

Inspection of The Ramsey Academy, Halstead

Colne Road, Halstead, Essex CO9 2HR

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 September 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Requires improvement**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Charlotte Sterland. This school is part of the Bridge Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark Farmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dr Margaret Wilson.

What is it like to attend this school?

At the Ramsey Academy, pupils like and respect their teachers. Staff provide strong support. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). If pupils have any concerns, they feel confident telling staff. The school is a safe place.

Recently, pupils have benefited from raised expectations of what they can achieve. They now learn an ambitious curriculum. Pupils produce high-quality work, such as beautiful artwork. They learn what they need to move successfully on to their next steps.

Behaviour is inconsistent. The majority of the time, pupils behave well and focus in lessons. However, at times, there is noisy and unsettled behaviour. This frustrates pupils who want to learn. Breaktimes are mostly orderly. Pupils are polite and friendly, such as opening doors for adults. Yet behaviour around the site can sometimes be unsettled. Some bullying happens. It gets addressed by the school, but in some instances it persists. A lot of parents have concerns about behaviour.

The closure of parts of the site has disrupted pupils' experience of school. This has not been the school's fault. There has also been some instability in staffing. These issues have affected behaviour. Staffing has now settled.

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

Standards in the school declined as it emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. The trust has worked effectively with leaders to reverse this. The school has established a strong vision for the quality of education. Where leaders have applied particular focus, such as the curriculum and attendance, the improvement is evident. In some areas, especially around behaviour, there is more to do.

There is a broad and well-considered curriculum. Pupils learn the building blocks that they need to succeed, such as subject-specific terminology. The school reviewed the curriculum in response to poor results in national tests in 2023. Pupils are now doing well.

Mostly, teachers deliver the curriculum successfully. They explain and model new content clearly. Staff ensure that learning is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers regularly revisit what pupils have learned previously. This means that in most cases pupils remember and apply what they learn. For example, Year 7 pupils confidently use knowledge about Victorian society to understand a Charles Dickens novel. While this is mostly the case, on occasion teachers do not check pupils' understanding thoroughly in lessons. Where this happens, pupils move on to new content with some gaps remaining in their learning.

In general, pupils develop their reading well. For example, science teachers break down the vocabulary in complex texts so that pupils read them confidently. However, pupils who are still in the early stages of reading do not get the help they should. Staff provide one-to-one reading support but have not had training in important areas such as phonics. This

means that pupils in the early stages of reading do not improve their reading as much as they might.

The school has implemented a new, clear behaviour policy. Expectations have risen. This has led to an increase in the issuing of consequences, such as suspensions. Corridors and classrooms have become calmer places. Attendance has improved significantly. However, pupils who are issued with consequences often repeat the same behaviours. The school is not effective enough at teaching pupils why positive behaviour is important. Consequently, pupils do not learn sufficiently to manage their own conduct.

There is a coherent and effective curriculum for personal development. Pupils learn important content, such as regarding online safety. They articulate their understanding well. Year 11 pupils value the way careers education has prepared them to make informed choices. Pupils with SEND access opportunities that meet their needs. However, the extra-curricular offer is not extensive. Some pupils do not participate in many activities. This means sometimes pupils do not buy into the life of the school as fully as they otherwise might.

Trustees and governors keep a close oversight of provision. They offer an appropriate blend of challenge and support. This has helped the school improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in the early stages of reading do not get the quality of support they should. This means they are not given the tools they need to become more confident readers and this has an impact on their learning. The school needs to put in place an effective programme of support for the weakest readers.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding thoroughly in lessons. This means that gaps in learning are not addressed as quickly or well as they might be. The school needs to ensure teachers get the guidance and support they need to check learning successfully.
- The school does not deal effectively enough with the underlying causes of misbehaviour. As a result, pupils' misbehaviour tends to recur. The school needs to teach pupils more successfully why positive conduct is important so that pupils learn to manage their own behaviour better.
- Some pupils do not engage as much as they could with the school's extra-curricular offer. This sometimes leads to a lack of buy-in from pupils into the wider life of the school. The school should enhance its extra-curricular provision so that there is a deeper engagement from pupils and a greater sense of community.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139248
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345354
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	752
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dr Margaret Wilson
CEO of the trust	Mark Farmer
Headteacher	Charlotte Sterland
Website	www.ramseyacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	8 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bridge Academy Trust.
- The headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2022.
- The school has experienced some disruption to the site. This has been caused by the buildings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. Some sections of the site have been closed to pupils. This has led to some lessons being taught in spaces other than classrooms.
- The school uses three registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the trust, other trust leaders, the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. As part of evaluating governance and the work of the trust, the lead inspector met with two trustees and the chair of the local governance committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, science, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including curriculum plans, school development plans, policies and documentation for behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection. They considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector

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