

# 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 with complex needs.

There are 187 pupils on roll. The total number of residential pupils is currently 23. Residential pupils can board between Monday and Friday for up to four nights.

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

The head of boarding has been in post for 11 years and has a relevant qualification.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 1 to 3 February 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 24 September 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children are happy at this school. They are at the very heart of staff's practice. Children have trusted relationships with staff. Staff know the children well and have a good rapport with them. This helps children to feel at ease when staying away from home.

Children in residence have a voice. Staff use a variety of ways to obtain children's wishes and feelings, such as children's meetings, questionnaires and the encouragement of letter writing to make requests directly to the manager. Staff act on the children's wishes and feelings. This improves the children's experience of care.

School attendance for children who stay in residence is good. Statistics show that the children have made progress in reading, writing and computer skills. For some children, there have been impressive improvements in their academic progress.

Children have made progress in developing their independence skills, such as learning to do their own washing and making their beds, and they have improved their personal care. Children's life skills improve because of being in residence.

Staff understand the importance of individual communication methods. They use a combination of symbols and words to communicate to children in their preferred style. Staff make communication boards and activity planners accessible to children. Pictures are used to help children make choices. Therefore, children feel listened to and that their voices are heard.

Staff acknowledge children's good behaviour to good effect. Children understand how to gain rewards. This encourages positive behaviour and creates an environment in which settled behaviour is the norm.

Children take part in a range of activities such as cooking, using the gym, and playing board games and outdoor games. Community-based activities have been limited due to COVID-19 restrictions and the internal restrictions that the school has placed on itself. Opportunities for children to gain experience in a variety of social settings outside of the school have also been limited.

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

There have been two occasions when the designated safeguarding lead at the school has failed to refer safeguarding concerns in line with the school's policy. Failure to follow safeguarding procedures puts children at risk of harm and prevents children from receiving the services and support they require. These shortfalls were identified at the inspection. In light of these shortfalls, the headteacher intends to make revisions to improve the monitoring of safeguarding concerns.

In contrast, referrals to the local authority designated officer (LADO) are made promptly. The designated safeguarding leads at the school adhere to advice and guidance provided by the LADO. This ensures that, when appropriate, internal investigations are carried out and staff and children are safeguarded during any period of investigation. Following investigations, staff receive clear guidance on preferred practices and changes that they need to make to ensure that they are adhering to the school's safeguarding policy.

Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and of whistle-blowing procedures. Staff have good awareness that, collectively, low-level concerns can combine to create more significant causes for concern. Staff have a good awareness of the importance of recording low-level concerns.

Staff are aware of risk management plans for children even if they do not directly work with these children. This demonstrates good leadership and management regarding the sharing of important information. Risk-reduction plans are good; they refer to appropriate control measures to reduce risk. As a result, children's safety is increased. Children receive guidance from staff that enables them to increase their own understanding about how to keep themselves safe.

Staff recognise signs of peer-on-peer abuse and remain vigilant to the potential that it could take place. They demonstrate professional curiosity by ensuring that low-level concerns are sufficiently investigated.

Children do not go missing from the school and the use of restraint is not required in residence. Staff use alternative means to guide behaviour and respond effectively to behaviours that challenge. Staff are skilled at de-escalation and use the strength of their relationships with the children to encourage preferred behaviours.

Staff are experienced and competent in the dispensation of medication. They undertake competency checks twice a year. As a result, medication errors do not occur.

Safer recruitment checks are embedded and help to ensure that unsuitable people do not work at the school.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The impact of COVID-19 has clearly affected education attendance levels, children's progress and staff absence. However, the negative impact of COVID-19 has been minimised by good leadership and planning to support the children who need it most. Leaders and managers swiftly arranged for virtual learning to be accessible to children at the start of the pandemic. Staff worked effectively with families to ensure that children returned to school and residence when it was safe to do so.

Managers have a visible presence in residence which enables them to readily monitor staff practice. Good monitoring systems are in place to ensure that children's records are up to date and that children are getting the services and level of care that they need.

Managers have met the three recommendations that were made at the last inspection. These related to staff training, responding to feedback to improve the service available to children and ensuring that any exclusion of a child appropriately considers the risks placed on the child if not at school. The progress made with all three recommendations has led to improvements in staff's skills and understanding, and improvements in the care that children receive.

Staff say that they feel well supported by managers. Managers make themselves available to staff for support and advice. As managers work on shift, they act as positive role models to the staff and establish trusted relationships with the children.

External and internal monitoring arrangements are good. The governing body has good oversight of operational aspects related to residence. Governors spend time with children and an independent listener makes regular visits to residence. This enables children to have opportunities to talk to an independent person about any concerns that they may have.

Managers extend their support to children beyond residence. Managers have provided support in the children's homes. They provided additional support outside of school hours for a young person with high levels of need. Some children remain in touch with residential staff after they have left the school. This demonstrates the strength of relationships that children establish with staff.

A consistent staff team provides stability and good-quality care to the children. Training and induction activities are good. However, leaders and managers have failed to provide staff with training to support children with ligature risks.

The complaints policy is not clear or easy to follow. Complaints are only accepted in a written format. This could be a barrier to enabling people to feel able to raise a complaint.

Overall, the school's policies are subject to regular review. However, three policies have not been reviewed since 2018. Outdated policies may fail to comply with changing legislation and guidance.

## **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:

- 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. In particular, ensure that safeguarding practice aligns with the school's safeguarding policy. (NMS 11.1)
- The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements. In particular, ensure that the complaints policy is clear and easy to follow and that the format for submitting complaints does not prevent people from doing so. (NMS 18.1)
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. In particular, ensure that staff are trained in ligature removal. (NMS 19.1)

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that children experience community-based activities.
- The registered person should ensure that policies are reviewed in a reasonable time frame.

## **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:** Sarah Young

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01263 578144

**Email address:** [office@sidestrandhall.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@sidestrandhall.norfolk.sch.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022