

Surrey charity celebrates 125 years of life-changing work

Young Epilepsy is celebrating a milestone anniversary for St Piers School and College, which for 125 years has been transforming the lives of children and young people with epilepsy, autism and other complex needs and disabilities.

First established in 1897 as a residential centre for teaching agricultural skills to young men with learning and physical disabilities, its first school for children with epilepsy opened in 1904. St. Piers has since led the way in its inclusive, progressive, and nurturing approach to education. Its specialist support for children and young adults includes not only education and residential care but renowned medical facilities too.

Alongside St Piers School and College, the campus is also home to Young Epilepsy's health and medical research facility. Together they have contributed greatly to international educational and medical breakthroughs in understanding and treatment of the condition over the past 100 years, supporting children like Andrew, who has been a pupil at St Piers School since 2019.

A fun and positive boy, Andrew struggled in the classroom environment and found being around other children overwhelming. But with help from St Piers' education and therapy teams he has found ways to cope and now joins in at school, enjoying his time with his classmates.

Andrew's Mum Jenny said: *"Andrew has autism and a complex form of epilepsy, which comes with behavioural challenges and learning difficulties. His is a very complex case, but with the multidisciplinary team at the school, we don't feel alone on this journey, they are helping us along the way. You can*

see it in Andrew's interactions with the St Piers team – he's always running up to them and giving them hugs and saying hello, wanting to hold their hand. At St Piers he is comfortable within himself because he knows that he is accepted".

Mark Devlin, Chief Executive of Young Epilepsy said: *"From its inception, St Piers has pioneered an approach to education focused on developing empowered, happy young people, who can fulfil their ambitions in a nurturing environment that creates a sense of purpose and self-belief in the individual. We are proud of the history of St Pier's estate, its services, and its place in the local community, and we are working on exciting plans to develop our facilities and ensure the long-term future of the whole campus. Hopefully, we can look forward to many more years of St Piers and being able to support many more generations of children, young people, and their families".*

About Young Epilepsy and St Piers:

St Piers School is a non-maintained special residential school for pupils aged five to nineteen, and St Piers College a unique residential and day college for students aged nineteen to twenty-five. We are run by the charity the National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE) trading as Young Epilepsy, charity number 311877. At St Piers, Young Epilepsy employs around 580 staff.

Young Epilepsy is dedicated to standing up for children and young people with epilepsy. We listen and work with them so they can fulfil their potential. We coordinate research that improves diagnosis and treatments. We campaign for children's rights. We support young people in school and college. We offer cutting edge health services and provide innovative tools, information, and practical help for living everyday life.

Working with Audley Group, one of the UK's leading providers

of residential care communities, Young Epilepsy is proposing to deliver improved facilities for students at St Piers and a new residential care community, which will help to secure Young Epilepsy's long-term future.

About epilepsy:

112,000 children and young people in the UK are living with epilepsy. Epilepsy is one of the most common long-term conditions that affects children. Epilepsy is a neurological condition that disrupts the normal electrical activity our brains use to communicate with the rest of the body. This disruption causes seizures. There are over 40 different types of seizure and every young person's epilepsy is unique to them. In order to be diagnosed with epilepsy, a young person must have had at least two seizures. In most cases, epilepsy is well managed, and seizures are controlled, but it is a very serious condition and can be life-threatening.