

# Sidestrand Hall School

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	07/12/2015 to 09/12/2015	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The young people who use the service make good social and educational progress because of the support they receive.
- A consistent group of skilled and caring staff supports the young people.
- An inspirational leadership team manages the residential provision.
- The young people enjoy residential life.
- There have been no incidents of bullying within the residential provision since the last inspection.
- The staff manage the young people's behaviour well.
- Feedback from families and professionals is consistently high.
- The school has not always followed its own policies and procedures in relation to recruitment checks.
- The missing children policy is out of date.
- The staff do not attend training on safeguarding disabled children.
- The young people's residential placement plans are variable in quality and depth.

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

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that placement plans include sufficient detail relating to the information needed for staff to understand how to meet the needs of the young people.
- Ensure that the missing children policy is up to date and staff are aware of what to do should any young person go missing.
- Ensure safer recruitment checks are completed in line with policy expectations and consider improving the recording of reference verification.
- Ensure that staff receive training or development that explores safeguarding disabled children.

## **Information about this inspection**

One inspector undertook the inspection over three days, within three and a half hours of the inspection announcement. Inspection activity included discussions with young people, residential staff, the head teacher and head of care, parents, external professionals and social workers of residential pupils. A full tour of the premises was undertaken and the inspector spent time with young people in each part of the residential accommodation. Documents checked include case files, placement plans, monitoring reports and policies and procedures in place within the school.

## **Inspection team**

Ashley Hinson

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Sidestrand Hall School is a day and residential special school on the North Norfolk coast and is maintained by Norfolk County Council. The school serves pupils aged 7 to 19 with complex needs. Set in approximately 10 acres, the site is in a conservation area and includes woodland and gardens. There are currently 144 pupils on roll and a maximum of 20 can board for up to 4 nights from Monday to Friday in the main house. The residential provision comprises three units, one for girls and two for boys, situated in the main school building, and Clement Lodge, which provides accommodation for up to six pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The total number of residential pupils is currently 25. The school aims to provide a small group living experience in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. An integrated inspection took place in February 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Good**

The young people who use the service make good progress because of the support they receive. They make progress academically and socially. Parents, professionals and young people recognise this. One young person said: 'I have become much more independent.' Another spoke of how the support he had received from staff had helped him make real improvement in his social skills: 'I don't like eating in front of others but on the second day here I managed to eat at the table with all of the others.' The young people were clearly proud of their achievements. The school is using a new computer system to capture evidence of progress. This is in its infancy but is already beginning to provide valuable information that evidences the progress young people in residential boarding make.

A consistent group of skilled and caring staff support the young people. The staffing levels allow young people to have time with staff to establish bonds. There is warmth to the interactions between staff and young people. There have been no safeguarding concerns arising from the quality of care provided within the residential provision. The staff are aware of reporting mechanisms for raising safeguarding concerns. As a result, young people are relaxed and comfortable in the care of the staff team who meet their needs well.

The residential provision is an integral part of the whole school. It does not exist in isolation. The staff report good working relationships with educational staff. There is effective and regular communication and positive feedback from parents, carers and professionals. The staff link with external professionals as necessary. This includes health professionals. Professionals report strong partnerships. The leadership and management are highly regarded. Professionals are particularly positive about the work undertaken by the head of child care. One social worker said: 'He is an absolute dream, he goes above and beyond.'

The young people show interest and concern for one another. They interact politely and treat each other with respect. The staff are able to support young people to develop friendships. The residential provision provides an opportunity for socialisation that would otherwise be absent, or at least significantly reduced, for many of the young people. A parent said: 'It gives him a chance to socialise. He goes out and about. He has grown and thrived through their support.'

The young people identify their increased independence skills as being a key benefit of the residential provision. They are encouraged to develop their skills in line with their needs and abilities. For example, some young people help to cook whilst others are encouraged to enhance their personal care skills. The staff report that this leads to an increase in young people's confidence and self-esteem. As a result, the residential provision is significantly contributing to young people's preparation for life beyond the school.

The level of participation young people have in the residential provision varies according to their ability to meaningfully participate. The young people report being able to

influence the day to day running of residence. They are able to show what has changed because of staff listening to their views. A consultation folder supports these assertions and helps young people to see that their opinions matter.

The young people participate in a range of activities. Recent activities have included trips to the Christmas lights in a nearby town, swimming events, outings to the cinema, shopping expeditions and the opportunity to play golf. There is a range of activities available to young people on site. This includes access to the gym, which is used for sport and games. Young people enjoy using the onsite bike track and go kart track. One young person, when asked to tell me the most important thing I should take away from this inspection, said: 'It's fun and awesome here.'

The inspection has identified some shortfalls that the internal monitoring systems have not previously picked up. Notwithstanding this, there is a generally good approach to monitoring effectiveness. The management team are well aware of the needs of the young people and they strive to ensure that they receive the best possible care.

### **The quality of care and support**

**Good**

A staff team with good knowledge of young people supports them well. The staff are able to discuss the young people's needs with insight and empathy. They treat the young people with dignity and respect. They base the care young people receive on an ever evolving understanding of their needs.

Approaches to young people's induction into the service vary, dependent on individual needs. The staff report close working relationships with the school and these close relationships assist in the integration of young people to the service. Where necessary, specialist professionals from mental health services also assist in the young people's inductions. Parents report staff handling their children's transition into the service sensitively and effectively.

The boarding provision spreads across two buildings on the school site. One of these includes three separate elements. Despite this, there is a joined up feel to the service. The young people who access one part of the service may well visit another part for an evening. There are whole service activities such as dodgeball. The three separate elements are within the main house. This is an old building. Work is ongoing to improve the décor. Where work has taken place, the difference is pronounced. A development plan is in place and this is having a positive effect. The newer building is of a high standard throughout.

The residential provision is a social provision and young people get on well with one another. A parent said: 'Boarding has helped him make friends and grow in confidence.' The provision is well equipped with games, DVDs, consoles and books for young people to enjoy. The young people are involved in choosing and preparing their meals. As with other areas of independence and influence, the depth of involvement varies. The young people enjoy their meals and see them as social occasions. They are well mannered and respectful of one another at the table. They are sensitive to the needs and idiosyncrasies of their peers.

The head of child care regularly attends health appointments with families. They see him

as a major source of support and advocacy for both themselves and the young people. A social worker said: 'He is really, really helpful and great with the parents.' A parent said: 'I see him at various appointments and this has helped no end. They are able to support with things like the medication. They give that professional perspective and that is a great help. Since being on this medication he has been able to stay in class, work and earn rewards. Without them pushing I might not have got this far.' Many of the activities that young people have the opportunity to engage in promote their physical health. Families report staff managing young people's health needs well. Medication is safely stored and administered in line with the school's policy.

The young people and their parents are in frequent contact during their stays. Parents report regular phone calls and young people are clear that they can contact their carers when they wish. This provides additional support and safeguards for young people.

The young people have residential placement plans. These are variable in quality and depth. For one young person, the placement plan does not include sufficient detail regarding ongoing safeguarding concerns, nor how staff should manage or respond to any issues arising from the concern. Discussions with staff evidenced awareness of these issues, but the plan should clearly reflect them.

## **How well children and young people are protected**

**Good**

The young people are clear that they can talk to a wide range of people if they are concerned or worried. There are posters up on the walls in the accommodation that identify who young people can speak to. A phone is available to young people at all times. This ensures young people have access to adults they can trust if they want to raise a concern.

Written records are clear and files are well organised. Where there have been safeguarding concerns, staff have clearly recorded and shared them with the social workers involved with the family. Where young people are subject to child protection procedures, the school is an active participant in core groups and child protection reviews. A social worker said: 'They are an important and integral part of the core group.'

The staff are aware of which young people are particularly vulnerable in relation to the use of the internet. They are aware of the work taking place regarding e-safety within the school. They reinforce these messages with young people whilst in the residential provision. For example, one young person wanted to place some information on a webpage. He does not have permission to do this and work is taking place in school to help him understand e-safety. The staff member explained to him that he could not do that and asked him to tell her why this was, thereby reinforcing the message.

There have been no incidents of bullying within the residential provision since the last inspection. Interactions between young people are warm and positive. The young people are concerned for each other's well-being. In discussion with young people, they clearly state that bullying is not something that occurs. The staff are aware of the possibility of bullying taking place and alert to the signs. The young people identify people that they could talk to if they are worried. During the inspection, young people shared with staff

some of the anxieties they felt about things generally. This offers assurance that they would take concerns about any bullying to staff. The staffing levels enable close monitoring of young people within the residential provision. As a result, the staff and structure of the residential provision help and protect young people to keep themselves safe from bullying.

The staff who support the young people are skilled in managing difficult behaviours. There have been no restraints since the last inspection. There have been nine physical interventions. Staff manage behaviour through positive reinforcement. They are generally able to anticipate the young people's behaviour because of their knowledge of individuals. They are alert to changes in behaviour and what the changes may indicate. This knowledge allows them to be attentive to triggers that may influence young people's behaviour, as well as indicators of potential abuse.

A comprehensive set of health and safety checks and risk assessments are in place for the building. Regular fire drills and tests take place. Fire risk assessments have resulted in improvements to the alarm systems. The site manager carries out regular tests in relation to areas such as the playground equipment.

There have been no safeguarding referrals since the last inspection. The school meets the minimum requirements of the standards and guidance relating to safer recruitment. However, the school has not always followed its own policies and procedures in relation to recruitment checks. A recommendation was made at the last inspection relating to the need to ensure consistency in contacting referees and verifying references. This is now happening. However, it is difficult to judge the consistency or quality of verification checks as the record only shows that it has happened, rather than any detail of the outcome.

No young people have gone missing from the residential provision. This means that staff do not have experience of dealing with an issue that they recognise may happen in the future. In discussions, staff acknowledged this and stated that they would use the procedures for guidance. The procedures available for staff are out of date. This means staff would be accessing guidance that is not in line with current statutory guidance.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers** Good

An experienced, passionate, qualified and committed head of child care leads the residential provision. Managers and deputies who share his attributes and values support him. Throughout the inspection their enthusiasm, good humour and child focused approach shone through. The effect is a management team who are inspirational, confident and ambitious for young people. They lead by example and the staff work as a team. There is a shared sense of responsibility and each member of staff who contributed to the inspection did so professionally and was a positive role model for the service. The staff report that they are well led and supported by the management team.

There is a clear culture of high aspirations for young people. The school is starting to capture evidence of social, emotional and personal progress within the new electronic recording system. This approach, in its infancy at present, will provide valuable evidence for the service to enable further analysis of the progress young people make because of their residential experience.

There are sufficient staff to support the young people. The management team are visible and work on shift. They show enormous commitment, with the head of child care sleeping in Monday to Thursday and a member of the management team within the specialist provision also sleeping in each night. This enables them to monitor practice directly, reflect with staff and spend time with the young people in the mornings as well as after school. The management team are clearly comfortable in the presence of the young people and vice versa.

Independent monitoring visits take place. The chair of governors acknowledges that these have needed to become more robust to offer the level of challenge necessary to facilitate improvement. This has now happened. The governors also receive regular reports relating to safeguarding and quality assurance monitoring. There have been no complaints received since the last inspection, hence no opportunity to learn from them. Discussions with the head of child care, his staff and the head teacher evidence a desire for challenge. Discussions with staff show a confidence in dealing with challenge in a frank and open way. This contributes to the likely improvements that will continue to take place.

Feedback from professionals and families is consistently positive. They report effective and regular communication. One parent said: 'They keep me up to date and informed.' A health professional said: 'There are good communication levels. When I hold professional's meetings the school is represented, despite the distance.' Professionals respect the service and parents feel included. As a result, there is a participative approach to meeting the young people's needs.

The staff receive regular supervision. They talk in highly positive terms about the support they receive from their line managers. The staff access training in a variety of key areas. This includes training in safeguarding, autism and medication. However, at present staff do not receive specialist training in safeguarding disabled children. The staff report that the safeguarding training they do receive, whilst valuable, does not consider the additional vulnerabilities of disabled children. Research shows that disabled children are at greater risk of abuse than their non-disabled peers. The current training arrangements may lead to staff having some gaps in knowledge regarding the increased risk of abuse faced by disabled children. The staff acknowledge this as an area they would welcome additional training in. One member of staff said: 'This is a specialist school and we should receive specialist training.'

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## 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>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	25
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	3 to19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Young
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	24/02/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01263 578144
<b>Email address</b>	office@sidestrandhall.norfolk.sch.uk

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