

# 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 199 pupils on roll. The total number of residential pupils is currently 26. Residential pupils can board between Monday and Friday for up to 4 nights.

The residential provision comprises 3 houses and a flat in the main school building and Clement Lodge.

There are 2 residential managers who have been in post since February 2021.

### **Inspection dates: 9 to 11 February 2026**

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 12 November 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children receive excellent care delivered by motivated, knowledgeable, calm and skilled staff. Exceptional managers model high-quality practice. Senior staff are enabled to develop innovative and inclusive approaches to children's care and support.

Children thoroughly enjoy their stays in residential. They have positive relationships with the staff and make excellent progress with independence, peer relationships, and experiences of communal living. Children are proud of their progress and speak with excitement about all the things they have achieved.

Children benefit from attending the residential provision in a myriad of ways. They participate in an exciting, innovative range of activities. They are enabled to experience acceptance and feel highly valued. Their opinions matter and are integral to shaping the residential experience. Children participate in an education programme tailored to their individual needs, and the associated activities are highly enjoyable and informative.

There is an excellent structure to the evenings in the residential provision, enabling children who require a predictable routine to thrive. Evenings include physical activities, off-site trips, board games, quizzes and communal meals. Children learn about turn-taking and mealtime etiquette and can let off physical energy.

Children speak with enthusiasm and excitement about their range of experiences. For example, one child set up a quiz night, and children have held concerts and attended a 1950s-themed evening with home-made vintage cars, dancing and a diner. Activities are intrinsically linked to the areas children are studying in school. For example, the history club has focused on the same period children were exploring in lessons.

Children's views and ideas are integral to their boarding experience. They are empowered to contribute ideas and activities and asked to feed back on their specific experiences. For example, several clubs that take place each week have been initiated by the children. Two children represent the residential provision on the school council. Children's views are routinely included in plans and documents.

Staff model tolerance and good behaviour. During the inspection, children were sometimes excited and loud, and then at other times, they were quiet and cautious. Staff are consistently alert to the children's needs and are calm and responsive. Children receive encouragement when they need it. Boisterous behaviour does not cross over to problematic behaviour because of the careful interventions and oversight of staff who know the children well.

Staff have achieved qualifications in research-informed therapeutic approaches. These are used to support the children.

Staff have created responsive, inclusive activities in partnership with children and the local community. For example, children have begun to form pen-pal relationships with residents at a home for older people.

Moves into and out of the residential provision are well planned and bespoke. For example, one child, who was particularly anxious about starting to board, was sent a 'golden ticket' to acknowledge her love of films and encourage her to attend. A parent said, 'My son struggled to adapt to the school when he first attended, but with further assistance and adaptation, he has now settled well.' Children who no longer require boarding due to their age or stage of development receive a phased end to staying in the residential provision. Parents, carers and children receive support when the nights reduce.

Leaders and managers are highly alert to emerging issues, and they research them. For example, residential managers have researched risks relating to artificial intelligence, and they have made changes to some practices and scheduled training for staff.

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

Children feel safe. They can identify a range of staff who they say they can share any concerns with. Strong relationships between children and staff increase the potential for this to take place. Information about the independent people who visit the residential provision is displayed throughout, and children are provided with worksheets to help them understand the visitors' roles.

When leaders and managers conclude that a risk management plan is needed, this is produced. The plans offer appropriate guidance to staff and are generally clear.

Staff's knowledge of the children helps them support them without the need to physically intervene. Staff are trained in de-escalation strategies and physical interventions but have not had to use them. Leaders have recognised the risk of having staff who have not used interventions, and they have introduced refreshers and reminders during handover meetings to reduce this.

Staff reward positive behaviour. They understand what motivates individual children. These motivators are highlighted in plans that guide staff. The overall approach means that children's behaviour is consistently good. This helps enable children to participate in a range of boisterous activities that are personally rewarding and engaging.

Leaders and managers have developed relationships with local emergency services, including the police and coastguard. This contributed to an emergency services day, when a wide range of emergency services attended the school. It has also enabled

staff to use their relationship with the police to try to steer children away from potential criminalisation.

No new staff have been recruited. Leaders, managers and governors have received safe recruitment training.

Leaders and managers understand the process for managing low-level concerns. When concerns arise that could potentially escalate beyond a low level, they are reported to the appropriate agencies.

When safeguarding concerns are raised about children, safeguarding leads take prompt and effective action. This includes respectfully challenging other agencies to help ensure that children's safety is prioritised.

Leaders are alert to broader factors that significantly impact the children's safety and experiences, such as poverty. They have signposted families to potential sources of support and have provided emergency funds on occasions to purchase essential items.

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

The provision is led by two experienced, skilled and committed managers. Their approaches complement one another, and they work very well together. They inspire considerable confidence in the staff, other leaders, external professionals, children and families.

There is a clear culture of high expectations throughout the provision, embodied by staff, leaders and managers. Managers lead by example; they are visible and well known to staff and children alike. Strong management has enabled the quality of the service to be sustained, and in some areas improved, despite unsettling uncertainty regarding redevelopment of the provision.

Staff are proud of their roles and the progress children make. They can easily give examples of how boarding benefits children and the added value this provides.

Leaders and managers, including governors, use a range of sources of evidence to help them understand the provision. As a result, they know the strengths and areas for development well. This contributes to a culture of continuous improvement. Leaders are forward-looking and have exciting plans in place to further develop the provision.

Staff feel very well supported. There is high morale and an exceptionally low turnover, with no staff leaving since the last inspection. Staff benefit from regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals. Constructive conversations take place during supervision sessions to help guide and develop staff.

There are excellent relationships between the residential provision and external agencies. These relationships and their calm confidence help leaders and managers to respectfully challenge other agencies when there are questions to be asked about agencies' actions. The approach of leaders and managers enables professional discussions and respectful challenges to take place. This helps children to be safer and families to get the support they need.

Leaders and managers maintain an excellent overview of staff training. This helps ensure that staff are up to date with the training they need. Leaders support and encourage staff to develop in their careers.

Residential and education staff across all levels work together in various highly effective ways. Linked residential staff meet with educational peers to consider individual children. The school curriculum is considered when planning clubs and activities for children.

Staff, leaders and managers strive to create an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for children. Information about safe spaces and specific staff who can offer support for children with specific needs is prominently displayed. When staff have requested training in areas linked to diversity, it has been provided.

## **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**

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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