

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.

There are 184 pupils on roll. The total number of residential pupils is currently 27. Residential pupils can board between Monday and Friday for up to four nights.

The residential provision comprises three units, a flat situated in the main school building and Clement Lodge, which provides accommodation for children who have autism spectrum disorder.

A welfare-only inspection took place in September 2018.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 September 2019

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	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 25 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Confident, aspirational managers inspire a skilful and knowledgeable staff team to provide high-quality care and support for the children.

The staff know the children well. They are sensitive to their needs and past experiences. The children benefit from strong relationships with a stable, experienced and reflective staff team. The children frequently used the word 'kind' to describe the staff.

Children build valuable independence skills. They learn to cook, ride bikes and carry out household tasks. These accomplishments are recognised by the children, their parents, the staff and professionals.

The children develop better ways to manage their feelings and behaviours. One child said, 'Back in the day, I used to be pretty horrible and since staying here I have calmed down.' Other children reinforced this, in recognition of their own personal growth.

There have been significant improvements to the accommodation. The children have a new shower and bathrooms. The hallways have been painted and the building has an increasingly pleasant feel.

The manager has reviewed the administration of medication. The staff who administer medication have had their competency assessed. The assessments help make the medication systems efficient and safe.

Children said that they were given a warm welcome when they first arrived at the residential school. The staff provide careful and individualised planning to ensure that children who are leaving the school have a smooth transition.

The staff seek the views of the children through a number of consultation activities. This has resulted in a large amount of feedback being gathered. However, while individual actions have taken place in response to individual comments, this feedback has yet to be collated, analysed or evaluated. Therefore, this has not yet informed the manager's understanding of the service.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children consistently reported that they feel safe. The staff know the children well and are alert to potential indicators of distress, unease or fear that the children show.

The children can identify staff that they can share their concerns or worries with. They have strong relationships with the staff. The managers are visible and available to the children, giving them an extensive support structure.

The designated safeguarding lead is experienced and trained. He is supported by trained deputy staff. The staff know the safeguarding leads and are confident in how to raise or escalate any concerns.

The staff manage behaviour positively through their knowledge of the children and without the use of physical restraint. Bullying is not an issue. Children's behaviour can annoy other children. However, the staff intervene, and the children can talk to staff if they are worried.

The staff are not risk-averse. They use creative and inclusive approaches, enabling children to participate in individualised activities. These activities can be risky but provide significant enjoyment and opportunities for the children to learn.

Risk assessments are created for children with identified needs, including sexually harmful behaviour. These assessments are clear and provide enough information for the staff to manage children's risks. However, the staff have not received training in sexualised behaviour. Therefore, this behaviour has not been fully explored, despite it being an emerging concern.

One safeguarding concern led to a child being temporarily excluded. The school rarely uses exclusion. In this instance, it was unclear whether the exclusion was the most appropriate course of action given the contextual risks to the child outside of the school.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Management arrangements have significantly strengthened since the last inspection. A new manager has been appointed in the main house. The manager presents with confidence, authority and knowledge. The manager of Clement Lodge has significant experience and knowledge. He demonstrates confident, assertive, child-focused practice. They are both managed by a head of care who is reflective, committed and highly respected by other professionals. Combined, the management team inspires staff and is ambitious for the children.

Managers lead by example and work directly with the children. The reflective nature of the head of care permeates through the service. The staff said that they are extremely well supported. The managers ensure that the staff have their practice appraised annually. The staff receive regular supervisions and describe management support as excellent. Consequently, staff turnover is minimal, meaning children are receiving care from a consistent and content staff team.

Managers are enthusiastic and engaging. They have very high expectations of the service. They are focused and keen to improve outcomes for the children. Recent improvements include innovative ideas, such as assessing the competency of staff who provide personal care.

Leaders and managers have a strong knowledge of the children in their care. They understand the child's journey and the positive difference the residential service makes to the children's lives.

Individual placement plans carefully consider diversity and promotion of inclusion for each child.

Feedback from families is exceptional. Comments included:

- 'It is unbelievable how much he has come on since going to residential school.'
- 'He absolutely adores going. It gives him a level of independence that he does not get otherwise.'
- 'Before, he would never leave me. It has given him the confidence to try new things. I am overwhelmed at how good it is and how well it has worked.'

Feedback from professionals is strong. Comments included:

- 'There is really good communication. The staff always attend meetings. They will even attend during school holidays when they are not working.'
- 'They are fantastic. I cannot fault them. They are engaging. They always put the children first. They always accommodate me. If there are any concerns, they are always available to us.'
- 'The school is an excellent example of how to provide the best homely, child-centred experience for children whilst being highly skilled in autism.'

Finally, feedback from children is also excellent. Comments included:

- 'On your boarding journey, you can feel yourself getting less and less angry every day because of the support the staff give you.'
- 'They always want to try and make sure everything is happy and we are safe. They are really good and kind.'
- 'I would rate the service 10 out of 10.'

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that when any action is taken to exclude a child, that this is the most appropriate course of action given any contextual risks to the child outside of the school. Ensure that records include how the risks inside and outside of school have been taken into account.
- Ensure that staff receive training in supporting children with sexualised behaviour.
- Ensure that the feedback about the quality of the service is collated, analysed and evaluated in order to improve the service.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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

Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Young

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector



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