

# Ramsden Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Kristen Judd
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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. There is a single governing body and one headteacher 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 special educational needs 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.

### **Summary**

This was an announced, key inspection. The quality of boarding is good with some outstanding aspects. There is good leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement to enhance the facilities of the school and the outcomes for boarders.

Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Staff endeavour to promote their safety and to support them to develop positive attitudes and behaviours. Young people have access to a good range of activities, and the close links between the school and residential provision promote the development of achievement for all boarders. The residential environment is appropriate although some areas are in need of redecoration and there are ongoing maintenance issues on one of the sites.

There is a relaxed, friendly atmosphere throughout the boarding houses. An area for development is to ensure there is consistency with the records maintained across the two sites.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The previous inspection raised issues in relation to the old site where the school was situated. Since the last inspection boarders have moved to the newly refurbished site. This site was not inspected on this occasion as boarders were temporarily using the main site due to ongoing maintenance issues. New actions have been raised in relation to this matter.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Staff are focused and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for healthcare for young people staying at this school. Staff are proactive and responsive to young people's emotional and health care needs. Young people's files contain clear information about their health needs, and the actions being taken to address these needs are well recorded. A child and adolescent mental health practitioner provides individual consultations to support young people and staff in a wide range of health and social needs. The systems in place ensure that all the required

health information is gathered from parents and shared with all agencies involved with the young people.

Staff receive training in first aid and there is always a qualified first aider on duty in the school. Appropriate records are kept of any accidents involving young people. The necessary parental consents for medical treatment, the administration of medicines and the use of first aid are held on young people's files. Training and guidance for young people on personal health care and safety is provided across the whole school. Staff demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of the health care needs of the young people in their care.

There are good arrangements in place for the receipt and storage of medicines in the school. The medication files are well organised and contain detailed medical and health information on the young people. The records of administration of prescribed medication were properly completed. Clear guidance is in place regarding the administration of medication; however, on one occasion the guidance was not followed with regard to the disposal of medication. Parents' consent for the school to administer medication is sought and recorded. Young people return home when unwell and parents confirm that there is good communication from the school regarding medical matters.

There is a good level of commitment to meeting the nutritional needs of the young people. The school provides good quantities of food, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Sufficient choice is offered, including hot and cold dishes, a salad bar and homemade soup as additional choices. Staff supervise mealtimes, where the young people are encouraged to try new foods. Drinking water is available and boarders have access to snacks, fresh fruit and drinks in the boarding houses. The staff and young people eat together at mealtimes and the focus is very much on encouraging a relaxed atmosphere and a positive social experience. Young people's comments about the food provided is positive and their observed enjoyment of mealtimes supports this.

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

The provision is good.

The use of any form of physical intervention in the residential unit is a last resort and incidents are few. Records are maintained and are monitored regularly by the head of care to ensure compliance with the school's procedures and to identify any patterns. Staff are trained in an accredited behaviour management technique. The behaviour management training is coordinated and organised by senior staff. Placement plans indicate that measures of control and disciplinary measures are based on developing positive relationships with young people in line with their individual needs. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done and they are encouraged to be a part of the decision-making process for any action to be taken, and their views are recorded. They know what is expected of them when they are boarding and consider the rules to be fair.

Sanctions or consequences of poor behaviour are not recorded as the school's approach to behaviour management is very much focused on encouraging the positive behaviours of the young people. However, staff say that on occasion young people may have 'time out' or a transport ban; this needs to be formally recorded as a consequence of behaviour. Achievement targets for developing individual skills and managing behaviours are set with the young people. Points are awarded to young people on a weekly basis which are accumulated to provide them with a reward at the end of the week. Young people speak positively about the benefits of

working towards their targets. The young people are presented with certificates in an assembly at the end of each week which recognises individual achievements. There are excellent methods of dealing with behaviour issues within the boarding house that are clearly documented.

The young people feel that their privacy is respected. They are able to make private telephone calls from the boarding house. The staff are good at ensuring the privacy of young people when bathing or attending to their personal needs. Information held about young people is stored securely and staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to keep information confidential. The staff handbook contains policy documents and information regarding practices and procedures to ensure young people's privacy and confidentiality. Young people are able to make and receive private telephone calls without having to ask permission from staff, using either their own mobile phones or the telephone provided by the school.

There are clear policies and procedures with regard to complaints. Information about complaints is made available to young people within the guide to the residential unit. The young people say that they feel able to tell the staff if they have a complaint or concern. Information is displayed throughout the boarding house which contains the contact details for agencies such as 'ChildLine'. The school has not received any complaints with regard to the welfare of young people.

The school has good procedures and policies with regard to bullying. The school has very few incidents of bullying. There are displays to help the young people understand when their behaviours may be construed as bullying. Written guidance is in place regarding the action to take if a young person goes missing. Following such incidents, staff endeavour to discuss with the young person the reasons for going missing, and appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of further incidents occurring. Records demonstrate that there have been few unauthorised absences of this type outside school hours.

Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for the young people. There are good systems in place that ensure that staff are aware of the whereabouts of the young people and strategies to deal with any unauthorised absences, should they occur. Comments and records by staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection issues. The head of care is the school's designated child protection officer and ensures that staff receive child protection training. Staff recruitment procedures ensure that the young people are generally cared for by staff who have had appropriate checks undertaken on their backgrounds. However, where an employee has changed jobs within the school written references are not consistently sought. The young people confirm that they feel safe and well looked after at their school.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for young people. Records show that regular safety and servicing checks are undertaken of fire, electrical and water installations. Fire drills are undertaken which ensure all young people are familiar with the evacuation procedures.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The residential provision, activities and care staff actively contribute to the educational progress that young people make at the school. Care staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of the young people in their care. They also contribute to their annual reviews. Staff

reflect on a young person's day while in education during handover, which ensures that staff are fully aware of any issues that may impact on the support required. Young people complete homework weekly and care staff offer support if needed. Young people have the opportunity to spend time with their key worker to discuss any concerns regarding any aspect of their school life.

There are excellent relationships between staff and young people who board. Staff are sensitive and offer support to young people experiencing homesickness and other problems. Young people also have access to an independent advocate. From observations and comments from the young people, it is evident that staff provide a positive, nurturing and professional approach to working with the young people in their care.

Young people report that the activities when they are in residence are very good and that there are activities everyday which they enjoy. They are actively involved in planning activities and have a choice on a day-to-day basis dependant on their behaviour. Young people would not be allowed to take part in any activities if a risk was highlighted following poor behaviour during the day. In these cases activities in the boarding house are supported by staff. A favourite is an ongoing Monopoly board game challenge which encourages young people to be patient. Young people also benefit from using the school grounds and outdoor swimming pool for evening activities in the summer. They speak extremely positively about the activities that they are able to participate in while staying at the boarding house, which keep them active.

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

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and supported by the care staff to make decisions about their lives. They say that they are consulted about issues and are encouraged to share their ideas and comments. They are provided with good choices, for example, at meal times and in the range of activities that they can undertake. The school council meets regularly and is attended by the headteacher and the head of care. Minutes demonstrate that boarding issues are discussed and staff record actions to be taken.

Young people's needs are assessed and written plans outline how these are to be met. The information about specific aspects of care of the young people ensures that staff have a consistent approach. The plans contain targets which are evaluated and updated on a regular basis. Information clearly demonstrates that planning for young people who board is of a good standard with a consistent approach towards the positive development of the young person in a holistic manner.

New boarders benefit from a sensitive admission process which helps them to become familiar with the staff, boarders and daily routines. Following assessments and discussions with parents, young people are introduced to the boarding house in a phased and supported manner. Leaving processes are well planned and tailored to individual boarders. For example, the number of nights that they board is slowly reduced in preparation for moving on.

Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with their families if they choose to while staying at the boarding house. They have a phone card for their personal use and confirm they may contact parents in private without the permission of staff. Staff maintain regular contact with parents and carers with regard to young people's progress as well as concerns.

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

There are two sites providing accommodation for boarding. Some improvements have been made to the main site since the new education facility opened in September 2009. For example, there are now some single rooms that have been newly refurbished. However, much of the main accommodation looks 'tired'. For example, paintwork is chipped and marked, some furnishings are worn and bathrooms are uninviting. Additionally not all bathing facilities are lockable and some bathroom and toilet locks can be opened easily from the outside. This may compromise a young person's privacy.

Each young person has their own bedroom space, with some young people having separate bedrooms. Some of the young people personalise their bedroom areas. Boarders say that they enjoy sharing with other boarders and are happy with the sleeping provision. Staff sleeping-in areas are close to the young people should an issue arise at night that requires additional support.

The second site was not seen during this inspection as boarders were not using it due to maintenance problems. Staff say this has been ongoing since moving into the accommodation in September 2009. This site was refurbished and young people spoken to say that it is nicely decorated. The ongoing maintenance issues are being addressed although this is causing some disruption to boarders as they occasionally have to move to the main site or alternatively not board.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a warm community atmosphere where young people's differences are accepted and valued. There is evidence of the promotion and development of social inclusion and work with the young people to help them achieve their potential. There is an appropriate gender mix of staff within the boarding house.

There is relevant and clear information regarding the ethos of the school. There is a statement of the school's care principles and practice for young people who board. Boarders also have a guide which is currently being updated.

Staffing levels outside teaching time are sufficient for the number of boarders, the different age groups and the activities they are involved in. Each of the residential areas has an identifiable leading staff member. Young people are aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times. The staff team are extremely positive in their approach to working with the young people and each other. They strive to achieve the best for the young people in their care.

Boarders are looked after by experienced staff who understand their needs and work closely with them to help them to progress and achieve. The low turnover of staff provides the boarders with stability and promotes positive relationships. Staff confirm that they receive regular supervision and there is easy access to senior staff for informal support. Training opportunities are made available to staff, including child protection, first aid and National Vocational Qualifications. However, there are some inconsistencies in the standards of recording and the



general organisation of files between the two sites. This has the potential to be confusing for staff which may impact on care provided.

Systems are in place for the monitoring of boarders' welfare; for example, governors and the independent advocate undertake visits to the boarding provision. However, they are not occurring as recommended by the national minimum standards. The headteacher has delegated areas of responsibility to members of his senior staff team. The management team monitor documentation in the boarding house, such as restraints records. Regular team meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the headteacher. The school's annual development plan addresses identified areas for development.

## 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
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### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the medication policy is implemented, in particular with regard to the disposal of medication (NMS 14.17)
- ensure a record of all sanctions applied is kept in a bound and numbered book. The record is made within 24 hours and is legibly recorded (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that all staff who work with children in the school are recruited in line with the national minimum standards prior to commencing work (NMS 27.2)
- ensure that all bathrooms, showers and toilet doors can be locked but staff are able to open them from the outside in case of emergency; such doors are not easily opened from the outside by other children (NMS 25.5)
- ensure the school provides adequate good quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs (NMS 24.1)
- ensure staff are provided with clear written guidance on procedures and policy that addresses all the issues detailed in Appendix 3 of the national minimum standards; in particular this is with regard to ensuring both sites are consistent in relation to case recording (NMS 30.7)
- ensure that visits are conducted every half term and a written report produced on the conduct of the school. (NMS 33.3)