

Sidestrand Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121254
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380191
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of social care 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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Roger Billings
Headteacher	Sarah Macro
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2009
School address	Cromer Road Sidestrand NR27 0NH
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Boarding provision	Sidestrand Hall School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC042606
Social care inspector	Deirdra Keating

Age group	7–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector. Inspectors visited 16 lessons taught by 14 teachers and higher level teaching assistants. They looked at information about pupils' progress and the ways in which this was checked. They observed the school's work and scrutinised the school's development plans and procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, groups of pupils, individual parents and carers and education and care staff. They examined 45 questionnaires returned from parents and carers, 80 from pupils and 39 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do teachers use the information the school has about pupils' progress and achievements to plan their lessons?
- How well does the school work with parents and carers to help them become involved in their child's learning and to improve attendance and behaviour?
- How are initiatives such as the new developments in the curriculum for the oldest students improving achievement and students' attitudes to learning?
- How does the residential provision contribute to pupils' learning and well-being?

Information about the school

Sidestrand Hall is an average-sized residential special school that provides education for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorders, moderate and severe and complex learning difficulties. The large majority of pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties and emotional and behavioural challenges linked to their learning needs. All have statements of special educational needs. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are three times as many boys as girls at the school. There has been a marked increase in the number of pupils who have multiple disabilities and needs since the last inspection. The school has a number of awards, particularly for sport and health.

The school provides residential accommodation for up to 18 pupils for between two and four nights per week according to need. There are 14 pupils registered currently. At the time of the inspection four teachers were absent due to illness. These included two new appointments to the newly-reconstituted leadership team.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that is improving well. Pupils and staff are proud to be part of it and there is a shared vision for pupils to achieve even more. The ethos of care and concern for the individual and indeed their families is palpable. The school is well placed to improve further. Its self-evaluation is good and accurate. The strong leadership team and good governing body know what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement in school and work well together to achieve this. New initiatives such as the whole-school focus on reading are beginning to improve skills. Some aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of the residential provision, the quality of care, support and guidance and pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and live healthy lives are outstanding.

The school's safeguarding systems are exemplary and it works extremely well with others to support those pupils whose circumstances may make them most vulnerable. Excellent pastoral support in school and in the residential provision has a clear focus on pupils' personal and emotional wellbeing. The school and the residential provision provide very safe environments in which everyone feels respected and valued. This and more consistent behavioural management all contribute to the good behaviour in the school. Behaviour in the residential accommodation is outstanding. Pupils' engagement in learning when taking part in more practical activities such as environmental science lessons and in the hairdressing salon is exemplary.

Good partnership working with parents and carers means that pupils carry over some of their developing skills at home. Parents and carers say 'I am thrilled with the progress my child has made here' and 'it's an amazing school.' They praise the quality of communication between the school and themselves. A few though find it hard to send their child to school regularly and this affects their child's progress. The large majority of pupils attend well but attendance is average because of this.

Pupils' outcomes and achievement are good. Progress from their varied starting points is good overall, including that of different groups such as girls and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has rigorous systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' individual achievements in all subjects and for highlighting any individual whose progress might be slowing. Work in using this data to target particular aspects of subjects, such as listening in English, is not as developed, but is an improving part of the school's work. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils make huge strides in their social

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development in particular, showing increasing self-awareness and empathy for others, including for those from different backgrounds and faiths. All this and the good quality provision mean that the school provides good value for money.

Effective systems are also in place for checking on and developing the quality of teaching and learning. These are ensuring that the quality of teaching is good and improving. However, in a few lessons the teaching does not take sufficient account of what is known about individual pupils' current levels and needs. This means that sometimes activities and lesson objectives and tasks are not sufficiently adjusted to these. Not all teachers share with pupils what they will learn at the beginning of lessons, focusing more on what the pupils will do. The good and rapidly improving curriculum offers learning opportunities that are highly relevant and motivating to pupils and that are enriched by visits and partnerships with other schools. Key skills such as literacy and numeracy are generally well taught across the curriculum. The school has identified that not enough use is being made of information and communication technology to support these and pupils' learning in general. The revisions to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 are really exciting students, including them fully and extending their life-skills opportunities very well. These are too new to have a lasting impact yet but students themselves are quick to say how much they feel they are learning. These lessons provide excellent practical contexts for students to apply their reading and numeracy skills and spur them on to try even harder. All this further helps to raise attendance and improve behaviour and prepares students well for the next stages of their education and life. However, throughout the school, some pupils still find it hard to self-manage their behaviour and work productively without very close supervision and the behaviour plans in residence and school do not always specify the small steps and strategies to be used towards this. The very large site and new adaptations to premises offer many rich learning experiences but there is not a detailed plan for the residence indicating when necessary refurbishment work will be done.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of consistently good or better teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all teachers in all subjects match work to what is known about pupils' current levels of attainment to move their learning on
 - ensuring all teachers share with pupils what they will learn and why
 - improving the use of questioning so that it supports pupils' thinking and active involvement in all lessons
 - making more use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning.

- Make even more effective use of the data that is held about pupils' achievement and progress so that:
 - planning is closely linked to what the data says about pupils' progress in different aspects of subjects
 - pupils who attend less regularly make up lost ground rapidly.

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- Improve the residential provision by
 - updating development plans for the residential provision to show clearly when specific refurbishments will take place
 - ensure that strategies to be used are more clearly detailed in individual pupils' behaviour plans and the plans are more accessible to all staff.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils join the school with exceptionally low standards reflecting their special educational needs and for many, their complex disabilities. A very few pupils enter with some skills closer to those of other pupils their age and the school has put into place a range of programmes and courses that allow everyone to achieve, whether at GCSE level in mathematics or science or in more vocational subjects such as hair and beauty, gardening and mechanics. The school's tracking and assessment data and inspectors' observations confirm achievement overall is good whatever pupils' starting points. The school has identified that pupils who attend less regularly are in danger of falling behind, and is putting measures in place to tackle this. All achieve accredited awards before they leave school, either at GCSE, Entry Level, the Unit awards system and the new 'Step Up' awards. There are no differences in the achievement and progress of pupils from different groups, backgrounds or who have different learning needs. Pupils make good and steady gains in their key skills such as numeracy and literacy and their attitude to learning. The new approach to teaching the sounds that letters make is already paying off in pupils' attempts to both spell words and to sound them out. They say 'I am really getting better at reading'. They really enjoy their information and communication technology work and throughout the school a few have skills closer to others of their age in this area. However, these skills are not always used sufficiently well to develop and extend writing and to support learning in other areas.

In lessons learning and progress are good and occasionally outstanding. In most lessons pupils are enthusiastic and are thrilled by the positive feedback they receive from teachers about how well they are learning and behaving. The rewards system works well to support this. In a mathematics lesson the youngest pupils demonstrated excellent progress in their understanding of number sequences and counting on and were proud to share their learning. Year 9 students showed very good understanding of how compost is formed and why recycling matters and voiced clearly their enthusiasm for promoting these at home. Occasionally learning in lessons is satisfactory rather than better, because the work is not so well matched to pupils' needs or the lesson is too teacher led with too few demands placed on pupils to think for themselves. Pupils here are more passive and the learning is not so effective. Key Stage 4 students are proud of their increasing independence. They and the school council are excited by the ways in which they influence school life, such as by determining menus or leisure activities and helping design the new go-kart facility

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in school and in the residence.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and the proportion of outstanding teaching is steadily improving. This is because teachers have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and levels and most now use this knowledge well in their planning. Most teachers are highly skilled in capturing pupils' interest and give constant feedback to pupils as to how well they are doing. Marking in books, however, is more variable and does not always make it clear to the pupil what is good about what they have done and what would make it even better. When lessons are satisfactory rather than good, they still have good features and in particular these relate to the quality of relationships and mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Most teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to draw ideas and contributions out from pupils and to make pupils think, but a few are not as skilled at this. Occasionally the focus is too much on completing an activity rather than what the child will learn through the activity.

The good and improving curriculum is highly relevant to pupils' needs and is strengthened by the further developments in partnership working with other schools. Ability grouping of some year groups for subjects such as literacy and numeracy ensures a real focus on specific key skills pupils need next and is backed up by

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

*In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations for the pupils' age

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opportunities to apply these skills in the real world through visits and projects. Pupils have good inclusive experiences with mainstream schools, in the broader community and also when mainstream pupils come into the school itself. Strong sporting and cultural links with other schools and the community enrich pupils’ experience further.

There are highly effective arrangements for induction into the school and transition between classes, as well into the next stages of students’ education and life. The school works extremely well with outside agencies and organisations and to protect those whose circumstances may make them most vulnerable. Families and other agencies pay tribute to the school’s work in supporting all pupils. This all contributes to the highly effective trusting relationships between pupils and staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, all staff and the governing body share a clear vision for enhancing the well-being, learning opportunities and life chances of all pupils. This drive has accelerated since the last inspection with the appointment of new middle leaders and more rigorous gathering and analysis of data. They pursue excellence in all that they do and know the steps they must take towards realising their aims. Leadership of teaching and learning is good and improving, with clear systems to support staff development and accountability. The school promotes equality well, because all pupils are included in its activities, and there are no gaps in the performance of different groups.

The good governing body is enthusiastic, highly visible in the school and holds the school to account for its work well. Highly effective systems and safeguarding procedures that are regularly updated ensure pupils’ safety. These are rigorously followed by all adults in school and in the residence. Staff are extremely well trained and ever vigilant. Pupils are respected and valued and their voice is heard. The school uses its links with other educational establishments, specialist agencies and businesses well to extend pupils’ learning opportunities. Its work with the community and businesses locally, regionally and internationally helps others to understand more about the learning and access needs of people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and enables it to make a good contribution to community cohesion.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. High quality care and provision have had an exceptional impact on pupils and they make excellent progress in their personal and social development. A key strength is the promotion of independence skills that contribute to pupils' feelings of self-worth. The residential provision is extremely well organised and managed. Staff are highly skilled and share an ambitious vision for continual improvement. Residential pupils, staff, parents and carers and placing authorities consistently report that their experiences of the provision are highly positive.

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. High levels of supervision and guidance from skilled staff help pupils make significant progress in their emotional and social development. Pupils treat each other with respect and accept one another's differences. Staff have high expectations of pupils and pupils rise to these, actively contributing to the residential community. Residential pupils are consulted about all aspects of the provision. Their wishes and preferences shape the menus, outings, décor, celebrations and activities. They know that their views are highly valued by staff and wherever possible will be acted upon. This empowers pupils, who readily take on roles and responsibilities for domestic routines, such as helping with shopping, cooking and clearing away after meals. Parents and carers report with pleasure how their children carry over these practical life-skills into their home lives.

The quality of residential provision and care is good. The well-being of individual pupils is at the centre of all practice. Case files for each residential pupil are current and concise. They ensure that each pupil's unique characteristics are known to staff

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and pupils' health needs are clearly detailed for staff to follow. Pupils sign their case files and are involved in reviews of their care. Residential pupils are relaxed and comfortable in the homely, clean environment. There is ample space and behaviour is extremely good. Staff are consistent and tenacious in their approach to this. A credit-reward system promotes consistency with that in school. Expectations and plans for individual behaviour management are recorded in case files. However, some aspects of these plans lack clarity, although staff themselves are clear about what needs to be done.

Residential pupils enjoy a wide and varied range of after-school activities. Staff arrange these with safe organisation, local knowledge and careful matching to pupils' interests and needs. For example, younger pupils are driven by bus into the local town while older students use public transport. High levels of staffing provide both company and good levels of supervision for pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy trips into local towns to spend their pocket money. This gives them a sense of local community and quality time with staff. Pupils are strongly encouraged to try new experiences, which develops their self-confidence.

The safety of residential pupils is outstanding. The school gives the highest priority to the safety of pupils while allowing them to participate in a full and varied curriculum. Staff assess risk carefully. This means pupils take reasonable risks and can enjoy activities that are challenging and exciting. Pupils know how to look after their own safety, for example learning road-safety awareness both in the community and on the large school site. Residential pupils report that they feel very safe and secure, naming a number of adults they would approach with any concerns. Pupils say that their belongings are safe. The residential provision also provides a secure constant in pupils' lives during periods of transition and change.

The head of care is the designated safeguarding officer. Regular training is updated annually for all staff and subsequently staff are competent and knowledgeable about how to implement the safeguarding procedures. Staff work very well with a wide range of agencies and outside agencies to safeguard children's welfare. Social workers report that staff are efficient, vigilant and flexible in meeting pupils' needs.

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The aims and criteria for boarding involve staff at all levels throughout the school. This ensures that day pupils who would benefit from residence are identified and referred to the head of care. Induction procedures are tailored carefully to the individual needs of pupils and their families. Communication and relationships with parents and carers are highly developed and work extremely well. Parents and carers report that 'this school is brilliant' and 'staff are innovative and resourceful at challenging barriers and overcoming problems'. The highly committed, cohesive staff team is managed with skill and efficiency. Links with the senior leadership team in the school are highly developed. The provision and the impact on residential pupils are evaluated using both external and internal monitoring. This is used effectively to drive improvements. Development plans are in place and show some planned

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expenditure for residential refurbishment. However, these plans lack detail and definition.

National Minimum Standards

All national minimum standards were met.

These are the grades for the boarding provision/These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/ Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	1
Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care	2
Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety	1
Leadership and management of boarding/Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaire and were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. Parents and carers feel strongly that their children are happy at school, kept safe and enabled to live healthy lives. They are very appreciative of how approachable the staff are and of the ways in which teachers and the senior staff will 'go the extra mile' for their children. They feel well informed about their child's progress and how to help them learn. Inspectors found the school to be a good school which has a good range of ways of working with families but is also exploring more. The school is highly effective in keeping pupils safe and supporting their wellbeing. New developments mean that pupils are enjoying their learning even more.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sidestrand Hall School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 107 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	76	9	20	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	82	7	16	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	60	17	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	71	13	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	27	60	14	31	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	73	11	24	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	51	17	38	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	35	78	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	71	9	20	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	71	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	73	8	18	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	38	84	6	13	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sidestrand Hall School, Sidestrand, NR27 0NH

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and the residential units recently. Thank you for talking with us and telling us how much you like your school and how you feel it is really helping you to make progress. Those of you who board told us you really love being in residence and feel it is helping you a lot.

We think your school is good. These are some of the things we found out about it.

- The ways in which the school looks after you all and helps you to keep safe are excellent.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and do lots of things to keep yourselves healthy.
- The teaching is good and so you all make good or better progress.
- Your behaviour is improving well and it is very good indeed in the residence.
- The headteacher, staff and members of the governing body are working together well to make the school even better.

In order to achieve this we have asked your headteacher and staff to:

- make sure the teachers give you work to do in all lessons that is matched very carefully to what you need to learn to do next
- keep checking in lessons on how you are getting on with your work
- make sure that all of you are making the best progress you can in all of the different parts of each subject
- make sure that your behaviour plans say exactly what will be done to help you improve your behaviour even more or sort things out if there are problems.
- plan exactly when some of the decoration and furnishings in the residential units will be improved.

You can help by continuing to improve your behaviour and attendance. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis
Lead inspector

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