

Sidestrand Hall School

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

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special 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 children and young people aged between seven and 19 who have complex needs. The large grounds include woodland and gardens. There are 172 pupils on roll. A maximum of 30 children and young people can board for up to four nights from Monday to Friday.

The residential provision comprises of flats situated in the main school building and Clement Lodge, which provides accommodation for up to six pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The total number of residential pupils is currently 27.

A welfare-only inspection took place in January 2016.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 21 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children and young people make progress in all areas of their development. They enjoy their stays in the residential provision immensely.
- The residential provision works cohesively with the school to support the children's and young people's academic achievements and remove any barriers to learning and socialisation.
- The children and young people benefit from wide-ranging activities and ample choices about how they spend their time.
- The fostering and support of independent life skills are extremely good.
- There is an established partnership with parents and professionals. The feedback is unanimously positive.
- The staff are experienced and professional practitioners. They are genuine in their care of the children and exceptionally skilled in their approach.
- The accommodation continues to undergo refurbishment to a high standard.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- A child protection concern was not immediately reported to the correct agencies.
- The behaviour management records require improvement.
- The fire drills lack detail and evaluation.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12.6 A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the record of fire drills differentiates between discussions and evacuation, and provides details and evaluation that inform personal emergency evacuation plans.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The school has enhanced and supported the children's and young people's development, with successful outcomes in many areas. However, a serious shortfall in the protection of the children and young people has been identified. This was a reporting failure that has been reflected on by the head of care to ensure that lessons are learned and future practice is informed. Despite this, the children and young people have highly positive experiences and outcomes.

The children and young people who use the residential provision absolutely thrive; they benefit enormously from their experiences. The children and young people and the parents spoken to highlighted the enjoyment factor in their feedback. The positive impact is evident and far reaching. The children and young people become more confident, improve their behaviour and gain a wealth of life skills.

The good rapport between the children and young people and the staff is evident. The children and young people are relaxed and at ease with the staff. The staff provide excellent role models. Respectful communication is maintained at all times, building positive relationships that are central to the children's and young people's positive achievements. The staff provide security, stability and consistent support to the children and young people while they are away from home.

There is an abundance of evidence to show the significant support that the staff provide to the children and young people who are unable to communicate verbally. The staff use symbols, picture exchanges systems (PECS) and sign along. Social stories prepare the children and young people for daily routines and any changes to these. The development of individual communication systems has reduced the children's and young people's anxieties. This reduction in anxiety has led to less behavioural incidents and an improvement in the quality of experiences in the residential provision.

The children's and young people's trust in the staff means that they confidently express their concerns and views to them. The staff use PECS and colourful feedback forms with simplified pictorial prompts to seek the children's and young people's views about the school. The staff take every opportunity to seek the opinions of the children and young people and their parents using a range of formats that ensure equal participation.

The residential provision fully supports and sustains the children's and young people's academic progress. Comparatively, the residential pupils are making good progress in their core subjects and towards their personal targets. There is an educational focus in the residential provision. The staff assist with homework, support reading targets and play games that support the children's and young people's numeracy and literacy skills. The structure and routine of the provision are linked to improved behaviour in school and readiness to learn.

The staff support the children and young people to learn many new life skills, including shopping, food preparation and household chores. The staff members' patience is limitless. They are highly skilled at supporting the children and young people. The staff allow ample time to enable the children and young people to build on existing skills. This tailored support helps them to accomplish many personal achievements that build their self-worth and confidence in their own abilities. One parent said, 'He [my child] has benefited enormously from [the] residential [provision]. He has improved his independence and social skills to a great extent.' Another parent said that her child had learned how to manage personal hygiene, enjoyed her own space and was able to shop independently as a result of staying at the school.

The staff provide holistic care. They work with a range of professionals to provide psychological help for children and young people who have had traumatic experiences. One external professional described seeing the staff with the children and young people as, 'Great interactions and amazing staff. Some of the best who I have ever worked with. They seek advice, listen and make my job much easier.' The staff proactively monitor health and dietary concerns. Food intolerance, allergies and medication changes are all considered with parents and professionals. This has brought about dietary changes for children and young people that have a positive impact on their quality of life. A social worker summarised, 'There is nothing they [the staff] won't do. They have built an improved health routine and we are pleased with the child's progress.'

The evening menus are compiled with the children and young people. This teaches them about healthy food combinations and nutrition. Mealtimes are social occasions where the children and young people and the staff sit around the table. The children learn about table etiquette and taking turns. Serving dishes at the table encourage the children to try new foods. Eating food from a varied menu together has enabled some of the children and young people to expand their diets and reduce their anxieties about certain food groups.

The children and young people access a wide range of activities. They play board games, ball games and enjoy soft play on-site. The children and young people develop their ideas and specific interests. One child is building a bowling alley in the garden. The child has undertaken fundraising and designed a project with the support of his parents and the staff. The children and young people spoke with enthusiasm about some of the activities that they participate in. Parents spoken to said that their children love the range and choice of activities. The children and young people are purposefully engaged in structured time after school. The combination of activities and structure fosters their interests, provides routine and builds their social skills.

The school is situated in a rural coastal location. A large house set back from the road with established gardens provides spacious accommodation that is safe and contained. The accommodation supports communal living and affords ample privacy.

The gardens have sea views, established woods and outdoor play resources such as cycles and a play bus. The children relish playing outside in the fresh air, where they benefit from physical exercise.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The school's designated safeguarding lead manages allegations in liaison with the designated officer. Information in regard to concerns about adults is shared without delay and communications are managed well. This sharing of information means that vulnerable children are effectively safeguarded. However, the reporting of safeguarding concerns and disclosures is different, and the inspection highlighted errors. When safeguarding concerns are reported to the local authority, the outcome is not always followed up effectively for every child and young person. Detailed information is recorded but the failure to follow through and chase responses does not consistently provide the children and young people with the safeguards that they need.

A serious child protection concern was not reported in accordance with the safeguarding policy or the staff conduct guide. The head of care recognises that this concern was classified wrongly. It was not reported to the appropriate authorities until the following day, after the child had gone home, because the school had asked the parent to report it. There was no immediate consultation with other agencies. The delay failed to consider the potential impact on the child.

Risks are managed effectively. The staff have a new risk assessment template that they are using to calculate the level of risk to individuals. These assessments are completed for all the children. However, the calculation is unclear and requires further work to enable the staff to use it effectively. This has not been raised as a shortfall as the actual risks were identified and currently there is no impact on the children's and young people's safety.

Behaviour management plans are current and support the staff to identify triggers of behavioural incidents. The staff team is extremely consistent in its approach. The staff know the children and young people well. Parents identify a clear improvement in their children's behaviour while at the school. Sanctions are rarely used, with just one in the last year. This was not recorded until six days afterwards. This delay fails to meet required timescales. The description of the behaviour leading to the event fails to capture the impact of the behaviour on the staff member and the other children. The information recorded does not read as a proportionate response. Although the daily logs include the detail, the depth of the monitoring carried out by the head of care, who had signed this record off, is unclear. This could lead to inconsistencies in the use of behavioural consequences.

Positive behaviour management is a strength. The staff do not use physical interventions with the children and young people. The staff are trained in restraint. However, there have been no incidents since the last inspection. The staff are

patient, calm and highly skilled at using de-escalation techniques. They encourage the children and young people to express how they feel, and reinforce consistent boundaries. This approach helps the children and young people to feel emotionally contained and safe.

The children and young people in the school are not currently at risk of child sexual exploitation. They receive support to use the internet safely and are guided about the dangers of exchanging information on social media. There has been one short-duration incident in which a child has been missing and left the school quickly by climbing two gates. The staff lost sight of the child and immediately instigated the missing from home protocols. The responses to this incident were reflective and show that lessons have been learned. Changes have been made to practice, including placing a member of staff on call to drive after a child or young person if they go missing, and better communication systems for the staff during busy periods. These actions reduce the likelihood of future incidents of a child or young person leaving the school without the staff.

The children and young people are involved in regular fire drills, both with and without the alarm sounding. The records clearly state the date and who was involved in the drill. However, the times of these drills are not routinely included and there is no evaluation as to how each child and young person responds to this process. This lack of evaluation does not demonstrate if each child and young person requires an individual personal emergency evacuation plan, and if these are not required, the reasons for this. This shortfall does not demonstrate that all of the children and young people are able to safely leave the building in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The residential provision is managed by an established head of care, a residential manager and a deputy manager. They work closely with the senior leadership team of the school. This provides strong day-to-day management of the residential flats and The Lodge. The head of care is qualified to level 4. Clear lines of management accountability are defined. There is an on-call system for incidents and a manager or deputy manager on duty at all times. This system ensures that incidents are handled by experienced staff.

The staff all know the children and young people well. The staff ensure that the data systems capture the children's and young people's progress. Data collected in respect of core subject levels shows that there is an added value to the children and young people who use the residential provision.

The established staff team is an absolute strength of the school. High-calibre, skilled staff provide excellent role models. They are qualified, access relevant training and enjoy working with the children and young people. The staff morale is good. The staff work cooperatively, enjoying the shared ownership of working as a team. The numbers of staff on duty provide good supervision levels to the children and young people. Contingency staff, who are known to the children and young people, are

available. This provides good continuity of care.

The staff are supported and guided through regular supervision with a line manager. Supervision is reflective and addresses practice issues. Reflection and discussion help the staff to learn from incidents and make changes to practice. This supports continuous improvement and adaptations that meet the children's and young people's ever-changing needs. The head of care and headteacher are aware of areas to improve, and use a development plan to target these areas. There continue to be significant changes to the standard and quality of the accommodation. New windows, carpets and paint work have resulted in a comfortable and homely environment. Plans are ambitious. The refurbishment work continues, showing a willingness and drive to improve.

One of the points for improvement from the last inspection has been met. The monitoring has improved significantly. A review against the national minimum standards has been carried out. The monitoring visits are carried out regularly and include coverage and review of all incidents, attendance and the accommodation. These are increasingly more detailed and evaluative, showing improvement. The previous point for improvement in regard to the fire drills and detail of recording has not been met.

Feedback from parents and professionals is consistently good, and many rate the school highly. Feedback in terms of building the children's and young people's independence and life skills, communication with parents, enjoyment and all-round progress is particularly good. Parent View responses are positive. One parent said, 'We have lived in three countries. This is by far the best school and second to none.' Surveys capture good feedback from the staff and the parents. The feedback demonstrates that staff take pride in their roles and share the ethos and the objectives of the residential provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC042606

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Inspectors

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