

Ramsden Hall Academy

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 currently sponsored by the Parallel Learning Trust. It is a day and residential special school that caters for boys aged from 10 to 16 who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school is based in a rural area on the outskirts of a large town.

There are 112 children on roll at the school. Of these, up to 30 children board on a flexible basis. The school can accommodate up to 40 children in the residential provision for between one and four nights per week. At the time of this inspection, 19 children were staying in the residential provision each night.

The residential manager has been in post for over five years and has the necessary experience and qualifications for the role.

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

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 September 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 20 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Inspectors spent time with all the children, including having individual discussions and participating in children's group activities. Children's experiences are consistently positive due to highly effective support they receive from staff and school leaders at the provision.

Children say they greatly enjoy boarding at the school. They want to remain as boarders, and they are taking on more responsibility during their stays. This includes working towards a 'boarders award' that is given out each year recognising children's achievements. This shows that children are invested in the boarding provision and have aspirational goals they would like to achieve.

The boarding houses have recently been refurbished to an excellent standard. Rooms have been tastefully decorated, with large rugs and new pictures on the walls, making the provision more homely. Rooms have also been repurposed. One room has a large TV for cinema nights. This high-quality living environment helps children to feel valued.

School leaders and staff adopt a holistic approach to reviewing, analysing, monitoring and supporting children's development. Staff demonstrate progress effectively through data that captures children's academic, social and emotional growth. This highlights that children make significant progress from their starting points. Children who stay in boarding are more likely to achieve the educational and social objectives set out in their plans than those who do not.

Staff support children to use devices in a healthy way, setting time limits for their use and offering alternative entertainment. Staff's creativity is evident in the range of other activities provided, such as hosting documentary screenings and facilitating discussions on real-life topics. This helps children to connect with and learn about the world around them.

Staff help children to build their independent living skills. Children are taught skills that help to prepare them for adult life. They have improved their skills in tasks such as preparing food, keeping their rooms tidy and cleaning. Children have also been learning outdoor skills such as building a fire and a shelter, and outdoor survival. These skills help them to grow into well-rounded adults.

Children are safe, nurtured and respected. They are given time to share their views, and they can do this in an environment where they feel listened to and valued. Children have matured physically and emotionally. As a result of staff's support, children who were previously not confident in group situations are now confident in groups and are more connected with other children.

Staff make sure children are active. Children enjoy trips to farms, parks and the cinema, go swimming, to the gym and on holidays. This helps to improve their health and well-being. Staff also help children to celebrate cultural and annual events, increasing their social awareness and sense of community.

Parents gave excellent feedback. One parent said, 'They are easily the best residential placement. I am really happy that my child is there.' Another parent said, 'They are doing an absolutely great job. You couldn't find anywhere better.'

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

Staff and school leaders maintain highly effective communication with outside agencies. Children are offered support and intervention when they display behaviour of concern, and the leaders make sure information is shared. They robustly challenge other professionals to make sure children receive the best support possible.

When children are in crisis, leaders and staff go above and beyond to keep them safe. They work with families to keep children safe and offer support and guidance when families are struggling at home. This extends to supporting children across the summer break.

There have been no incidents that have required the use of physical intervention. Staff understand how to connect and communicate with children. This means incidents are often prevented. Staff demonstrate excellent practice by recognising and responding when children become agitated.

Staff receive high-quality training in effective safeguarding practice. They are aware of procedures and how to raise concerns. New staff receive informative training and are able to articulate how they would deal with emerging safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding is dealt with very promptly, offering a high level of support to children and their families.

Children do not go missing from the boarding provision. Children choose to stay and are heavily invested in the setting. They say they are safe and have positive relationships with staff and their peers. This was also observed during the inspection.

Parents say their children are kept safe and secure, which gives them peace of mind when their children come to stay.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

School leaders such as the headteacher and the head of care prioritise the needs of the children above all else and strongly advocate for their safety and well-being.

School leaders have a clear understanding of the progress children are making. They implement bespoke programmes and strategies to boost children's independence and self-esteem.

School leaders and managers are inspirational. They have created an open and transparent culture. School leaders are tenacious and regularly challenge others when they have concerns for children's welfare. If it is felt agencies have not fulfilled their duties, school leaders call meetings with the wider network to look at lessons learned and to hold people to account.

Leaders ensure staff are equipped to deal with conflict effectively. They deliver regular training to ensure staff are up to date with their knowledge. They proactively encourage continued professional development. They place staff on required diplomas very early in their employment, encouraging them to achieve the educational qualification alongside building practical experience.

Staff feel confident and well supported. They say they feel happy and settled and are confident to speak out if they have concerns, stating they would go to the governors or Ofsted if needed.

Leaders and managers regularly review and analyse how the provision is performing. They create targeted development plans. They make sure staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities to uphold the highest level of care to the children who board.

Leaders work closely with families and others to maintain excellent levels of communication. Staff have regular check-ins with parents to update them on the weekly progress of their child. Parents say their children are happy and school leaders and staff go above and beyond to help each child make progress.

Team meetings are held regularly. Whistle-blowing is a running agenda item, and safeguarding scenarios are role-played, to continue to upskill the team. Staff receive regular and effective supervision and appraisal. Staff say they have never had support like it. They feel valued for their contribution, and this positively impacts their day-to-day practice.

Feedback from professionals is incredibly positive. One social worker said, 'Leaders are always positive and great at communicating. They are also proactive in their approach to ensure children are well cared for.'

No unmet standards or points for improvement were issued during this inspection.

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/teacher in charge: Antony Clements

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Dan Williams, Social Care Inspector

Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector

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