

Ramsden Hall School

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

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The acting headteacher, senior leaders and the interim executive board are effectively driving improvements forward, enabling the school to move out of special measures.
- Leaders have transformed the culture in the school so that it focuses sharply on good teaching, learning and behaviour. Together, they are ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- The school promotes pupils' physical well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have moved from inadequate at the previous inspection to good. Teachers set high expectations for learning and make good use of questioning to deepen pupils' thinking.
- Staff make good use of resources for learning and ensure that learning activities are matched to individual needs. They maintain good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and improves rapidly during their time in school. Exclusion rates have fallen considerably.
- The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to learning. Staff promote pupils' welfare effectively and safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, from their low starting points. Some pupils make outstanding progress in reading.
- Older pupils are making good progress towards their GCSE examination courses. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's marking policy to ensure pupils respond to the guidance given. This limits pupils' achievement.
- Occasionally, expectations for behaviour and pupils' engagement in learning are not high enough.
- A small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not attending as well as they should. Exclusion rates in Years 10 and 11 have an adverse effect on attendance and the curriculum does not always re-engage the oldest pupils with learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by making sure that teachers always:
 - apply the school's marking policy consistently to challenge pupils to respond to the guidance they are given about how to improve their work
 - ensure their expectations of pupils' behaviour are as high as their expectations for learning.

- Reduce the rate of persistent absence, particularly in Years 10 and 11, by:
 - making sure learning opportunities are provided to captivate the interests of these pupils so they re-engage with learning
 - further reducing exclusion rates.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and senior leaders are providing clear direction in effectively driving improvements forward, and are successfully creating an ethos where teaching, learning and good behaviour flourish. They are receiving good support from the interim executive board in addressing weaknesses in teaching, improving attendance and moving the school out of special measures. Leaders have significantly reduced the number of exclusions, including repeat exclusions. They rightly recognise that still more needs to be done to further improve attendance, especially in Years 10 and 11. As a result of good leadership and good teaching, pupils' achievements are now good. This was confirmed by inspection evidence, including discussions with pupils, staff and parents.
- Senior leaders have implemented rigorous procedures for managing the performance of staff through continuous monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Each half term, leaders look at the information from the tracking of pupils' progress. They use the outcomes of their frequent visits to lessons alongside this information, together with the work seen in pupils' books, to evaluate teaching and identify strengths and areas for development. Clear targets are set for improvement and these are supported with a programme of training, advice and guidance. This has led to good teaching and learning across the school.
- Subject leaders are developing their roles to ensure that teaching and learning continue to improve. They participate fully in meetings to discuss pupils' progress and ensure that any barriers to learning are quickly identified and remedied. Staff have developed detailed assessment systems to record and track the progress pupils are making across a wide range of subjects from their different starting points. They use the information from these assessments to improve their teaching and shape whole-school priorities for development.
- The curriculum is well planned and relevant to the needs of most pupils, except for a small minority in Years 10 and 11 who remain disaffected with learning. The school recognises this and has made significant improvements already to make learning more relevant to these pupils by extending the range of alternative education programmes and the addition of construction. The programme offered in design and technology has also improved considerably with better resources and the opportunity for pupils to enter for GCSE examination. Together, these actions are having a good impact on attendance, which has continued to rise and has improved by a further 6% since September 2015.
- At Key Stage 3, pupils are offered a wide range of subjects, with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. They receive effective careers advice which enables them to choose options in Year 9 relevant to their chosen pathways. The curriculum is personalised to match each pupil's interests and abilities, with an effective balance between academic and vocational courses. Pupils have good opportunities to attend courses run by external providers, such as catering and motor vehicle maintenance. As a result, attendance improves, pupils become more enthusiastic about learning, and they quickly make good progress.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, preparing them well for the responsibilities of adult life and the world of work. British values of democracy and respect for the rule of law are promoted effectively through well-chosen topics in personal, social and health education and citizenship, such as hearing the views of prison inmates about the crimes they have committed. Pupils learn right from wrong through: the code of conduct; topics on the harmful effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco; the programme of sex and relationships education; and the good role models staff provide. Pupils learn about different cultures by discussing news items, topics on different religions and cultures, and learning how to work together.
- Leaders use the additional pupil premium funding well to provide extra support to enable eligible pupils to catch up with their work and participate in the same activities outside lessons as their classmates.
- Leaders are enabling all pupils to participate in everything the school offers. They are making sure that any form of racism is dealt with effectively by promoting tolerance and respect for others. As a result, the number of incidents involving racist comments or prejudice-based behaviour has significantly reduced.
- The local authority is providing good support for the school through the consultant headteacher, who has helped leaders to develop more effective procedures for self-evaluation and school improvement.

■ The governance of the school

- The interim executive board is providing effective support for school leaders. Its members hold leaders to account for their work and regularly review policies to ensure that they are up to date and meeting requirements.
 - Members of the interim executive board have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how this is impacting on pupils' learning. They regularly review the school's information about the progress pupils are making and help to shape priorities for improvement where shortcomings are identified.
 - The board makes sure that the school provides good value for money in its use of pupil premium funding. It manages and reviews the performance of the headteacher well, and ensures that good teaching is recognised and any weaknesses are addressed.
 - Members of the interim executive board promote safeguarding effectively by regularly carrying out a detailed audit to ensure statutory requirements are met. They check that records of training and the single central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils is up to date.
 - The board holds the school to account for its promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school environment is safe and the school works closely with parents and external professionals to ensure that the interests and well-being of pupils are protected. This includes regularly checking attendance patterns, behaviour and progress of those pupils attending alternative provision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils' books and the school's tracking information about the progress pupils are making demonstrate that teaching, learning and assessment have moved from inadequate at the previous inspection to good. This is confirmed in visits to lessons over time where the school's records show that teaching in a range of subjects and across the school is leading to pupils' good learning and progress.
- Pupils' work across a range of subjects shows that teachers set high expectations for learning. Teachers constantly challenge pupils to think deeply through good use of questioning. In design and technology, pupils were challenged to improve their plans for tables and chairs by researching different designs before making them. In mathematics, the teacher constantly checked the progress pupils were making in converting fractions into decimals and in solving real-life problems using money, questioning them to check their understanding before providing them with further challenges.
- Good use of learning resources is seen in pupils' books and was confirmed during lesson visits. In food technology, pupils use a variety of ingredients and follow recipes to produce high-quality products, such as French bread, pizzas, cakes and pasta. In art, teachers encourage pupils to use a variety of media in their artwork, for example to decorate boomerangs using laminated cards with Aboriginal symbols and their meanings. Teachers ensure that all pupils complete different activities matched to their individual needs.
- Staff maintain good relationships with pupils and promote a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils say they respect their teachers and now enjoy learning.
- Staff provide good support for disadvantaged pupils, those with additional special educational needs and those who need to catch up quickly. As a result, these pupils make equally good progress as their classmates.
- Teachers are successfully developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects, such as humanities, personal, social and health education, science, and construction.
- Teachers make good use of pupils' prior learning to plan sequences of lessons matched to different learning needs. They provide good feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and usually provide them with suitable guidance on how to improve their work. However, they do not always apply the school's marking policy consistently enough in checking that pupils respond to their guidance. Consequently, this limits pupils' achievement.
- Parents say that they receive good information from teachers about the progress their children are making in different subjects.
- Teachers are promoting equality of opportunity well in lessons by ensuring that all pupils have full access to learning. They usually manage behaviour well, although occasionally expectations for behaviour and pupils' engagement in learning are not high enough. In a few cases, teachers do not intervene quickly enough when disruption occurs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff provide good role models and effective support within a safe and caring structured environment, such as the nurturing environment in Redwood for Year 7 pupils. This ensures that pupils settle into routines and engage with learning quickly.
- Staff promote safeguarding well. They maintain good links with external agencies to ensure all pupils learn and make progress. They carefully check pupils' safety and well-being when they attend alternative provision. Staff offer good guidance and support to enable pupils to make choices about their future training and employment after school. All these factors contribute well to the progress pupils make. As a result, the majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to school and most improve their behaviour and attendance.
- Pupils are increasing their awareness of different types of bullying. Staff discuss with pupils the impact of bullying and prejudiced behaviour on others. As a result, there has been a marked decrease in the number of incidents of bullying and prejudiced behaviour, including racism.
- Robust procedures are in place to safeguard the interests and welfare of pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe in school, when attending alternative provision, and when taking part in school trips and visits. Pupils abide by the rules of safety across the school and always wear protective clothing, handling equipment safely in practical activities.
- Staff are vigilant in checking that pupils are using mobile phones and the internet safely. Parents praised the work of staff in promoting their children's safety and well-being. Pupils also confirmed that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They want to change their behaviour for the better and usually reflect on the impact of their actions on others. They learn to take turns, share, listen to and respect the views of others. They are courteous and helpful to visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There has been a rapid decline in the rate of exclusions and incidents of challenging behaviour. The number of racist incidents has also declined sharply.
- At the last inspection, learning was continuously disrupted and many pupils walked out during lessons, refusing to re-engage with learning. Leaders, staff, parents and pupils confirm that pupils' conduct and behaviour in lessons and around the school are now typically good. Occasional incidents of disruption do occur, and most are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to learning. Most pupils focus on their learning and ignore any disruption when it occurs. They listen carefully to their teachers, follow instructions and take a pride in their work. Pupils' books show that they take a pride in their work.
- Pupils' attendance has risen steadily since the last inspection, with a strong increase since September 2015. The majority of pupils have progressed from low levels of attendance to above-average attendance. However, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not attending as well as they should and remain disaffected with learning, despite some improvement in their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils enter the school at various times during the year with low levels of attainment, often because they have experienced previous disruption to their learning. They make good progress in their academic and vocational subjects from their starting points and their achievement is good.
- At Key Stage 3, pupils' work and the information about their progress over time shows that they are making rapid gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects and activities such as art, computing and science. Most make expected progress in rapidly narrowing the gap between their prior attainment and their potential, and a significant number make more than expected progress.

- Pupils across the school make good progress in mathematics, reading, writing, and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Some make outstanding progress in reading over time, gaining more than six years in reading age within two years at school. The majority of pupils in Year 11 are already reading at the levels expected for their ages. They make good progress in applying their writing and mathematical skills across a range of academic and vocational subjects.
- Pupils at Key Stage 4 continue to make good progress, especially towards their examination courses. In 2014 and 2015, their attainment was low, with insufficient pupils gaining five or more GCSEs, including mathematics and English.
- The school's accurate records of the attainment and progress of current pupils show that most are on course to achieve five GCSE grades A* to G, including English and mathematics, which is a significant rise in attainment from 2015. For example, six pupils out of 10 have been entered for GCSE design and technology, with most of these pupils on course to attain a B or C grade.
- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have recently been entered for the functional skills examinations in English, mathematics and computing. Many of these pupils will be then be entered for GCSE mathematics and English.
- Pupils are making equally good progress in vocational subjects, such as construction, with many doing much better than expected in moving from a pass to a merit within five weeks. Pupils attending alternative providers are making good progress in catering and motor vehicle maintenance.
- Pupils make good progress in preparing for the world of work and independent living because the school usually provides work experience matched to pupils' future career choices.
- Pupils with additional disabilities and special educational needs, those who need to catch up quickly and the most able are making equally good progress from their different starting points. This was seen in their work and confirmed in the school's accurate records of progress over time for different groups of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making the same progress as their classmates in English and mathematics because good support is provided for their learning. There are achieving below other pupils nationally, but the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally is currently narrowing considerably as a result of higher expectations for their learning.
- Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have developed negative attitudes to learning during the time the school has spent in special measures. The school is trying hard to re-engage them in learning with limited success, which has had a negative impact on their achievement.

School details

Unique reference number	115449
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10008119

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The interim executive board
Chair	Nick Pavitt
Headteacher	Garry Walker (acting headteacher)
Telephone number	01277 624580
Website	www.ramsdenhall.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@ramsdenbillericay.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 January 2014

Information about this school

- Ramsden Hall School is a weekly residential special school for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. Nineteen pupils reside at the school for one to four nights a week.
- Pupils are referred to the school from Essex County Council and surrounding local authorities.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Most of them have additional disabilities or special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- Most pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. More pupils than average start or leave the school part-way through their education.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who receive support from pupil premium funding is high. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative providers for part of their education. These include: Rally Sports Academy in the Wickford Action Learning Centre, Downham; BEP Group, Chelmsford; and the café in St Peter's Hospital, Maldon.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was operating from two sites 40 miles apart. Now the school is operating on a single site. The school was placed in special measures at the previous inspection and has subsequently received five monitoring visits by Ofsted to determine how much progress it was making in meeting its areas for improvement.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has been replaced with an interim executive board, a new acting headteacher has taken up post and the leadership team has been re-organised. The school has also received support from a consultant headteacher. The school has applied for conversion to an academy and expects this to be established by April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons jointly with senior leaders, including a visit to an alternative provider to see pupils engaging in motor vehicle maintenance. They looked at samples of pupils' work in each year group across a range of subjects, including design and technology, food technology, horticulture and art.
- Inspectors examined and discussed the information from the school's tracking system and data with a senior leader to determine the progress pupils are making in different subjects at school and at alternative providers.
- Inspectors held a meeting with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. They also held informal discussions with different pupils at breaktimes, lunchtime and during breakfast. They held telephone discussions with a small number of parents and looked at the school's own survey of parents to seek their views as there were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school's evaluation of its own work; minutes of meetings of the interim executive board; records of exclusions, attendance and behaviour at school and at alternative providers; and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Inspectors held different meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the interim executive board. A further meeting was held with the consultant headteacher and a local authority representative to discuss the emerging inspection findings.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

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Susan Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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