

# Ramsden Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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| <b>Inspector</b>               | Pat Stanton       |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key               |

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| <b>Head / Principal</b>        | Essex County Council  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 5 February 2008   |

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Outstanding:  | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good:         | this aspect of the provision is strong                        |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound                         |
| Inadequate:   | this aspect of the provision is not good enough               |

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Ramsden Hall School is currently on two sites, one in Billericay and one in Colchester. They are about 31 miles apart. There is a single governing body and one Head Teacher for both sites, which are owned and managed by Essex County Council. The school offers day provision and residential accommodation on both sites from Monday to Friday during term-time to boys who have a Statement of Educational Need and may have emotional and behavioural difficulties that significantly affect their schooling. The school aims to reintegrate pupils into their local communities and works closely with pupils' main carers to achieve this. Only rarely will boarding be thought appropriate for pupils younger than Year 7 and, whenever possible, it is gradually reduced as pupils move into their final years at the school. Ramsden Hall School at Billericay is a converted Victorian mansion standing in 14 acres. It provides residential, teaching and office accommodation. Boarding pupils are accommodated in four separate year groups. Bedroom accommodation consists of single and multi-occupancy and each year group has a lounge area. A sports hall, an outdoor swimming pool, additional classrooms and other recreational facilities are located in the grounds. Some staff live on site in separate accommodation. The school's extensive grounds are well used for outdoor pursuits. The school has a minibus and uses this for outings and activities off-site to access community leisure facilities. At the time of the inspection a new building programme is in progress to provide up-to-date teaching and studying facilities with the current sports hall as a hub. Ramsden Hall School on the Heath site at Colchester is situated in different surroundings, being in the suburbs of the town within a large residential estate. It was purpose-built in the 1960's. Classrooms are located in a single storey building. The adjoining residential accommodation, on two floors, are divided into a number of units, known as flats, where boarders have single bedrooms. The school has a football pitch, a basketball court and an indoor gymnasium.

### Summary

The inspection looked at the key Residential Special School National Minimum Standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. The inspection assessed the performance of the service against all the key National Minimum Standards (NMS) on a proportionate basis, as this is the second full key inspection at the school within seven months. The inspection took place over two days, one day spent at the Billericay site and the other at the Colchester site. Discussions were held with the Care Standards Manager, five staff and 11 children. A range of records were sampled and there was a tour of both sites. Feedback was given to both the Care Standards Manager and both care managers at inspection. The overall judgment is based on the outcomes of the standards inspected. The service provides a good standard of care in being healthy, staying safe, positive contribution and organisation, a satisfactory standard of care in economic well-being and an outstanding standard of care in enjoying and achieving. The most impressive aspect of the school is the enthusiastic atmosphere between children and staff. The service is very child focused and staff are enthusiastic in helping children achieve in both educational and social skills. It is evident children feel happy, safe and secure at the school with the staff who offer excellent individual support to help children feel valued. All children and staff are positive about the school and the atmosphere is very good.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection improvements have been made to meet the recommendations made at the previous report. All staff who have direct contact with children now have an understanding of the school's policies on how and in what way the 'Quiet Room' is used for and robust recruitment processes identify explanation for any gaps in applicants employment. This has helped enhance the level of care being provided and ensures better safeguarding for children.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children's individual health and intimate care needs are identified and assessed on admission. This is recorded in a clear easily accessible plan for each child detailing how specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the children are identified at the earliest opportunity and staff, in partnership with parents, actively seek out the services needed to address these. For example, involvement of specialist health workers such as children and mental health service (CAMHS). This means the children receive care that actively promotes their well-being and health. The school does not have facilities to care for children who become ill at school as parents take responsible for children's medical and health appointments; however the school transports children home and makes appropriate referrals to health professionals to ensure children receive appropriate care in emergencies. Children's medical needs are safely met. The school operates a well developed and effective medication policy and practice guidance. Children's files contain signed medical consent forms and completed medication charts. Selected staff have permission to provide first aid and prescribed medicines which is stored and administered appropriately by staff that have the appropriate skills. Senior staff regularly audit medication at the school to ensure children's well-being is protected and care staff are trained in a number of health related areas including medication and first aid. Children's well-being is supported at the Colchester site by a named medical practitioner however this service is no longer available at the Billericay site which may compromise the services continuity of care to children. Care staff are supported by a nominated medical officer who works at the school with other health professionals to make appropriate referrals when required. The local school nurse delivers appropriate health promotion and screening to children. This enables the school to meet the ever-changing health care needs of children in partnership with other professionals. Children are provided with a nutritious and varied diet ensuring their dietary needs are met. Staff have a good understanding of any special dietary needs and children have a good choice of food at meal time which are social occasions taken with staff. Communication between children and staff at meal times is relaxed and mutually positive and respectful. It is evident children enjoy dining with staff. Children are consulted about the menus and are very complimentary of the food at the school, confirming they have adequate amounts of food and are able to help themselves to healthy snacks and drinks throughout the day. The school has a healthy free tuck shop which children enjoy and fresh fruit and vegetables are part of the daily menu. Home baked cooking is provided by catering staff employed at the school. Children have access to fresh water at all times throughout the school and boarding house.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is mostly respected and the school has clear guidance on how to support children during personal and intimate care. Children's welfare is promoted because they are

clear about how to make a complaint. Children confirm they are very confident that their concerns are addressed and that they know about the complaints procedure. 'We can talk to anyone if we are unhappy; most of us go to our key worker if we need help'. Records confirm children's complaints are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. Children's welfare is protected by staff that receive ongoing training in child protection and demonstrate a good knowledge of policies and procedures. Staff are conversant with child protection procedures and make appropriate referrals demonstrating that staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Children are protected from bullying in the school and confirm this is not a real issue. Staff are proactive in their approach when dealing with incidents of bullying and use a personal abuse system which helps prevent any incidents occurring. Most children say they feel safe at school and are confident staff will address any issues of bullying to help keep them safe. Staff have a good understanding of the behavioural needs of children ensuring observations are recorded should there be any issues of concern. They go to great efforts to encourage children to think about the difference between right and wrong. Measures of support, control and consequences are excellent, based on establishing points system which promotes positive relationships and are designed to help children develop socially acceptable behaviour. The school rarely use restraint, however records demonstrate method of restraint are used only to effectively safeguard staff and children. Children are observed to know what is expected of them and are given every opportunity to become involved and motivated in setting and implementing the rules that govern their own behaviour. The consistent application of boundaries helps children develop a sense of trust and security whilst enabling them to understand how they can contribute to the operation of the school. Children confirm punishments are fair and that staff offer to help them make amends to prevent detention or loss of activity. Children live in a school that provides physical safety and security. Children's health and safety is protected by risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds, which are implemented successfully in practice. The school has thorough monitoring systems in place which ensures the ongoing safety of the children and staff. A fire risk assessment is in place with regular recorded monitoring of fire alarm bells, fire points and emergency lighting. Regular fire drills enable children to learn how to safely evacuate the building and examined files confirm the school operates a robust staff vetting procedure. Staff demonstrate proactive awareness of the need to safeguard children at school.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children's educational progress at the school is actively supported by the residential provision. Children receive a good level of support depending on ability and need. The school values, promotes and encourages all of their children to make the best of their educational opportunities. Children explore their potential and develop their personal interests through connections and staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner. Consequently, the care, learning opportunities and activities are good. Children receive superb individual support when they need it. All staff are observed to know each child in the school individually and children appear to be very relaxed and attached to staff. Considerable effort is put into combining social, education, care and health needs into a package which will not only meet identified needs but promote development. Children freely initiate interaction and seek help from the various staff members on duty. Their well-being is positively promoted as they are each allocated to a key person to ensure their continual care needs are met. Thus, children benefit from receiving a service from staff focused on their success, needs and achievements. Small school class sizes allow staff to offer individual support to any child who is in need of one to one support. The

school has an open designated room where children can go to chill out away from others, whilst supported by staff.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children's views and preferences are sought in one to one consultations with staff and the school council which meets regularly. Children confirm they are consulted about their care and the redecoration of the boarding house and school. Children are observed to be given choice with food and activities and have access to a suggestion box to help them have a say in the way the boarding house is run. Children are supported by clear and concise care plans which reflect individual needs and wishes. All care plans are regularly reviewed to make sure the ever changing needs of individuals are reflected. Staff help children to achieve goals in conjunction with their family to help them become independent and staff encourage children to help them develop their social and communication skills. Success is celebrated, raising children's confidence and self-esteem. Children are supported to have appropriate contact with friends and family. Children benefit from a phone card and private telephone and confirm they may contact parents in private without the permission of staff. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents. Significant time is taken to build relationships and share information with families, social workers and external agencies. This working partnership promotes children's welfare as they get consistent messages from both home and school. Children begin to learn about the wider world through sharing significant experiences, for example at mealtimes children spoke happily to staff about what it was like for the teacher when he was at school and why he decided to teach. Social events are used positively by staff to increase children's understanding and ability to appreciate each others' similarities and differences and to value the diversity of the wider world.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children live in accommodation on the Billericay site which is appropriately decorated furnished and maintained to a good standard; however children's accommodation on the Colchester site does not provide adequate well maintained accommodation for boarding pupils. The Billericay site is under going a programme of refurbishment for its boarding accommodation. At inspection the Billericay site was completing finishing touches to six new single bedrooms to give children a choice of a single or multiple occupancy bedrooms. The boarding accommodation is homely, clean and well ventilated. Children say they are happy with the standard of accommodation and each communal area, which is comfortably furnished with soft furnishings. Boarders are able to personalise the boarding house and enjoy recreational facilities to meet their needs. Boarders say that they enjoy sharing with other boarders and are happy with the sleeping provision. Both the Billericay and Colchester site have taken delivery of new bedroom furniture to help improve bedroom accommodation; these include new beds, bedside cabinets and bedside lamps. Bathing facilities at both sites are satisfactory and afford an adequate level of privacy when bathing, however the décor is sparse and along with both "quite rooms" in the main school. The Colchester site boarding house accommodation is clean and bright in some areas, but does not afford the same homely atmosphere as Billericay. The boarding houses are not appropriately decorated, furnished or maintained to a high standard and do not provide good quality facilities for boarders use. The communal areas and some bedrooms are not designed well as some bedrooms have only a space for a single bed and a chest of drawers. The majority

of bedrooms do not have seating, sufficient storage for clothes or a lockable or otherwise safe storage for boarder’s personal possessions. New furniture to be installed does however, include bedside cabinets with a lockable space for boarders use. All boarders bedroom doors have a fire safety glass panel covered from the outside by a curtain for privacy, however this does not provide privacy for the boarders whilst inside their rooms. Some areas and rooms are personalised by boarders and boarders say, "the boarding house is great", while another young person says, "the boarding house is scary". There are adequate facilities for young people to enjoy leisure activities with sufficient storage for materials plus sufficiently stocked communal kitchens in each boarding house.

### Organisation

The organisation is good.

The schools Statement of Purpose (SOP) covers matters as outlined in standard 1 of the Residential Special School NMS. Parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils and appropriate children's guide which is informative and child friendly. Children are looked after by staff that understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. They are kept safe and make good progress because staffing in the school is well organised and effectively managed. Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff and management. 50% of all staff now have National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in child care and at the time of inspection other staff are enrolled in NVQ Level 4 course. This welfare, safety and developmental progress is strengthened because staff receive a planned induction and training programme. As a result, they become sure of their job role and individual level of responsibility. Children benefit from this positive approach as they are cared for by motivated and suitably competent staff team who meet regularly and appear supportive of each other. Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of children currently receiving care. The organisation has established a pattern of management to monitor the service provided by the School Care Standard Manager who oversees all reporting procedures, supported by the Head of Care and Head Master.

### What must be done to secure future improvement?

#### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

#### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all children have bedrooms which contain seating, storage for clothes, lockable or otherwise safe storage for personal possessions (NMS 24.5)
- ensure there are facilities for children to study outside teaching time, which are quite, with sufficient seating and a desk or table space with adequate storage for books and study materials (NMS 24.9)



- ensure all parts of the residential accommodation and facilities for pupils out of class time are appropriately decorated and furnished to an acceptable standard which creates a pleasant and as far as practicable, a homely residential environment (NMS 24.2)
- ensure children wishes for privacy in bedrooms is respected (NMS 3.1.)
- ensure all there is arrangements for each child to receive medical treatment while accommodated at school (NMS 14.5).

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for residential special school

#### Being healthy

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

**Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

**Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

**Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

**Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

**Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**