

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 with complex needs.

There are 193 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 houses, a flat situated in the main school building and Clement Lodge, which provides accommodation for children with autism.

There are two residential managers who have been in post since February 2021. One residential manager has a relevant qualification.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 November 2024

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected 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: 7 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They have made close friendships and enjoy each other's company. There have been no incidents of bullying. One child said, 'The best thing is I get to hang out with my best friends.' A small staff team builds trusting relationships with children, encouraging them to try new things and develop their social skills. Children are increasing in confidence and self-esteem as a result.

Children benefit from a range of activities and new experiences. Staff encourage children to plan their evenings. Children enjoy board games, playing pool, spending time on the beach, visiting animal parks and trampolining. All the children contribute to the shopping, cooking and eating of a shared meal with staff every evening.

Staff understand the importance of children feeling included in the local community. Children regularly volunteer at a home for older people. Staff and children attended a local silent disco evening together. Activities are also organised that bring the local community into the school. For example, an emergency services day was organised in the school grounds. This provided the opportunity for children to have fun and build a sense of belonging.

Staff prepare children for adulthood effectively. Staff consistently complete an independence programme with children which helps them to learn new skills and gain qualifications at the same time. One parent said, '[Name of child] has become more independent at home as a result of boarding.' All children were offered the opportunity to become a member of the student council. Children voted for each other until a candidate was chosen. As a result, children have learned responsibility and negotiation and have had the opportunity to shape the future of the school.

Staff ensure that children attend school regularly. The residential provision is viewed as part of the school. Children benefit from a seamless approach between care and education staff. For example, residential staff tailor educational targets to ensure that children consistently work towards their education and independence aims.

A reward-based system is in place, which children enjoy. They enjoy the benefits they can achieve from this, such as a later bedtime and feeling proud of their achievements.

Children know who the independent listener is, and they have met with them to share their views. Detailed reports are shared with the home's managers and senior leaders, who act without delay when recommendations are made.

The accommodation is well furnished and spacious. The large communal areas allow the children to spend time together in a comfortable and homely environment.

However, despite regular health and safety checks, managers had not identified that a number of fire doors did not close fully. This was rectified during the inspection.

Children's health needs are well understood and monitored. Staff work with wider professionals to ensure that any concerns about children's health are addressed. However, when a medication dose was missed, managers did not follow the school's medication policy. While no harm came to the child, managers did not gain medical advice.

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

Safeguarding systems work well. Meetings between the designated safeguarding lead and the senior leadership team take place regularly. These meetings offer reflective discussions for all causes of concern and safeguarding matters. This sharing of information and ideas means that safeguarding is monitored and acted on without delay effectively.

Staff are confident in identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns. They are supported in their roles with comprehensive policies and procedures. Safeguarding training for staff is prioritised and includes an emphasis on recognising the increased vulnerabilities of disabled children. Staff have a good understanding of these vulnerabilities, and this helps them to keep children safe.

Staff are good role models for children, and they encourage positive behaviour. The warm and nurturing relationships between staff and children mean there have been no physical interventions. Staff support children well to manage their own behaviour. Incidents tend to be low level, and staff only create behaviour plans if they are required.

Risk assessments are detailed and tailored to each child or activity. Managers review the plans regularly to make certain that children remain safe. Staff regularly talk with children about any vulnerabilities they may face. One child spoke to staff about a particular issue, and together they talked about strategies to help.

Children enjoy accessing the internet on a variety of devices. Staff monitor what the children access and talk with them about being safe online. Children can bring mobile phones into the residential provision, but usage is closely monitored.

Since the last inspection, there has been one incident of a child being missing. When staff realised, they acted without delay and followed the school's missing protocol. When the child was found, staff welcomed them back. The managers were reflective about this incident and made immediate changes to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for children and are determined to help children become independent and reach their full potential.

Internal and external monitoring is good. Governors who are responsible for oversight of the residential provision are effective in their roles. They are knowledgeable and trained. They visit the home regularly and produce reports following their visits. The reports include conversations with children to gather their views about their care. Any recommendations feed into the manager's detailed development plan, which is continually reviewed and revised.

An independent person visits the school every half term to monitor the effectiveness of the residential provision. They provide informative reports that support leaders and managers to continually improve the provision. Leaders are committed to the independent scrutiny.

Staff benefit from regular reflective supervision. This provides staff with the opportunity to reflect along with clear guidance and professional development. If staff have a special interest, managers source training. One member of staff has been trained to deliver a specific therapy that benefits children's emotional well-being. Staff are confident in the support that they receive and the responsiveness of leaders.

Staff are trained to carry out their roles in relation to meeting the children's individual needs. All staff complete training that enhances their skills and practice. Staff are either qualified or working towards the relevant childcare qualification in timescales.

Since the last inspection, no staff have left, and one new staff member joined. Safer recruitment processes are followed. The dedicated staff team provides consistency for children, and staff know the children well. Residential and school staff meet twice a day to share information about children. This ensures that there is continuity of care and safety.

The residential managers and deputy managers are highly committed and dedicated. They work in partnership with the headteacher, the independent visitor, governors, parents and children to continually improve the opportunities and experiences for children. However, only one residential manager has the appropriate management qualification.

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 standard for residential special schools:

- The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who have medical conditions and/or are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of prescription and non-prescription medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Royal College of Nursing. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 12.6)

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that all fire doors are regularly checked to ensure that they fully close.
- School leaders should ensure that staff with management responsibilities undertake appropriate training in the management and practice of residential care.

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/teacher in charge: Shelley Taylor

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Mandy Start, Social Care Inspector
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