribute highly to the overall outcomes for pupils. Staff know the pupils in their care very well and value and

understand their individual needs. Staff remain highly committed to their role and pupils' benefit greatly from competent, highly skilled and experienced staff teams.

Comprehensive documentation regarding the school and the boarding provision is provided to parents, carers, pupils and other interested parties and is regularly updated. Where appropriate, documentation is translated to ensure all parties have equal access to information and understanding of the school's collective provision.

The school provides effective systems of support, guidance and training opportunities, internally and externally, to assist staff in their work. Refresher courses are accessed as required. External support is provided to the headteacher and an effective system of performance review is established. Staff have access to written guidance through a comprehensive set of policies and procedures and the school's handbook. Staff report excellent communication across the school community including handover meetings, whole school briefings and team meetings. Regular opportunities are also provided for whole school training and training with other schools. There is a highly positive and supportive team ethos and staff value the open access they have to the senior management team.

A duty rota and staffing policy are followed in practice and boarders know who is responsible for them at specific times. A member of care staff sleeps in each of the residential units at night. 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. The increased role of education and support staff in residential duties since the last inspection has provided greater flexible and support at times of staff sickness and absence. This practice also contributes highly to continuity and consistency of care for boarders by adults who know them well.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school positively promotes the integration of all pupils and recognises pupils' individual circumstances and needs. For example, transport is provided to enable every pupil to participate in the after school activity programme and highly individualised work is undertaken to enable and support each pupil to progress and develop. Pupils are supported to negotiate their place in the community through a range of activities and staff work hard to promote tolerance and understanding of others within the school and beyond.

Effective, established systems regularly monitor pupils' welfare and the operation of the boarding provision. Regular checks of records are conducted by the head of care as required and the headteacher prepares regular reports to the governing body. Copies of internal monitoring reports and those compiled by the local authority and designated governor are held on file and made available for inspection.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- update the contact details for Ofsted in the complaints documentation provided to pupils and parents. (NMS 4.8)