

Ramsden Hall School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Unique reference number | SC018026 |
| Inspection date | 02/02/2011 |
| Inspector | Kristen Judd |
| Type of inspection | Key |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Setting address | Ramsden Hall School, Heath Road, Ramsden Heath, BILLERICAY, Essex, CM11 1HN |
| Telephone number | 01277 624580 school mob 07710 372150 |
| Email | admin@ramsdenhall.essex.sch.uk |
| Registered person | Essex County Council |
| Head/ Principal | Stewart Grant |
| Nominated person | Stewart Grant |
| Date of last inspection | 22/01/2010 |

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced key inspection of the school. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the school against key national minimum standards and gauge improvements to the service since the previous inspection. The school is a good school with outstanding features. Outcomes for children are excellent. A multidisciplinary staff team work effectively together to meet the identified needs of young people. Staff set individual targets, which are keenly monitored and revised as necessary. Young people benefit from working with highly skilled staff who help address their behavioural issues. The school's assessment and care planning process is effective.

Staff of the residential unit are fully involved in developing young people's individual plans. The care staff are a well-established group, highly committed and well supported by a strong management team. Young people clearly enjoy opportunities to learn and develop through their boarding experience, and parents indicate they feel very well informed and supported by all of the staff.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection seven recommendations were made. These were to make improvements to medication practice and recording of restraints and sanctions, to provide clear guidance to staff to ascertain consistency in practice, ensure that all recruitment records contain the required documentation and improve privacy for young people when using bathrooms. All of these recommendations have been met.

Two further recommendations were made in relation to making improvements to the

accommodation and the frequency of monitoring visits to the boarding provision. Some of the communal areas have been redecorated and new furniture purchased. However, some communal areas and bedrooms require further attention. Monitoring visits are being conducted on a half termly basis, however, the reports are not consistently in line with national minimum standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people receive excellent advice, guidance and support on a range of health and social issues and are given opportunities to discuss matters openly with care staff. The young people's files contain good information about their health care needs, and the actions taken to address these needs are appropriately recorded. Work has commenced in developing a separate health care plan. Those completed are of an extremely high standard. Staff maintain good links with health professionals; additionally, a child and adolescent mental health practitioner provides individual support to young people and staff when needed. Records demonstrate that staff discuss issues relating to health and personal hygiene with young people. The school's curriculum promotes and addresses personal issues and health and social matters. Parents and carers are expected to take responsibility for the health of their child. They are encouraged to work in partnership with the school in maintaining good standards of health and well-being.

Staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication, both on and off site. Medication records are kept to a very high standard and medicines are securely stored. The arrangements for regular auditing of the medication stock and records are sound. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. Most staff are qualified in first aid and there is generally a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid. However, on occasion, staff covering the night shift do not have the required training. There are good on-call systems that provide extra support to staff. Young people return home when unwell and parents confirm that there is good communication from the school regarding medical matters. The necessary parental consents for medical treatment, the administration of medicines and the use of first aid are held on boarders' medical files. Staff are focused and committed to ensuring a good quality provision of health care for young people.

Significant emphasis is placed on a whole school approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The school has recently gained the Healthy Schools' Award. Sufficient choice is offered, including hot and cold dishes, a salad bar and homemade soup as additional choices. Staff have an excellent knowledge of young people's individual preferences and allergies. Young people eat their main meal at lunchtime in the school. Meals are well presented. Meal times are well organised with clear routines and expectations to promote the development of social skills. Drinking water is available and boarders have access to snacks, fresh fruit and drinks in the boarding houses. Young people who participated in the survey were positive about

the meals and some were observed having second helpings. Food handling and hygiene training is undertaken by catering staff and is regularly updated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled. They are encouraged to be independent and responsible for their own personal hygiene. Staff are good at ensuring the privacy of young people when bathing. Facilities are available for young people to make and receive telephone calls in private. However, at the time of this inspection the telephone was out of order on one of the sites. Some young people have mobile telephones and can access the main telephone in the unit if they request it from staff.

Complaints procedures are provided to parents and young people. Information is displayed throughout the boarding houses which contains the contact details for independent agencies. They also have access to an independent advocate who regularly visits the boarding houses. Young people spoken with stated that they know how to make a complaint. They identify a range of adults, both in school and the boarding house, whom they feel they can approach with any worries or concerns. The complaints log was viewed and has detailed documentation of how young people's complaints are managed to a satisfactory outcome.

There are sound arrangements in place to safeguard young people from possible abuse. All staff have received safeguarding training and fully demonstrate their understanding of the procedures and protocols. Senior managers have also attended advanced training so that they are given the knowledge and skills needed to perform the function of 'designated person' in their school. Comments by staff demonstrate a clear understanding of child protection issues.

Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe place for 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. 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. There are clear procedures with regard to bullying. There are displays to help young people understand when their behaviour may be construed as bullying. Young people have a clear understanding of what to do if someone is making them unhappy. Some young people have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are proactive and responsive to incidents of bullying behaviour.

There is a positive family atmosphere in the boarding houses. Behaviour management is a strength of this school. There are clear and consistent rules which young people are supported to understand. Care plans indicate that measures of control and discipline are based on developing positive relationships. Staff are familiar with individual plans, which ensure consistency when responding to

inappropriate behaviour. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done. There are clear and consistent rules that young people are supported to understand.

Any form of physical intervention is used as a last resort and incidents are few. All staff are trained in an accredited method of physical intervention. The training is updated regularly. Clear records are maintained and are monitored regularly by the head of care to ensure compliance with the school's procedures. Very few sanctions are used by residential staff. Strong emphasis is placed on the positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour, and a reward system is operated whereby boarders can earn credits towards rewards at the end of the week. Young people have a clear understanding of this system and are extremely proud of the credits they achieve for reaching their individual targets. Boundaries between staff and young people are clear and relationships are excellent. Staff are extremely successful in implementing clear structures, routines and positive praise to promote acceptable behaviours from young people in their care.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for young people. Safety checks are completed. There are fire risk assessments in place for both sites; however, there are some inconsistencies between the two sites. As such, staff are not clear how often fire drills should be undertaken and about some of the fire requirements on one of the sites. Young people are given fire safety instruction and fire drills are carried out termly. Recruitment procedures are robust. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and two satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the school. Boarders indicate that they feel safe and well looked after at the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive an excellent range of support. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to achieve both educationally and socially. Staff develop the holistic needs of each individual young person, who benefits from a 24-hour curriculum. This identifies the importance of learning experiences which occur outside the traditional school day. Staff actively encourage young people to attend lessons on time, and communication between care staff and school staff is outstanding. 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's achievements are celebrated. Excellent opportunities are made available to develop a young person's life and social skills, thereby supporting their educational progress.

There are excellent arrangements in place that ensure effective communication between the staff and parents. Survey responses show that parents appreciate telephone calls to inform them about their child's progress. These calls also give them the opportunity to discuss any areas of concern. Good records are kept of this

contact. Young people have access to a range of individualised support. Appropriate counselling and care are available to address the mental and emotional needs of young people. The school has good staffing levels. Care staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people in their care and are highly committed to their work. Young people confirm that they are able to approach any staff member with concerns. They also have access to an independent advocate. Young people receive excellent pastoral care and individual support in line with their needs.

Young people have excellent opportunities to take part in a varied programme of activities that offers them valuable learning opportunities and expands their life experiences. The staff support the boarders to experience different leisure activities in different settings so that they can learn the required socially acceptable behaviour. Popular activities include swimming, basketball and fishing in the summer months. Young people are encouraged to be involved in planning activities and outings and have a choice on a day-to-day basis. A favourite is an ongoing board game challenge which encourages young people to be patient, learn to lose, and improve numeracy and literacy skills. All these aspects are reiterated during the games by staff. Young people are extremely positive about the activities that they are able to participate in while staying at the boarding house. One young person commented: 'I enjoy boarding because it's fun and enjoyable.' Staff encourage pupils to achieve educationally and socially in order to reach their full potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to express their views and be involved in decision making. They exercise choice throughout their daily lives. A range of opportunities is available for consultation and includes one-to-one sessions, meal times, use of surveys and activity time. Young people participate with the school council and their views are actively sought when changes are envisaged. Young people are provided with good choices, for example, in the range of activities that they can undertake. There is ongoing consultation with young people, staff and the caterers regarding the meal provision.

The school has clear admission and leaving procedures. Staff complete an initial assessment of the prospective young person's needs. This involves working in partnership with parents and involved professionals. Young people and their families have the opportunity to visit the school. The potential impact of a new admission into the boarding provision is carefully considered and monitored. Young people benefit from a sensitive admission process which helps them to become familiar with the staff, young people and the daily routines. Each young person has an induction into the boarding house that covers a variety of issues including the rewards system, house routines and practical issues, such as fire procedures. Young people receive care which helps them to prepare for moving on. Throughout their time at the boarding house they are encouraged to become involved in activities that will help them develop skills that they will need when they move. Moves are very structured in line with the individual needs of the young person. The number of overnight stays is

reduced to ensure that young people are confident in their future plans.

Young people benefit from the school's holistic approach to care planning. Care plans cover a wide range of needs and include clear information about how the care and support are delivered and detail how specific behaviours are managed. They also highlight the strengths, personality and character of each young person. The plans are continually reviewed; the need for additional support or intervention is addressed. Key workers set new achievable targets in line with a young person's individual ability. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the individual needs of the young people and are aware of how those needs should be met. Documentation provides good information and ensures that a consistent approach is used by all staff to meet their individual needs.

The school enables young people to maintain contact with their families. This is in accordance with a young person's wishes and individual circumstances. The school works hard at developing a good working relationship with families. Young people have access to telephones and have a phone card for their personal use. Staff regularly update parents on their child's progress, medical matters and any concerns. Parents are highly positive in their comments about the school. Comments include: 'I feel so supported by all the staff.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarding accommodation is provided on two sites. The Langham site has had some work completed. Young people's bedrooms have been redecorated and refurbished with new carpets, curtains, beds and furniture to provide a welcoming and pleasant environment for young people. Bathing and toilet facilities have also been upgraded. However, some of the paintwork in the communal areas is chipped and marked. The school's main site residential provision has seen some improvements to the communal areas. However, some of the bedrooms are 'tired' and some furnishings are worn. Bathrooms are uninviting. In the meantime, staff work hard to provide a clean and welcoming environment for young people and encourage the personalisation of sleeping areas.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

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. A separate guide is provided to boarders and parents which is clear and easy to understand. Each young person has a file containing a permanent record of their progress. Records are signed and dated by the author.

The leadership and management of boarding are very strong and there is a clear commitment to continue to improve the school's facilities to enhance young people's

progress and development. Young people are looked after by experienced, trained and competent staff who understand their individual needs. The monitoring and management of the school mean that young people receive a good level of care. The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership of the school's boarding provision. The head of care is qualified, competent and manages the boarding provision effectively. The headteacher prepares a report for the governing body each term. Governors and the independent advocate undertake regular visits to the boarding provision. On occasion the reports are comprehensive; however, most of the reports provide limited information and are not completed as recommended by the national minimum standards.

The management team meet regularly, ensuring that matters affecting the young people's welfare are discussed and monitored. Comments received from parents are supportive of the boarding house approach to working with, supporting and encouraging young people to achieve. Parents and young people comment extremely positively about the service. Comments include: 'I feel that my child is safe at this school and that the staff really care about him.' One young person commented: 'The staff are kind and listen.'

Young people receive support from an experienced and competent staff team. High staffing ratios enable young people to receive outstanding care. Care practices are creative and focus on meeting the individual needs of young people. Staff understand the needs of young people in their care and help them to further develop and achieve their potential. A duty rota is followed in practice and time is scheduled for handover sessions, staff meetings and casework tasks. Young people know who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times, including during the night. Suitable arrangements are in place for duty cover in times of staff sickness and absence through use of the school's own pool of staff. The low turnover of staff provides young people with consistency and stability and promotes positive relationships.

The head of care has the appropriate experience and qualifications and the service is committed to ensuring that it has a well qualified workforce. Documentation viewed confirms that 80% of the care staff have obtained a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or 4. A handbook is provided to staff, and policies and procedures are readily accessed and updated. Staff confirm that they receive regular formal supervision and there is easy access to senior staff for informal support.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a strong commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of a young person's individual plan supports this commitment. The school excels in focusing on each young person's ability and potential. This gives young people the confidence to successfully develop the skills necessary for adult life.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that there is at least one staff member on each shift and in each building where children sleep, who holds a current first aid qualification (NMS 14.9)
- ensure that children can make and receive telephone calls in private and without staff permission; this is in particular reference to ensuring that telephones are in good working order (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that the head of school or the other senior members of staff regular review the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessments carried out; this relates to decisions made in relation in health and safety issues (NMS 26.4)
- ensure the school provides adequate good quality and well maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs (NMS 24.1)
- ensure that visits are conducted every half term and a written report produced on the conduct of the school. (NMS 33.3)