

Sidestrand Hall School

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

Inspection dates

21/02/2017 to 23/02/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential element of the school has a highly positive impact on the young people. This has led to exceptional progress for young people in all aspects of their development.
- Staff provide excellent role models and exceptionally good support to young people. De-escalation and behaviour management strategies are highly successful in helping young people to make positive changes.
- The well-managed and orderly environment is a significant contributory factor to young people's ability to engage well in their education.
- A radical refurbishment programme has resulted in an extremely high standard of accommodation.
- Excellent safeguarding arrangements thread through all areas of practice in the school. This promotes the safety of vulnerable young people.
- A wide and varied range of activities promotes equality of opportunity for young people who have experienced barriers to accessing such experiences.
- An established group of trained and dedicated staff support the young people.
- The school is exceptionally well led by a united and cohesive senior leadership team.

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 the record of fire drills differentiates between discussions and evacuation, and provides details and evaluation.
- Develop the managerial monitoring to provide a more detailed and realistic overview of the residential provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspection took place over three days, and began within four hours of the announcement. Inspection activities included discussions with young people, residential staff, the headteacher, the head of care, the manager of Clement Lodge, parents, the local authority designated officer and the independent visitor. A tour of the premises was undertaken and the inspector spent time with young people in each part of the residential accommodation. Documents that were checked included case files, placement plans, monitoring report policies and procedures that are in place in the school, and Parent View responses.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

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. It is maintained by Norfolk County Council. The school caters for pupils aged between 7 and 19 years, who have complex needs. Set in approximately 10 acres of grounds, the site is in a conservation area and includes woodland and gardens. There are currently 159 pupils on roll and a maximum of 28 young people can board for up to four nights from Monday to Friday.

The residential provision comprises: three units – one for girls and two for boys – that are situated in the main school building; and Clement Lodge, which provides accommodation for up to six pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. The total number of residential pupils is currently 28. The school aims to provide a small-group living experience in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

A welfare-only inspection took place in December 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The residential element of the school has a marked and significant impact on young people's lives, on their family relationships and on their academic attainment. High-quality accommodation and high-calibre staff contribute to young people's exceptionally positive experiences.

A young person said, 'It's the first time I have ever liked school.' A parent said, 'They [staff] are so helpful. The school felt he needed the residential provision and this gives me a day with the younger two.' Young people who were spoken with all say that the school provides them with a positive and beneficial experience.

The staff place high priority on young people's safety and welfare. Robust systems ensure that young people are safeguarded effectively and that their well-being is continually monitored.

Amicable and supportive relationships exist between the young people and staff in the school. The skilled staff team makes a significant difference to the young people and enhances the residential experience. The staff are exceptionally calm and they manage behaviour extremely well. This is helping young people to reduce the number of negative behavioural incidents that occur.

Exceptional progress in social and emotional development is evident across the board and contributes to young people's academic achievement. The successful positive behaviour management influences young people's ability to cope with the classroom environment. The residential staff routinely support young people with their homework and reading. Evening routines and early nights in a settled and orderly provision provide young people with a good start to the school day.

Parents talk about the progress that their children make. One parent said, 'They [the staff] are teaching him really well. I am so thankful that he can board because he does things at school that I cannot provide.' A sample of the grades that have been achieved shows that all young people in one year group met or exceeded the predicted grades in core subjects. The new sixth form offers accredited gateway courses for independent skills, and literacy, numeracy and vocational courses. Five out of six young people have stayed on and attended the sixth form, which provides a bridge between the school and mainstream further education. This supports young people to achieve qualifications and develop future life skills.

Young people talk excitedly about the varied range of stimulating activities on offer. They learn to cook and bake, and they routinely enjoy arts and crafts, walks and sports. Young people shop, budget and prepare meals with staff. They explore their ideas and creativity with staff by making novelty cakes and signature dishes, and by inventing board games.

The senior management team continues to drive changes to enhance the provision and support young people into adulthood. They have a good presence in the school and they know each young person and have a comprehensive understanding of their needs.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The staff provide superb role models and have a relaxed and respectful rapport with the young people. This is based on an in-depth knowledge of the young people's unique characteristics. Strong relationships and a long-serving staff team help young people to build fundamental attachments to staff over time. The school staff and residential staff work cooperatively and share goals. Young people are at the centre of all decisions and the staff maintain a clear focus on young people's emotional, social and academic development.

Extensive development and refurbishment has resulted in residential accommodation that is well-designed and comfortable. A refurbishment programme is well underway, with one area outstanding. New windows, kitchens, bathrooms, carpets and soft furnishings have created an extremely well-appointed environment. Young people have ample communal space and enjoy the privacy of their own rooms. The bedrooms are highly personalised and give young people a strong sense of belonging.

Staff facilitate a family-type dining experience in each area of residence. Staff and young people sit around the table together and practise good mealtime etiquette. Evening menus are devised with young people and balance healthy choices with preferred options. Individual dietary requirements are unobtrusively catered for. Lunchtime meals include a number of healthy choices. There is an orderly routine to mealtimes. Young people eat enthusiastically and staff support those who need encouragement.

Care plans have been extensively developed and bring together information to guide staff in young people's care. The plans are detailed and comprehensive; they show appointments, outcomes and actions for staff. Each young person has a healthcare record that shows how staff will meet their individual health needs. Young people with complex health needs have specific care plans that are drawn up by a specialist nurse. When plans are not in place, due to young people being new to the school and awaiting a hospital diagnosis, interim protocols are agreed with the nurse. The staff have all had recent training in specific protocols to ensure that they can safely manage individual health needs. This is in direct response to admissions of young people who have identified health needs. The school has an organised and proactive approach to managing health needs. Secure medication storage and stringent procedures, including the countersigning of records, mean that medication is safely kept and is administered correctly. General health needs are met through monitoring each young person and facilitating health appointments. The reduction in the allocation of school nurses means that staff have had to be persistent in order to ensure that they get the guidance to support young people's health in the best way.

Staff actively and routinely seek young people's views in a natural manner, without formal meetings. Daily discussions shape menus, activities and decor. Young people are instrumental both in the daily running of the residential provision and in ongoing improvements.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Young people are evidently relaxed and comfortable with one another and with staff in the residential provision. They say that they feel safe and that minor tensions are

defused quickly by attentive staff. Careful matching of young people and high ratios of adults mean that young people rarely experience anything that could be described as bullying. This has generated a calm, relaxed culture in which young people feel safe and secure. In their responses to Parent View, 100% of parents say that their children are safe at the school.

There are no incidents of young people going missing from the residential provision. Staff are aware of the school's policy and know how to instigate this process. Preventative actions ensure that the more vulnerable young people take an identification card when they are away from the school. This is to alleviate distress in the event of a young person who uses non-verbal communication being parted from staff.

Risks are managed well. Assessment of these includes the consideration of new and relevant information on each young person. The assessments clearly specify risks to young people and others and guide staff on how to minimise these. Staff are alert and vigilant regarding e-safety and regarding internet activity that takes place away from the school. The staff educate young people about e-safety risks and take forward concerns to safeguarding professionals quickly and effectively.

The staff use positive reward and encouragement. Sanctions are rarely used. The token reward system replaces the need for this because it encourages young people to modify their behaviour. Young people enthusiastically take part in this scheme; they are cooperative, polite and considerate. This scheme works extremely well and the behaviour in the residential provision is exemplary.

Safeguarding is an absolute priority in the school and the systems that are used are established and robust. Staff are clearly named as designated safeguarding leads and their roles are highlighted throughout the school. Designated staff are responsive and accountable. They ensure that other staff fully understand their responsibility in the logging and reporting of concerns. Staff have read the summary version of 'Keeping children safe in education' and the school's safeguarding policy. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are vigilant and curious and share information quickly in accordance with the school's policy. Staff who were spoken with demonstrate competence and confidence in instigating the safeguarding procedures. There is a high safeguarding profile throughout the school that protects young people and contributes significantly to their overall well-being.

Allegations and concerns are managed quickly and efficiently. Referrals are made without delay to the local authority designated officer. The school works well and cooperatively with safeguarding professionals. Feedback from the local authority is good; records match all referrals made by the school and include updates and outcomes. The school has signed up to 'Operation Encompass' to provide better information-sharing between the police and the schools following domestic incidents.

Two independent visitors have been appointed recently to replace the previous visitor. One of these visitors has an understanding of the communication needs of the children who are non-verbal. The second visitor spent six months at the school on a study-based placement and this gives her an excellent understanding of the issues that young people may face. Careful consideration has resulted in the appointment of independent visitors who have a comprehensive understanding of young people's needs.

Good management and safety oversight of the school premises ensure that young people are protected from hazards. Visitors sign in, wear identification and are chaperoned on site. The electronic gates provide extra security and a boundary between

the school and the road. Contractors on the school site are risk assessed to ensure safe working practices. The premises manager provides robust and careful oversight of the appliance and utility service checks, which are undertaken every year. This ensures the health and safety of young people and staff.

There are regular fire drills and fire discussions during residential time. Walk-through practices of safe evacuations ensure that young people who may be affected by loud noise are not unsettled by the procedure. The differences between the walk-throughs and the actual evacuations are not captured in the fire drill record layout, which lacks differentiation and detail.

There has been a productive recruitment campaign to support the expansion of the school. Recruitment and checking of prospective staff is systematic and in line with the school's policy. There is a consistent approach to contacting referees and verifying references. Details of the verification outcome are recorded, dated and signed. Any emergent issues are explored and documented, which gives an added layer of safety to the recruitment checks. This approach ensures that staff are suitable for their roles.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The leadership and management of the school are key strengths. The senior leadership team members work extremely well together to ensure that the residential provision is integral to the school. The management structure ensures that each element of the residential provision has an accountable manager. The managers are hard-working, dedicated and passionate about their roles. They work collaboratively to provide high-quality care.

The skilled and experienced staff team provides bespoke care for young people. The staff are genuinely dedicated to helping young people to overcome barriers and benefit from the residential experience. This contributes to the excellent progress that young people make.

The staff embrace a cohesive team spirit. They are all trained to level 3, or are working towards this qualification. There are clear and effective arrangements for staff development and training in respect of the protection and care of children. Staff receive regular supervision and support. Records show that staff have regular formal meetings which identify targets and feed into annual appraisals. Staff say that they feel supported, well managed and happy in their roles.

The senior leadership team members focus their skill and energy exceptionally well in order to drive continuous improvement. Ambitious development plans are research based and fully consider the needs of the young people. These plans have resulted in building expansion, which includes a new sixth form and the high-quality refurbishment of the residential flats. This has provided further education choices for young people who could have found it difficult to integrate into other provisions.

External monitoring systems are well established. The records show that there are visits from the governing body and the local authority every month. Internal monitoring is routinely completed by the head of care, who has provided a review against the national minimum standards. This review is generalised, lacks detail and could result in aspects of practice that do not fully evidence how the school meets the national minimum

standards.

All parents who were spoken with during the inspection were very happy with the school. Parent View responses show that 100% of parents would recommend the school to others. Feedback is unequivocally positive. One parent said, 'I have no concerns at all, they are brilliant.' Parents know who to contact with concerns and say that communication with the school is very good. External professionals provide positive feedback about the way in which the school works with them in order to support individuals. One member of the governing board said, 'It's a lovely school I am very proud to be part of it; the staff work so well together.'

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's 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 their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	121254
Social care unique reference number	SC042606
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	28
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	3 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Young
Date of previous boarding inspection	07/12/2015
Telephone number	01263 578144
Email address	office@sidestrandhall.norfolk.sch.uk

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