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Ramsden Hall

Ramsden Hall School, 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 is a maintained residential special school for male pupils aged between 11 and 16 years. The school is situated on the outskirts of Billericay, with residential on the site, with 27 pupils residing at the school for between one and three nights a week. The school caters for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or education health care plan that deems them to have social, emotional and/or mental health needs.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 February 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 5 October 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children make good progress during their time in the school because of the residential provision.
- The children have the opportunity to build and maintain positive relationships with their peers and the adults looking after them.
- Staff use risk assessments comprehensively so that the children can engage in a wide variety of activities.
- All of the staff have completed safeguarding training. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- The children say that they enjoy staying in the residential provision because they like the staff and have fun.
- The children are fully involved in the plans for the new residential building.
- Staff have high aspirations for the children. The staff are proactive in considering how they can continually support the children.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The recruitment checks do not include records about gaps in employment history.
- The adults who live on site do not have a contractual agreement outlining their responsibilities.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 14.3 There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with children, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with children. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children have begun to make good academic and personal progress. They enjoy the positive experiences that this school offers. There is good evidence that children's progression across many areas has started to improve because of the extra support provided by the residential provision.

The children have the opportunity to build and maintain positive friendships. Children commented that they enjoy staying here because they get to be with their friends. A parent commented, 'Because of where we live and his needs, he has no friends in our area. This has given him the opportunity to make friends and spend quality time with them.'

The children have developed meaningful relationships with each other. When children are experiencing difficulties with each other, the staff come up with ways for the children to rebuild and repair relationships. Resilience is seen as an important part of the children's development and progress. The staff support them to learn how to recover from difficult situations in order for them to move on. The staff support the children to have restorative meetings with each other to help them reflect on the consequences of their behaviour on one another.

The children have built secure and positive relationships with staff members who know and understand their individual needs and who want them to make progress. The children were observed having positive relationships with staff. There was appropriate banter between the staff and children. A child commented, 'I love coming here, it's the best. We do loads of fun stuff and the staff are brilliant.'

Since the last inspection, the residential staff are using the school's computerised monitoring system to record the children's progress and behaviours. This means that all the staff can identify trends and patterns, and work together to support the children. The headteacher ensures that all staff across education and residential have training together, which supports consistency and joint working across the service. A member of staff commented that the school and residential are working closely together, which supports the children with progression and managing their behaviours.

The children are gaining confidence through learning life skills that increase their independence. The children are supported in keeping their rooms tidy and making their beds. A parent commented, 'He's become a lot more independent since staying in the residential. I think it's because his confidence has grown and he sees other boys doing things for themselves.'

The staff understand that transitions for the children and their families can be difficult. The school has a dedicated transition worker who supports the children and their families through this process. The children and parents are given a comprehensive handbook explaining the residential provision. The children have the opportunity to have an extended day with an evening meal before deciding if they

want to stay. The children have the choice as to whether they wish to use the residential provision. The staff commented that allowing the children to elect to stay has had a positive impact. Negative behaviours have decreased, attendance has improved and the children have made progress.

The school seeks and values the children's views. The school governors complete regular monitoring visits, and the children are consulted in a number of ways. Each residential flat has a representative that sits on the residential council taking forward the children's ideas. These ideas are recorded and the head of care responds in writing, which is read out at the following meeting. This shows that the children's wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on.

A new residential provision is due to be built and completed in 2019. The children are fully involved in this and, once work commences, they will meet with the contractors fortnightly. The children are involved in budgeting and planning the rooms, looking at designs and writing about the work which will be undertaken. This gives the children an opportunity to be involved in a large project in a learning environment.

The children are involved in a wide variety of activities both at school and in the community. These give the children the opportunity to develop relationships with their peers. The children regularly attend a local youth club. At first, staff attended with them until children questioned why staff needed to be there and asked if could attend independently. Staff listened and acted on the children's wishes.

There is a comprehensive list of activities that the children can enjoy while staying in the residential provision. The staff record how these activities can help with the children's development and education. For example, darts helps children learn mathematics and night walks encourage the children to read maps. The staff plan activities which are fun and support the children's academic learning.

The children have the opportunity to attend residential activities, which recently have included a sailing trip. This was planned with the children, who completed a workbook before and during the trip to ensure that they got the full benefit of the experience.

Meal times are seen as an important part of the residential provision. There is a wide variety and choice of options. The children are expected to be respectful during meal times. The staff teach the children table etiquette by eating with them and role modelling good behaviours. The kitchen staff choose a child who is awarded 'Manners of the week' and they receive a certificate.

The staff understand the importance of celebrating achievements. The children that gain all their points in school and exceed expectation are given a lottery ticket. These are drawn fortnightly and the children can earn a reward such as a gift voucher. The children in residential have a point system which they complete with staff at the end of each day. The children were able to explain this system and say that they like seeing how many points they can get. This provides incentives that the children value.

The older children are encouraged to be mentors to new or younger children in the

residential setting. This shows that staff understand the importance of children supporting each other and having responsibilities.

The staff understand the importance of teaching children empathy and understanding of others. They recently completed a 'wear pink' day in support of breast cancer and raised nearly £300. This enables the children to make a positive contribution.

The children are encouraged to personalise part of their bedrooms. There are photos of the children and the staff enjoying activities, as well as children's artwork, displayed around each of the flats, creating a child-friendly feel.

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

The effective implementation of safeguarding policies means that the children are safe. A safeguarding audit is completed bi-yearly and a copy is sent to the local safeguarding board. The safeguarding governor works closely with the headteacher to ensure that the school is working in line with the policies and procedures.

All of the staff have completed their safeguarding training and continue to receive ongoing training. All concerns are recorded on the school's monitoring system. These are appropriately reported and the child protection lead works with other agencies to ensure that safeguarding actions and outcomes are met. All of the staff spoken to had a good understanding of how to safeguard the children and how to report any concerns.

There are some shortfalls in the recruitment files, as there are gaps in some staff's employment history which the staff have not verified. There are some staff that live on site. Although contracts have been written, these are not comprehensive. There are no contracts in place for anyone living with staff who are over the age of 16 to ensure that they understand their responsibilities while living on site.

The children feel safe in the residential provision. A child commented, 'I feel safe because the staff lock all the doors at night and put the alarm on so no one can get in.' There is a wide variety of adults whom the children can speak to if they are worried or upset. All the children could name a member of staff they would speak to. There are contact numbers displayed around the accommodation of organisations that the children can contact, as well as a photo and contact details of the independent visitor.

The staff understand the importance of the children having new and meaningful experiences while learning to manage risk. The staff are not risk averse. They use comprehensive risk assessments to help them keep children safe while the children have the opportunity to learn new hobbies and skills in a safe environment.

The children know how to complain. They have been able to do this by completing a complaints form or through house meetings or the residential council meetings. The staff support the children in making a complaint if they wish. These are responded to and dealt with effectively, and the children are informed of the outcome and asked if

they are happy with the actions taken.

During the inspection, the children were polite and welcoming, and they spoke proudly of their achievements. The staff have a good understanding of the children's strengths and areas for development, as well as triggers for unwanted behaviours. Clear care plans support the staff in recognising any potential issues. This reduces behavioural incidents effectively. The residential staff and the education staff record behaviours and incidents on the school's data system, in addition to verbal handover sessions twice a day. This means that all of the staff are aware of any potential issues between the children and can put in extra strategies to support them if needed. This supports the staff to look at patterns and trends and adapt support plans accordingly.

There have been several incidents of bullying since the last inspection. These are recorded and the staff act appropriately. The victim and the perpetrator are spoken to and the children are supported to look at how their behaviour can affect others. The staff use a restorative approach, supporting the victim to talk through how the behaviour has affected them and for the perpetrator to have an understanding of the impact of their behaviour. This has been very successful in rebuilding and repairing relationships.

There have been no incidents of children going missing since the last inspection. The staff know what to do should this occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Senior managers in both the school and residential provision are dedicated and fully committed to providing effective and efficient leadership. This focus ensures that the children make good progress, have fun and are safe.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2017, but has worked in the school for five years and has the relevant experience and qualifications to manage the school. The acting head of care has a level four national vocational award and a degree in leadership and management. He has experience of managing the residential provision.

The staff communicate with parents and have regular contact with them. A parent commented, 'I get a call every Friday to let me know how he has been, but I can ring any time if I need to talk to staff and they will inform me of any incidents.' Regular communication helps give the children a consistent message.

The care that the children receive is good. The school and the residential provision work closely together to meet the children's individual needs. The headteacher meets the children from their taxis in the morning, again at the tuck shop and at various times throughout the day. The children were observed going in and out of her office on their way to lessons to tell her something. This provides availability for the children and the staff, and means that the children have another adult that they can speak to if they are worried or upset. The staff will join in with activities and learn new skills alongside the children, which supports and encourages the children to

participate.

There has been a shortage of staff in the residential provision. The staff commented that this has prevented some activities taking place. Two new staff have recently started and a third is due back to work next week. A senior member of staff from the school attends handovers and the staff from the school work alongside the staff in the residential provision. This practice means that the children know the staff that are looking after them and receive continuity of care.

All of the staff in residential have undertaken safeguarding training. The new staff have had experience of working with children and complete mandatory training. A new member of staff commented that she had found her induction supportive and this had given her a good insight into the children and working with them.

The school and residential provision are run by a forward-thinking management team that has a clear vision of how it wants to develop the school and residential provision, to have a fully holistic approach to ensure that the children fulfil their potential. The senior managers continue to drive the provision forward. The acting head of care has begun to make contact with the schools in the area to look at and share good practice to implement within the school and residential provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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

Executive Headteacher: Emma Baker

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Inspector

Trish Palmer, social care inspector



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