

# Sidestrand Hall School

Sidestrand Hall School, Cromer Road, Sidestrand, CROMER, Norfolk, NR27 0NH

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26/02/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Boarders receive exceptionally high quality of individualised, well-planned and consistent care. Consequently, boarders make significant progress in personal development, establishing and maintaining meaningful friendships, taking part in activities and engaging well with peers and others in the community. They develop life skills, which for many, had previously been thought unattainable.
- Managers give safeguarding and the wellbeing of boarders in this school extremely high priority. A wide range of clear and fully implemented policies and practices support staff to keep boarders safe. All boarders spoken to say they feel safe here; this is fully endorsed by parents, social workers and other professionals involved in their care.
- Boarding is given a high priority within this school, as an integral part of the services the school offer. Clement Lodge is now fully operational as a specialist unit working with boarders on the autistic spectrum. The resounding success of this unit has led the visionary school management team to consider further ways of developing and enhancing the services they offer.
- Boarders, their parents, social workers and child and adolescent mental health workers are consistently positive about the boarding provision and the impact it has had on boarders' lives. A parent said: 'They don't view my son as a problem; they have saved him. This time a year ago, things could not have been any worse, now they could not be any better.' A social worker said: 'She has made huge strides at the school. What I have really valued is that they have allowed her personality to shine but pushed her in a supportive manner to do things people think she would never be able to do such as cooking basic meals.'
- Managers have met and significantly exceeded all of the National Minimum Standards.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

The school were contacted at 9.00am on the first day of inspection and the duration and initial plans for inspection discussed with the Head teacher. This included the inspection being carried out over two days with two inspectors on site for day two. The inspection took place within three and a half hours of this initial contact. Inspection activity included discussions with young people, residential staff, the headteacher and parents and social workers of residential pupils.

A full tour of the premises was undertaken with young people, meals were taken with the residential group and after school activities were observed.

Documents checked include risk assessments, personal education plans, sanction and restraint records, missing from care records and policies and procedures in place within the school.

## Inspection team

Stephen Halliley

Lead social care inspector

Louisa Bayley

Social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

The inspection of the boarding provision took place over two days, with two inspectors on site for day two, following a notice period of three and a half hours. The welfare only inspection of the four boarding units included; discussions with boarders, boarding staff and the headteacher, along with observation of boarding routines and meals taken with boarders. Review of documentary records and feedback from parents and social workers contributed to and supported the inspection judgements.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Consider implementing a system whereby staff sign risk assessments and subsequent updates to show they have read and understood the content.
- Ensure that staff supervision minutes reflect the duration of each supervision session.
- Consider improving the reporting in external monitoring visits, with a view to providing a critical friend to reflect in greater depth on the quality of care provided.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding.

Boarders' social development and social interactions have improved significantly as a result of their boarding experience. They are exceptionally tolerant of each other and accept differences in behaviour, personality and individual need almost without question. Boarders develop and sustain valuable friendships, which are further supported by the group dynamics and boarding arrangements. They spend quality social time with their peers and consequently form strong attachments. A parent said: 'My son does struggle with peers but he has made friends. His friend boards on the same night, which is lovely for him. He has never known what it is like to have a friend before.' The social skills boarders develop prepare them for the next stages of their lives and adulthood.

Boarders make excellent progress in their personal development while at this school. This includes achieving levels of independence and developing life skills which, for many, had previously been thought out of reach. Parents comment extremely positively on this progress: 'Being at this school has helped him hugely. He has gone from a frustrated, angry child to one who is happy, able to interact socially and to participate in activities and trips. He has achieved more at this school than in his whole school career.' The progress boarders make increases their self-esteem and self-confidence. As a result, they are happy to face new challenges and learn new skills, building on the successes they have achieved.

Boarders make good progress in all aspects of their health. They access a range of services to promote their psychological, physical and emotional health and well being.

Boarders' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, sensitive to each others' space and needs and treat the boarding environment like their own home. All boarders spoken to say they are very happy during their time in boarding. Their comments include: 'I really enjoy my two nights here each week, activities are the best thing about being here.' Boarders readily take up opportunities to be involved in activities both on and off site. They develop hand-eye coordination, maintain and improve their physical health, learn and develop new skills and learn to behave and interact well in a range of social settings.

Boarders make a highly significant contribution to the boarding community, from involving themselves in decorating their rooms, to decorating communal areas, menu and activity planning and cooking. For many boarders this is a new experience and they take full advantage of being given the opportunity to make their mark on the boarding units. They contribute their views through regular discussion, observation, keyworker sessions and reviews of their thoughts about boarding and what it offers to them. Boarders' views actively influence and contribute to the continual improvement of the boarding provision.

Boarders are well prepared for the transition to independence, adult life or a new school placement through well planned support and guidance. A member of staff said: 'We build independence routines and see these through no matter how slow the progress or small the task as for these children each achievement is a huge step.'

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of boarding provision and care is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from a clear and effective induction process; the duration of induction is varied

to meet individual need. Staff, parents and additional specialist support such as child and adolescent mental health services contribute to the successful induction for each boarder. The strong links between pastoral and educational staff play a key part in ensuring continuity of care and consistent behaviour management. This allows boarders to learn, develop and enhance new skills in both daily living and academic achievement, such as reading. Consequently, positive outcomes and measurable progress are continually achieved. The impact of the staff on young people is tremendous. Staff are patient, calm, consistent and very measured in their approach to boarders. Staff use positive reinforcement, repetition of key phrases, role modelling and provide limited, manageable choices, which nurture individual progress.

Staff effectively implement local authority care plans, providing daily care that is consistent with individual needs. Senior staff ensure they are aware of the contents of care plans, through discussion with social workers and carers. They cascade this information to the staff who look after boarders on a day to day basis. Boarding staff demonstrate dedication and commitment to providing high quality boarding provision that is tailored to meet highly individual needs.

Boarding staff offer a wide range of activities; the uptake of these activities is extremely high. Activities offered both on site and off provide stimulating and often challenging environments for boarders. They rise to the challenge with high quality individual support of staff. Examples include swimming, bowling, football, shopping and reading. For boarders who struggle to adapt to new situations, staff provide slow, staged integration into these activities so they do not miss the opportunity to be involved with their peers or appreciate new experiences.

Staff follow clear plans and policies to support boarders' health needs, while allowing the primary responsibility for this to remain with parents. Exceptionally strong links with external professionals such as the child and adolescent mental health services, who work in close liaison with boarding staff, underpin the progress boarders make with all aspects of their psychological, physical and emotional health.

Boarders benefit from good quality main meals that are prepared in a five star hygiene rated kitchen. Catering staff have good awareness of any individual needs and cater very well for these, in liaison with parents and boarding staff. The staff support boarders to follow food hygiene and health and safety courses through working in the kitchen one day each week. This promotes the attainment of additional skills and qualifications.

Boarders' accommodation is very well presented, benefiting from newly fitted kitchens. This provides a hygienic, well-planned environment in which boarders are able to help staff prepare evening meals, bake cakes or make snacks. Boarders have significant input into the décor and design of the well decorated bedrooms and communal areas. A rolling maintenance and decoration programme is in place, with plans to paint all corridors and to repair or replace the roof and windows. The high standards of the boarding environment support boarders to feel valued and to take pride in their surroundings.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with family and friends while staying at school. Telephone contact can be facilitated at any time though many boarders find it difficult to understand the concept of contact with their parents while they are staying at school. As the school offers a boarding provision up to a maximum of five nights per week all boarders maintain extremely close links with families as they spend a proportion of each week living at home.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

## **Outstanding**

This school are outstanding at keeping boarders safe.

Boarders are kept safe from possible harm or abuse from adults who work with them or visitors

to the school site. Safe recruitment checks are in place, with two verbally verified references for each member of staff. This is much improved as a result of managers acting on a recommendation for further improvement made at the last inspection. Staff interviewing prospective candidates have completed safer recruitment training, as have the governors. There are clear systems in place to ensure that unauthorised visitors do not access the school, further protecting boarders from potential harm.

There have been no incidents of boarders going missing. The school has a policy in place clearly setting out the procedures to follow in the event pupils do go missing. The policy refers to the local area procedures. Staff are very clear as to their role and responsibility should boarders go missing, in order to facilitate their prompt and safe return to the school. Parents report that bullying is not an issue, as do the boarders. The attention to detail in group dynamics and the level of staffing and supervision ensures that boarders do not bully each other.

Safeguarding is taken extremely seriously and the designated safeguarding officers fully understand their roles. They take immediate action to refer concerns and pursue external agencies where they believe individuals are at risk. They are actively involved with the common assessment framework, with designated staff taking on the role of lead professional. The proactive practice and extensive training staff access supports them to identify, monitor and act upon concerns about individual safety.

A wide range of health and safety checks are in place to protect boarders as fully as possible from accidental injury. Fire equipment checks take place in line with policy and all boarders participate in regular fire evacuations. The use of walk through fire drills between staged drills ensures familiarity with the actions they should take in case of fire.

There have been no incidents of restraint in the school. Some parents say this is particularly notable as their children have been frequently restrained in their previous schools. They say that behaviour is exceptionally managed well, avoiding the need for restraint. Parents reflect that the staff approach behaviour management positively. This enables their children to participate in activities and form friendships which they were unable to do in their previous placements. Parents consistently say their children have improved their behaviour as a result of their school and boarding experience. One parent said: 'This time last year, things could not have been any worse, now they could not be any better.'

Staff have not used sanctions in the last year; there is an emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour rather than a punitive approach. Individualised adaptations to the environment, such as yellow faced clocks and information printed on yellow paper ensures that all boarders have access to information, preventing them becoming frustrated or anxious.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding**

Leadership and management of the boarding provision are outstanding.

Parents confirm they receive a good level information when their children begin boarding. They say the school meets the clear boarding aims. This is demonstrated in the progress they see their children make, for some, it is the first time they have thrived, made friends and been able to participate in social and leisure opportunities.

Management of the school is visionary; managers have developed high quality provision that continues to expand. The skills and experience of a member of staff who has a background in working with autism are well utilised and respected. The staff and parents cite this as an absolute strength. The school have contributed to forming a trust for special school head teachers, sharing expertise and delivering training to other provisions. This provides for the outstanding practice in

this school to be disseminated to other provisions.

Staff have regular supervision with their line manager. They comment that this is supportive and fundamental in enabling them to work to the best of their ability. The supervisions are recorded, however, the duration of each session is not consistently recorded. This is a point for improvement. All staff are well qualified, well trained and offered individual support. Staffing ratios are consistently high, ensuring that staff are able to meet individual needs.

There are robust systems in place to monitor the care, both internally and through an independent visitor. However, there is scope to improve the quality of reporting of external monitoring to support future development. There are clear, well defined plans in place for continued development of the boarding provision. The development plan aims serve to promote the enjoyment and achievement of boarders.

There have been no complaints received by the school. Parents confirm they know how to complain and feel confident that if they needed to complain they would be listened to and taken seriously. There is a good level of consultation with boarders and with parents. Parents say they feel listened to and that the school has acted on their suggestions. Records of school council meetings show that staff listen to boarders and actively seek their views. This contributes to boarders feeling valued.

Policies and procedures are in place, accessible and communicated to staff. The policies are regularly updated and provide clear information and guidance. These now refer to the new unit, which specialises in working with boarders on the autistic spectrum. Additionally staff are required to sign updated policies when they have read them to show their understanding and compliance with the policies. This is a clear response to an improvement point raised at the last inspection.

Equality is promoted in every aspect of the school and boarding provision and staff meet individual needs exceptionally well. Parents talk about the fantastic progress their children make and compare this, in some cases, to other schools where their child has been failed and felt a failure.

There are strong relationships with external professionals; a specialist nurse visits once per month to have lunch with the pupils, a representative from the local authority joins regular meetings and supports the school in promoting safeguarding the pupils. Staff work as part of multi-agency teams to provide support for families. There are strong links with the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board. These extremely strong external relationships ensure the school are able to respond to changing needs and keep young people safe at all times.



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121254
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC042606
<b>DfE registration number</b>	926/7001

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	24
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Macro
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/12/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01263 578144
<b>Email address</b>	office@sidestrandhall.norfolk.sch.uk

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