

Ramsden Hall Academy

Heath Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay, Essex CM11 1HN

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Ramsden Hall Academy is sponsored by the Parallel Learning Trust. It is a day and residential special school that caters for boys aged 10 to 16 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many of the boys have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as autism spectrum conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and communication difficulties. The school is based in a rural area on the outskirts of a large town.

There are 102 children at the school, of whom 31 board. The school can accommodate 40 children in the residential provision for between one and four nights per week.

The residential manager has been in post for over four years. She has the necessary experience and qualification for the role.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 7 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Professional practice and high aspirations have led to exceptional outcomes for children compared to their starting points. Children who attend the residential provision have experienced accelerated academic progress in reading and comprehension compared to children who attend school in the day only.

Residential and teaching staff work together exceedingly well. Children's education outcomes are enhanced by having access to education staff each evening in residence. Teaching staff provide activities that are linked to their subject area, such as design technology and physical education. Access to such activities helps children to further develop their academic progress.

There is a whole-school approach to review and analysis of children's emotional and social needs and educational attainment. This holistic review and analysis are underpinned by research-informed practice that is fully embedded in residence. Residential and education staff consistently and effectively review children's all-round needs. This leads to children receiving the right support at the right time. Responsive strategies are exceptionally well considered and highly tailored to children's needs. Consequently, there is evidence of exceptional progress in children's behaviour, social understanding, health and well-being.

One parent said about their child, 'His whole demeanour and social skills have changed for the better since going into residence. To say that they have improved him 100% is not enough. The pastoral care is amazing. I have nothing but praise for the staff.'

Children unquestionably benefit from excellent relationships with committed staff who understand their needs. As a result, children trust the staff completely. These relationships and the staff's skills combine to support children to flourish in a range of areas. Children have grown in confidence, made friends, improved their social skills and learned how to manage feelings that once used to overwhelm them.

Staff occupy the children in imaginative ways. Consequently, children enjoy a diverse and wide range of meaningful activities. The staff are committed to furthering children's social experiences. Children volunteer their time at a local food bank and read to residents at a local home for the elderly. The range of local activities helps to widen children's experience of the world around them and give them opportunities that they have not had previously.

Staying in residence has a positive and enduring impact on children. Some children return to the school after Year 11 to engage in work experience and support the school. Children said that they love being with the residential staff. This shines

through in the warm exchanges that staff have with children. Children are better equipped for the world beyond the school because of staying in residence.

The headteacher and head of care provide support and guidance to other residential special schools. The research-informed practices adopted at the school are shared with other schools and families. The positive influence of staff extends beyond the school to support education colleagues and families. Residential staff have trained families in trauma-perceptive practice and medical diagnosis. The staff understand the importance of successful collaborative working to enhance children's lives.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The designated safeguarding lead implements safeguarding process and practice to exceptional effect. Safeguarding concerns are responded to swiftly and managed meticulously. The designated safeguarding lead works proactively to ensure that families and children have access to the support that they need. Partnership safeguarding agencies are frequently welcomed into school to work with children and families who require additional support.

The proactive and creative practice of staff has led to children finding alternative strategies to manage difficult feelings in positive ways. Consequently, children in residence have not gone missing from the school or required the use of restraint.

Creative behaviour management strategies include access to the school's reading dog and animals such as rabbits, reptiles, cats, guinea pigs and ducks. Staff understand the power of time spent with animals to reduce children's distress. Some children access vocational opportunities in and outside of the school to meet their social needs. The whole staff team is aware of individual strategies to soothe children when they are in distress. The embedded trauma-informed practices have influenced the language and understanding of children when upset. Children are becoming proficient at understanding what their own behaviours are wider indicators of. They are becoming increasingly skilled at expressing how they feel and what they need to feel better. Compared to children's starting points, this is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Targeted work is carried out with children who have been directly or indirectly affected by a safeguarding concern. The school staff provide support to parents. Behavioural and emotional strategies have been shared with parents to use in their own homes. This has led to distinct improvements in children's behaviour when at home. One grandparent said, 'He is like a different boy now. I am so proud of him.'

There is a whole-school approach to effective safeguarding. This involves swift identification of children in need of additional support. Staff have increased children's safety and understanding through targeted work related to sexual health, sexualised behaviour, online bullying and healthy relationships.

The school has been creative in using external groups to provide learning for children. These groups have empowered children and increased their awareness about concerns related to county lines, mental health and substance misuse. Children are now more aware of the dangers of associations with negative influences. This empowers children to make informed decisions and be aware of risks that they may not have considered previously. This is a proactive measure that demonstrates staff have children's needs at the heart of their practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care and headteacher together work in an integrated forward-thinking way to ensure that aspirations for children remain high.

Internal and external monitoring are taken seriously. The strengths of residence are clearly understood and areas for development are equally well known. Effective monitoring enables early identification of potential issues. This fosters improved decision-making. Children's experiences and outcomes are consistently highly positive.

Exemplary monitoring and routine checks ensure that the physical environment is in excellent condition.

Children experience exceptionally well-organised inductions to the residential provision. These are led by the head of care. Introductions are planned between the children, families and residential staff at a pace that is right for the child. As a result, these introductions are consistently successful.

Regular, child-focused, well-planned and well-attended team meetings ensure that all staff are kept informed and updated about the children's progress, concerns and areas for development.

Staff said that they feel valued, listened to and supported by the head of care. Regular supervisions are of a high quality. Staff's performance is reviewed annually to ensure that professional development is ongoing, current and relevant. Highly effective training equips the staff extremely well to meet the children's needs. This training means that staff's knowledge and skills are continually updated. The staff implement this knowledge in their daily practice to exceptional effect.

The head of care is well respected by both education and residential staff. The head of care is an exceptional role model who drives continuous improvements and inspires others to do the same. This ensures that children experience the highest quality care when staying in residence.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC018026

Headteacher: Emma Baker

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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