

# Ramsden Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115449
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311938
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Naylor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Geoff Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stewart Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ramsden Heath Billericay Essex CM11 1HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01277624580
<b>Fax number</b>	01277631373

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ramsden Hall School caters for boys with a statement of special educational need indicating social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils are White British and are drawn from a wide area of Essex. Many have experienced severely disrupted schooling and have poor educational histories prior to joining the school. Their attainment is generally lower than national expectations on admission. Since the previous inspection, the school has amalgamated with another similar school near Colchester (this is now known as Ramsden Hall-Heath site) These two sites, each with boarding accommodation are over thirty miles apart. Detailed plans are in place to build new accommodation on the Ramsden Hall site by late 2008. The headteacher and governors oversee both sites.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Ramsden Hall School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Value for money is good. Pupils are well cared for and make good progress academically and in their personal development. They learn to manage their behaviour effectively; they make friends and establish a good rapport with adults. Pupils succeed well in examinations and are well prepared, when they leave, for a move to further education or employment. All staff work diligently to provide a strongly caring environment on both school sites.

The headteacher is an excellent leader. With his clear direction and the effective support of governors the school has successfully accomplished an amalgamation of two schools. The headteacher and governors have created cohesion in the teaching and care provision on both sites. All staff on both sites have dealt well with the demands of the many adjustments and changes required. The stability and the best qualities of both schools have been maintained and these are now being built upon. Staff morale is high and the process of sharing of expertise and best practice is being handled through the school's professional development programme; this needs to be extended further to achieve improvements in teaching right across the school. Good systems of communication are established between both sites. Effective management has ensured that few problems have been encountered in bringing the two schools together. The capacity for further improvements is good.

Achievement is good. Parents express delight that their children now make good progress, after many years of failing in other schools. Standards are broadly average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain a good range of qualifications, through courses that are well matched to their abilities and aspirations. These include GCSE examinations and other awards that accredit a wide range of personal achievements. All pupils do work experience and some have the opportunity of following college courses.

Teaching and learning are good. A key feature of this good teaching is to be seen in the successful management of behaviour. Also in the provision of relevant and interesting activities that motivate pupils to learn. Staff use a points system consistently to reward appropriate patterns of behaviour, which gives pupils much encouragement because they feel this is fair and challenging. Although individual learning targets are set for each pupil these are of variable quality and are not always linked to teachers' lesson planning.

A good curriculum provides challenging learning opportunities that engage pupils. It gives good attention to providing access to the National Curriculum subjects, although music and a modern foreign language are not currently taught at the Heath site. The curriculum ensures that pupils' social moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. An effective link is made with the extended curriculum provided in the boarding houses.

Care, support and guidance are good. In particular, the quality of pastoral care is excellent, so that pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs are carefully monitored and supported and, as a result, their personal development is good. There is very good communication between care staff and education staff. The school also maintains good links with parents and with a wide range of other specialist agencies.

Pupils enjoy, and are proud of, their success in the classroom and in examinations. They enjoy the many sporting and social activities that are provided, especially those after school. They grow in awareness of how to keep themselves safe, healthy and they participate fully in the school community. They grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. Attendance is satisfactory

and for many is good. Pupils learn how to modify their behaviour. Basic literacy and living skills are nurtured and pupils learn about how to cope in an adult world.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The report of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) of July 2006 judged provision for boarders to be good. A very dedicated team of care staff led by a very experienced care standards manager, looks after boarders well. Pupils are very happy and relaxed and have an excellent rapport with staff. Care staff give good support to pupils and staff during school hours. A very good range of after school activities is available that can also be shared by day pupils. These focus effectively on areas that complement the curriculum of the school. This is seen in pupils' joy in their achievements. Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and the need for healthy eating and exercise also improves. They acquire basic life skills and learn to work co-operatively and build a happy caring community. Boarding arrangements meet and often exceed minimum national standards, and the few minor improvements to be made, highlighted in the CSCI report have been mostly addressed. The school plans to further improve privacy for boys in bedrooms and in shower facilities, but is awaiting local authority approval of funding.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Meet statutory requirements to provide a curriculum for music and a modern foreign language at the Heath site.
- Write individual learning targets more clearly so pupils and teachers know precisely what they are aiming for and ensure teachers include them in their planning and use these in lesson planning across the school.
- Continue to recognise and share the best practice in teaching across both sites.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. On admission pupils' standards are often quite low. Parental comments confirm the school's view that their children quickly settle into school and make rapid improvements especially in self-confidence and life skills. As a result they achieve well and by the time they leave standards are broadly average. This progress is also reflected in their increased literacy skills, especially in reading. An improvement in their self-esteem helps to raise their levels of attainment. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are encouraged to participate in national tests and achieve well, often further improving their levels of attainment. Pupils take part in a wide range of accredited courses. There has been a year-on-year gain for several years in the number gaining qualifications. In 2007, many pupils achieved A\*-G grades in GCSE English, mathematics, and science. There has been particularly good success in GCSE art over successive years. Other pupils have participated and achieved well in Entry Level Certificate courses offered in most subjects. All pupils took Assessment and Qualification Alliance Awards in a range of activities such as basic literacy and life skills, for which they gained certificates. Most pupils take part successfully in work experience placements and part-time college courses. The majority take up further education placements and a significant number find employment on leaving school.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. The school is a safe and welcoming environment that provides good opportunities for pupils to grow in self-confidence. Good spiritual development is shown by pupils' raised self-awareness. Social and moral skills are learned in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and through the good boarding environment. There are good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and their performance in examinations and tests shows that they can work hard and achieve well. Attendance is good for many and satisfactory overall with little unauthorised absence. Pupils appreciate the recognition and value that staff give to their work and their improved behaviour through the points and rewards systems. They learn to modify their behaviour, to develop good attitudes to work and they demonstrate this during work experience and college placements. Pupils gain a good understanding of safe practices and the need for regular exercise and healthy lifestyles. They make an effective contribution to the school community through the school and residents' councils and to the wider community, for instance, through vocational training experiences and by raising funds for charities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and provide positive feedback that builds their self-esteem. In most cases they manage behaviour effectively, well supported by the additional staff on hand. The school has effective systems for managing behaviour and, as a result, there are many lessons in which behaviour is good and where pupils concentrate well on learning.

Pupils learn well because of teacher's enthusiasm for their subjects and also because most lessons include interesting activities. The best lessons make skilful use of interactive whiteboards and videos to capture pupils' interest and attention. Through their questions, teachers help pupils to recall what they have learnt and to develop their understanding. Pupils generally respond well and gain a genuine interest in what they are learning. A few lessons are routine because teaching approaches rely on resources that do not much stimulate pupils. In these lessons, pupils show a lack of interest and do not concentrate well.

Pupils have individual targets for their learning in most subjects. However, targets vary in quality, and do not focus sharply enough on what pupils should be aiming at, both across subjects and across the two sites. In the best lessons, teachers plan work that is well matched to pupils' individual targets, but in some lessons this match is not close enough. Learning support assistants provide useful support to individual pupils, particularly in helping them to maintain their concentration.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides pupils with a good range of courses and other activities that support their personal development well and enables them to achieve essential skills and qualifications for their future lives.

Most pupils follow a broad range of subjects, including the full National Curriculum. However, music and a modern foreign language, while requirements, are not taught at the Heath site. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are promoted well. There is a well-planned course in PSHE that aids pupils' understanding of their roles as citizens and how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils have the option of a range of national accreditation courses.

A wide range of additional activities enriches the curriculum. These include many subject trips that bring learning to life, a residential course in outdoor pursuits, lunchtime activities and a large number of evening activities, which are open to day pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. There are rigorous procedures for child protection, safeguarding pupils and ensuring safety in school. The quality of care has been enhanced by the appointment of a full-time mental health practitioner. This initiative is at an early stage but has been established well and is beginning to improve further the support to individual boys and the links with other professional agencies.

There are good procedures for the induction of new pupils and to support pupils' career planning and their transition into work or college. Pupils' personal and academic progress are monitored carefully and reviewed regularly. Behavioural incidents are tracked rigorously on a daily basis, reviewed by staff and discussed with pupils each half-term in order to set agreed individual behavioural targets. Pupils also have individual learning targets, although the extent to which teachers make effective use of these in planning lessons varies.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding direction. His high standards enable other staff to perform at their best. Improvement is well supported by an experienced and dedicated leadership team. Good support is provided for all staff through professional development training. This has been successfully coordinated and effectively involves staff from both sites. This training has helped to sustain staff morale and to improve their skills in for example, behaviour management. The school uses self-evaluation well and has a good view of its own competences. There is careful monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. This is identifying best practice in teaching and learning but there is a need for this to be disseminated equally on both sites. The school has recognised that this can be done through a more consistent approach to subject leadership across both sites. The governors play a pivotal roll in supporting staff and pupils. They challenge the headteacher constructively and have ensured that the amalgamation of the two schools has gone smoothly. Governors' sub-committees are well regulated to offer good support in evaluating the school's financial management, curriculum and personnel policy on both sites.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ramsden Hall (and Heath site) School, Billericay CM11 1HN

Thank you very much for the way you welcomed Mr Godwood and myself to your school earlier this week. We were very pleased to be able to join you in some of your lessons and to see the activities you follow in school and in the boarding houses. We would like to share with you our views about your school.

We were pleased to see that, for most of the time, you enjoy coming to the school, although we recognised some of you find this difficult. You are quite right to be pleased with your successes and achievements in the classroom. We found that there is usually a pleasant, welcoming and calm atmosphere in school and in the boarding houses. This helps you to settle in and to make progress in all you do. We were impressed that your attendance, behaviour and progress improve and, as a result, you succeed in national examinations and in your sporting and social activities. It is good that you are working so hard on work experience and college placements as these are helping you prepare for leaving school.

We think that the good leadership of the headteacher and senior staff helps you find success. Teaching is good and you have a range of interesting activities to take part in. Staff look after your interests very well and provide you with good care and support, whether in school or in the boarding houses. Your parents are right to be proud of what you achieve.

There are just a few things that we have told the headteacher we feel would help you to be even more successful. Music and French should be taught at the Heath site. Your individual learning targets should be improved and used more effectively in lessons to support your learning. Teachers and care staff need to make sure that all the best things that they do, such as good teaching, are equally present across both sites.

Do please keep up your attendance and the improvements to your behaviour as these will help you to make good progress in your work.

We wish you every success in the future.

Ian Naylor

Lead Inspector