



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Ramsden Hall School

Ramsden Heath

Billericay

Essex

CM11 1HN

Lead Inspector

Jenny

Elliott

Announced
27th June - 4th July 2005

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained 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

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Ramsden Hall School
Address	Ramsden Heath Billericay Essex CM11 1HN
Telephone number	01277 624580
Fax number	01277 631373
Email address	admin@ramsdenhall.essex.sch.uk
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the	Essex County Council
Name of Head	Stewart Grant
Name of Head of Care	Yvonne Goouge
Age range of residential pupils	11-16
Date of last welfare inspection	05/10/2004

Brief Description of the School:

Ramsden Hall School is owned and managed by Essex County Council. The school offers residential accommodation Monday- Friday during term time.

At the time of the inspection there were twenty one pupils boarding for all or part of each week.

All pupils of the school are subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs identifying emotional and behavioural difficulties that seriously affected their education. The school aims to reintegrate pupils into their local communities and works to reduce or end boarding as pupils move into the final years of their education. The school works closely with pupils' main carers to achieve this.

Pupils are accommodated in four groups, all within the main building.

The main building is a large Victorian mansion providing office, residential and teaching accommodation. There are a number of other buildings in the grounds including classrooms and a sports hall. The school has 14 acres of land and uses this well for outdoor pursuits including fishing, swimming and walks. The school has a minibus and uses this to access community leisure facilities.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection that took place between the 27th June and 4th July 2005. During this period four days were spent at the school. Whilst at the school, time was spent with pupils completing questionnaires, taking meals and participating in evening activities. Pupils also provided the inspector with a tour of the school and grounds. In addition to the time spent with pupils, records were inspected and meetings held with school staff. Outside of the time spent at the school, questionnaires from parents and pupils were analysed and views of the school sought from other professionals.

What the school does well:

Pupils felt well cared for. One pupil said that the best thing that had happened to them since coming to the school was 'meeting their key-worker'. A number of pupils made comments like '[the staff] helped me to calm down' and '[I] can discuss problems I have at home'.

There is a clear distinction between lesson time and residential time, but the school also understands and promotes learning outside of the classroom that will help pupils in their daily lives.

Staff are well supported and there is good communication across all staff groups. All staff spoken with during the inspection had an appropriate level of understanding about the difficulties pupils faced.

Pupils liked the size of the school and grounds. One pupil said they liked the grounds because of 'the freedom' and another because of the 'nature around the grounds'.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The care plans provide more detail about how pupils should be helped. Health records were more accessible and up to date.

Supervision records demonstrated a more planned approach to care.

Policies and procedures had been developed in line with National Minimum Standards.

The school had engaged an independent visitor.

What they could do better:

The school should continue to explore ways of improving privacy in shared rooms, particularly for older pupils.

The school should continue to explore ways of improving the presentation of meals at dinnertime.

The school should continue to develop and monitor systems in place for the administration of prescribed medication.

The school should identify ways of ensuring that the welfare of boarders is monitored and reported on by a person who is not a member of school staff.

The school should continue to consult with pupils, and find ways of helping those who have difficulty expressing their views, to take part fully in those processes.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 14, 15

The health and care needs of pupils are well provided for. Meals taken during the inspection were satisfactory, although presentation could be improved.

EVIDENCE:

The school had improved the information in care plans relating to the primary health needs of pupils. Evidence and practice was seen of the sensitive handling of personal care required by one pupil. The member of staff responsible for medication and health care had been allocated additional time to cover this area of work. Systems for administering and recording medication had been tightened and record keeping in relation to health care generally had improved. Medication was still decanted into envelopes for administration by care staff in individual houses. It was felt that the overall improvement in systems meant that any misadministration would be quickly identified, however the school should be mindful of the risks inherent in this method of administration and consider alternative ways of administering medication.

Food taken by inspectors during the inspection was satisfactory although it was felt that presentation could be improved. The food was provided in good quantity and there was a good choice available at each mealtime. Mealtimes were well-managed orderly occasions.

Pupils did not express a high degree of satisfaction about food at the school. Sixty two percent of pupils felt the food was 'just about OK' or better and thirty eight percent that it was usually bad or very bad. Complaints about food were varied and included 'the food has no flavour' and 'better lunch than tea', but also that it was 'improving'. It was noted that the school council had asked that vegetables be served separately at dinner times in March 2005, subsequent meeting notes had not fed back to pupils in respect of this request.

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 by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(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, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26, 27

The school strives to keep pupils safe and responds promptly to any concerns.

EVIDENCE:

Confidentiality was promoted by staff, and information about pupils was stored securely. Most, but not all, pupils felt that there was sufficient privacy in bathrooms, showers and bedrooms. It is hoped that improvements would be made to key areas in the planned refurbishment of the building.

The school has a clearly advertised complaints procedure understood by all of the pupils spoken with at inspection. All of the pupils who completed questionnaires were able to name at least one member of staff they would be

comfortable speaking to about any concerns. Records demonstrated that all complaints raised by pupils were responded to in an appropriate and timely manner. The Commission had not received any complaints about the school. Contact details for CSCI were posted in each house.

The school had reviewed its Child Protection policy, and this now met all of the requirements of National Minimum Standards (NMS). The school had worked hard to ensure that any concerns raised were taken forward by an appropriate authority, and that the regulatory body were kept informed. Staff attend training and regular briefing sessions on the protection of children. The school's policies, procedures and understanding of behavioural issues support the training and other initiatives to provide a good understanding of child protection issues. Communication at the school was good, minimising the risk of issues not being identified. Pupils felt well looked after, one person said staff 'looked out for them' and another that pupils were 'looked after well at school'. It was felt that these endeavours exceeded the minimum requirements of NMS.

Seventy seven percent of pupils said they were 'hardly ever' or 'never' bullied. Those that were experiencing bullying said they had spoken to staff and that it had been addressed, although not necessarily stopped. For two pupils bullying was an ongoing issue. The school carries out confidential surveys with pupils that helped to identify the most prolific bullies at school. The school then works with the pupils identified, and their main carers, to address this behaviour. The school had held a bullying awareness week and advertised key themes on a notice board. Pupils were articulate when explaining the display to the inspector and clearly understood the key issues.

Records were kept in respect of pupils who were absent without authority, including details of positive action taken upon their return. The behaviour of pupils in school was good throughout the inspection. Staff were observed working positively to help pupils maintain acceptable levels of behaviour with the appropriate use of humour and tone of voice and in a manner that did not impinge upon pupils' dignity. All of the staff spoken with had a good understanding of challenging behaviour.

There were no safety issues identified during the inspection and there had been no serious accidents or injuries since the last inspection.

Recruitment records belonging to a new member of staff were inspected and demonstrated that the vetting undertaken met NMS.

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 both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 12, 22

The school's care provision helps pupils achieve outside the classroom and supports them within it.

EVIDENCE:

The school organises evening time to ensure pupils can take part in a range of activities and also have time to relax. The school's independent visitor remarked on how pupils physically relaxed when they went to their houses at the end of the school day, much as a child would when they returned home from school. A number of pupils mentioned evening options (activities) as the good things about the school. A smaller number said they would like 'better options' although not all pupils could say how they should be improved. The school had recently undertaken a survey to ascertain pupil preferences with regard to options. Whilst the options are not in any way classroom type activities, they and the evening routines of the school, are organised to promote learning and behaviours that address the difficulties pupils experience in accessing education and living in their home communities. A high level of informal discussion and good use of written communication systems promotes learning and achievement across the day and evening. Formal meetings between care staff and form tutors are planned to support this on a monthly basis.

Each pupil has the opportunity to earn credits during the school day and house time. These can be used to access additional options. Each pupil also has personal targets to meet their individual needs. Pupils were proud of their achievements when they earned maximum credits, they were able to explain clearly to the inspector what they needed to do to make up any lost credits, and understood why they had not received full credits. During the handover

meeting for care staff, the inspector observed staff discussing how to support individual pupils and identify appropriate interventions and strategies to help pupils achieve maximum credits.

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 living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 2, 9, 20

Pupils are encouraged to make decisions about their day-to-day lives and supported to develop the emotional maturity to deal with difficult situations.

EVIDENCE:

A school council is in operation at the school; the council covers the whole school as well as boarding issues (see previous comments relating to the presentation of food). Discussions were also observed in individual houses, at tea and breakfast times that related directly to the operation of those houses. During the day and evening pupils were given as many opportunities as possible to make their own decisions. There was a higher level than previously of pupils knowing about their care plans, all pupils were aware of their key targets. Pupils did not think they could have a say in how their bedrooms were decorated or furnished.

Completed questionnaires were received from the primary carers of seven pupils. All of the responses were positive. One said the best thing about the school was 'keeping constantly in touch with me.' Records evidenced that care staff attempted to contact main carers at least once a week. Pupils are provided with phone cards so that they can contact family and friends without

having to seek permission of staff. Most pupils also have mobile phones that they can use outside of lesson time.

The relationships observed between staff and pupils during the inspection were positive, staff praised good behaviour and dealt appropriately with less acceptable behaviour. Pupils spoke highly of staff. Physical interventions continue to be recorded and monitored extensively and in a manner that should identify any concerns or inconsistencies.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 23, 24, 25

The residential provision is homely. There is limited privacy in shared rooms.

EVIDENCE:

The residential provision at the school is situated across four units in a Victorian mansion. Each house is decorated and furnished in a homely manner. Some pupils have built shelving units that act as dividers in shared bedrooms, lack of privacy in bedrooms remained an issue for some pupils. One pupil said 'curtains would be better'. There were also three showers in one house and two toilets in another house where privacy could be compromised. The school hopes to develop its premises in the next few years and if successful this will include the provision of more single bedrooms.

Management

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 is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for standard(s) 28, 29, 30, 31, 33

The school is well managed, staff are well supported and supervised.

EVIDENCE:

The school has a coherent senior management structure into which the residential provision links. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of pupil needs and a consistent approach to different pupils was described by staff, observed by the inspector and recorded in care plans and other documents. Pupils said they felt cared for and each pupil asked was happy with their key-worker, some pupils said they had asked for a change when they didn't get on with their previous key-worker.

The supervision records of care staff had improved since the previous inspection. Records demonstrated that discussion took place about each pupil

the key-worker worked with, that a child-centred approach was taken in those discussions and that issues were followed up between sessions. Handover meetings were used to ensure that a consistent approach was adopted by all staff to support pupils.

The school has been fortunate in gaining the services of an independent visitor. The visitor was clear about their role, the boundaries of confidentiality and child protection practice. The school had plans to involve the visitor in some training to enhance the role. The school should also consider how it may set the parameters of the role and facilitate a direct link for the visitor to the governing body. Records of governors visits were inspected, these did not fully monitor the welfare of pupils at the school.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
Standard No	Score
14	2
15	3

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
3	3
4	3
5	4
6	3
7	3
8	3
10	4
26	3
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	3
13	X
22	4

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
2	3
9	4
11	X
17	X
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	X
21	X
23	3
24	2
25	

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	X
18	X
19	X
28	3
29	3
30	3
31	3
32	X
33	2

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

There is one outstanding recommendation from the previous inspection.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	14	The school must review its systems for the administration of medication to ensure they meet the school's own policy, good practice guidelines and reduce the risk of misadministration. (Previous timescale of 31/12/04 not met).
2.	24,25	The school should keep under review the provision of sleeping and bathing facilities to ensure the privacy of pupils is not compromised.
3.	33	The governing body should consider how it can monitor the welfare of pupils at the school in line with the requirements of this standard.

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