

Inspection of Ramsden Hall Academy

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

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have often experienced significant disruption to their formal education before arriving at Ramsden Hall Academy. As a result, many pupils have gaps in their learning. Staff work swiftly to help pupils settle well into school life. The 'ready to learn' curriculum ensures that gaps in pupils' learning are soon addressed and pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are met. Consequently, pupils feel safe, secure and well looked after. As one pupil noted: 'Teachers really understand us and that helps us feel settled.' Pupils have trusted adults to talk to when things get tricky.

Staff teach pupils well about how to manage their own behaviour. Staff, using the school's therapeutic techniques, act quickly to prevent negative situations from escalating. Occasional disruption to learning is well managed so pupils can concentrate on their studies. Derogatory language is not tolerated within the school community and is dealt with effectively.

Pupils value the 'positive points' they are rewarded with for being increasingly resilient and 'doing the right thing'. Pupils experience a range of trips and visits that are linked to their interests or that support them do something different. Examples include mountain biking, rock climbing or helping out at a local care home.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders, with the support of the trust, have created a school that supports pupils to reach their potential. Pupils' prior experiences and SEMH needs are carefully managed so they do not become a barrier to success.

The curriculum is well designed. Pupils new to the school study the 'ready to learn' curriculum which covers a broad range of subjects similar to the national curriculum. For most subjects, leaders have pinpointed the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Staff check effectively what pupils already know, as many pupils have had gaps in their schooling. Teachers adapt lessons quickly and well to bridge these gaps and support pupils to build new knowledge over time. This means that older pupils are emotionally ready, and have the right knowledge, to access a range of suitable qualifications to prepare them for their next steps.

There are times, however, in a small number of subjects where plans focus on activities rather than key knowledge. In these instances, pupils find it trickier to build their knowledge and understanding.

Reading is a priority in the school. Well-planned systems are in place to spot if a pupil struggles with reading. Staff use the chosen phonics scheme well to support pupils that need extra help with learning to read. Weaker reading knowledge is not a barrier to accessing the school's curriculum. There is a growing love of reading across the school. Pupils, for instance, read to the school's 'reading dog'. Some pupils who could not read prior to joining the school now read to others.

Leaders' approach to supporting pupils with their behaviour is working. Staff at all levels know, in depth, the school's chosen approach to dealing with behaviour. They ensure that it is applied consistently well. Staff understand the pupils' SEMH needs in detail so pupils get the right help, at the right time. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced and positive rewards are increasing.

Prior to joining the school, many pupils have had very poor attendance. Leaders' work to encourage pupils to attend school is having a positive effect. Pupils' attendance has vastly improved. There are still some pupils, however, who are not attending regularly enough. These pupils are not benefiting from the positive experiences offered at the school.

The 'life skills' curriculum prepares pupils well for life outside the school. Pupils have a good understanding of diversity and respect individual differences. In addition, careful careers advice and support ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps, whether that is a college, an apprenticeship or in the workplace.

The trust and academy council diligently hold leaders to account for their actions. Staff work together effectively so that pupils, regardless of background, feel well looked after and receive a good-quality education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a robust safeguarding culture within the school. Staff are well trained to spot and report concerns to the safeguarding team. Staff have detailed knowledge about the individual and societal risks to each and every pupil.

Procedures to report concerns are clear, known and used by all staff. Leaders are quick to act to ensure that pupils get the help they need. Detailed safeguarding records show appropriate responses to concerns raised about pupils. Leaders work with a range of agencies and organisations to give pupils and families the help they need.

Staff teach pupils well about the risks they may face. As a result, pupils know about topics such as county lines, knife crime and radicalisation.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Despite the significant improvement in individual pupils' attendance, a number of pupils are still not attending school regularly enough. They are missing out on learning, the positive school environment and preparation for their next steps in

life. Leaders need to work even more closely with the local authority and parents and carers to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

- In a small number of curriculum plans, learning is linked to activities rather than knowledge. In these areas, pupils do not build knowledge as effectively as other areas of the curriculum. Leaders need to review these curriculum areas to ensure that all key knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced so that pupils progress well through the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	142612
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10241121
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jonathan Alvis
Headteacher	Emma Baker
Website	www.ramsdenhall.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ramsden Hall academy is a special school for boys aged 10 to 16 that caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities related to SEMH.
- Many pupils have faced significant disruption to their education prior to joining the academy.
- The academy offers up to 100 places for pupils referred by the local authority.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has residential provision for a small number of pupils.
- The residential provision was last inspected in June 2022.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Additionally, inspectors scrutinised curriculum plans and pupils' work from history, geography and the school's 'ready to learn' curriculum.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), the deputy headteacher and the designated safeguarding leader.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised safeguarding documents, policies and procedures. They spoke with a range of pupils and staff to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the academy council and a representative from the trust.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative from the local authority and representatives from the school's chosen alternative provisions.
- Inspectors considered the 12 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 11 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors considered the school's own surveys and met a range of pupils across both days of inspection.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector His Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Walker Ofsted Inspector

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