

Romans Field School

Shenley Road, Milton Keynes, MK3 7AW

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher has led the school exceptionally well. She has built an effective senior team and together they have significantly improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- As a result of her leadership, there have been significant improvements in all aspects of the school's organisation and effectiveness.
- Teaching is now consistently good. Teachers plan activities that are matched to pupils' abilities and learning needs.
- The rate of pupils' progress has increased significantly this year. Almost every pupil has made progress in line with national expectations and a growing minority have made rapid progress.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because the subjects they study are well planned and interest them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because it is consistently well managed. There are clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour which the pupils understand and follow.
- The effectiveness of the governing body has substantially improved since the previous inspection. Governors are beginning to develop consistent strategies to challenge and support the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On some occasions, teaching assistants, particularly those who are relatively new to their role, do not effectively support individual pupils in their learning.
- The work of governors does not always systematically provide strategic direction for the school's leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in seven lessons, all of which were joint observations with a senior staff member. The inspector also observed the pupils in an assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, support staff, a group of governors including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. A meeting was also held with representatives of the school council to gain their views on their own safety and enjoyment of school. A small group of pupils were heard reading.
- The inspector took into account the school's own surveys of parents' opinions, gained since September 2014. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, (Parent View) to be included.
- Questionnaires from 22 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's review of its own progress and forward planning. Records of pupils' progress and achievement in academic and personal development and their behaviour were analysed. Monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and the performance management of staff were considered. The inspector also looked at attendance records and reviewed the safeguarding arrangements for the pupils.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband,

Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Romans Field is a small special school for pupils, aged seven to 13, with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Some pupils also have associated learning difficulties. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Many pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools.
- Most pupils are White British. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium (additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is above average.
- The school admits boys and girls, but there are currently only a small number of girls attending the school.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the skills of teaching assistants so that they consistently and effectively support pupils' learning.
- Ensure that the governing body systematically challenges the school as it continues to develop.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, ably supported by a committed team of senior staff, has made very significant improvements to the quality of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress. There is now strong and effective teaching across the school. Teachers and other adults are enthusiastic about the school's progress. Several staff commented that the new leadership has been 'like a breath of fresh air' in revitalising the school. There is high staff morale.
- In this small school, there are a very small number of middle leaders. Currently, senior staff monitor all aspects of teaching and the delivery of learning activities for pupils. They regularly check teachers' performance and provide high levels of further training. Teachers welcome the supportive and detailed monitoring of their work and the opportunities for development of their skills. They are aware that they are fully accountable for the pupils' progress and that pay awards are linked to the quality of their work.
- Senior leaders rigorously and systematically check the progress of each pupil. There were few records before the headteacher's arrival in September 2014. Now, each pupil's progress is carefully checked and recorded each half term. Well-organised, extra support is quickly put in place should a pupil start to fall behind. Over the year, the rate of pupils' progress has accelerated due to these checks and the rapid rise in the quality of teaching.
- There is no discrimination at the school and all the pupils have an equal opportunity to do as well as they can. The very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive a high level of additional support which enables them to make good progress in their language development. Pupils with additional learning needs are supported well and make good progress.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils, the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up', is used effectively to raise their performance. The school has used this funding to increase the levels of individual and small group support and has provided extensive training for all staff in reading development, including phonics (the sounds and shapes of letters and words). As a result, the eligible pupils have made good progress, at the same rate as other pupils.
- The headteacher and other leaders check on each aspect of the school's work relentlessly. This has led to detailed, realistic and ambitious plans for the school's development. Leaders are aware of occasional inconsistencies in the quality of support given to individual pupils by teaching assistants.
- Over the previous year, the local authority provided strong and effective support to promote the school's improvement through effective monitoring of the school's development.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance and behaviour are good. They are interested in the subjects they study. These are well adapted to their ability and learning needs.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is uniformly good and pupils make increasingly rapid progress. Leaders ensure that opportunities to practise reading, writing and aspects of numeracy are built into every lesson. This promotes the pupils' literacy and number skills in a wide range of contexts and contributes significantly to their good progress.
- The school develops pupils' personal development and behaviour well. There are high levels of daily activities in personal, social and health education, including many planned whole-class discussions about respecting, fostering good relations and valuing others. Pupils gradually learn to be responsible for their own conduct and learn how their behaviour affects others.
- The school develops pupils' awareness of what it means to be a modern British citizen. Pupils learn in depth about democracy through the work of the school council, through agreeing a 'class charter' of rules and responsibilities and through regular school surveys of their opinions and views about the school's organisation. Pupils learn about the need for laws and rules, helped by contributions from the local community police constable. They learn about how to value and exercise their personal freedoms and rights. They are taught effectively about the diversity of faiths and cultures in modern Britain. One class each day shares in a 'British values' breakfast where adults and pupils discuss relevant issues of tolerance and respect. This work is effectively complemented by many visits to places of worship and other places of interest in the community.
- Additional sports funding has been used effectively to train staff and to introduce pupils to a wide range of physical activities. The teaching of physical education is now more effective, more pupils actively participate and they make good progress.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' academic, personal and physical development well. It has a strong impact on the pupils' improving behaviour and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School leaders have worked successfully to establish effective communication with parents. Staff make

regular telephone contact and parents value the 'home-school book'. Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the school's work.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is well organised and effective. The school's leaders ensure all statutory requirements are met and as a result pupils feel very safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The effectiveness of governors has significantly improved since the previous inspection when an external review of their effectiveness was undertaken. Led by a very experienced Chair, the governing body has been reorganised. It provides a rapidly developing level of challenge and support to the school. This is not yet systematic enough to ensure that governors are able confidently to monitor all aspects of the school's work. Governors are taking advantage of the significant training opportunities offered by the local authority.
 - Governors have instituted effective strategies to check on the progress of pupils, including those with additional needs. They are developing strong procedures to monitor the impact of additional funding and the quality of teaching. They ensure that pay awards for teachers and other staff are soundly based on the performance of staff. Governors have a growing understanding of the levels of pupils' achievement and well-being. They effectively check on the pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Governors ensure that current statutory regulations, for instance, in safeguarding, are fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils quickly develop positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy their activities and establish warm relationships with adults who support them. They take pride in their work and are confident to display it in the classrooms and corridors. This is a significant improvement in their behaviour after previously troubled relationships in other schools. Improved behaviour and attitudes to learning are having a positive impact on their increased rate of progress.
- Disruption to learning is increasingly rare. The school's records indicate that incidents of challenging behaviour have decreased rapidly over the year. The number of pupils asked to remain at home, due to poor behaviour, has been substantially reduced since September 2014. Teachers manage behaviour effectively. School leaders regularly review the occasions when there are incidents of poor behaviour. Their analysis has led to changes in the timing of lessons and lunchtimes.
- Adults know the pupils very well. They provide good role models for pupils and the pupils are confident that adults will give them effective support should they be upset and when experiencing difficulty with their work. Over time, the pupils gain a good understanding of how to regulate their own conduct and how their behaviour can affect the happiness and well-being of others.
- The pupils behave well outside of classrooms. Breaks and lunchtimes are quiet and the pupils behave with courtesy and respect for others. Parents are satisfied that behaviour has improved and is now good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are extremely effective and well organised. Staff are very well trained.
- The pupils gain a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe through specific lessons in how to identify dangers, including internet risks. The many trips into the local community and beyond show them how to behave and keep safe in different situations. They are regularly visited by the community police officer.
- Bullying is increasingly rare in the school. Pupils say that they are confident that when it does occur, adults deal with it swiftly and fairly.
- Romans Field is a harmonious place of learning and pupils enjoy coming to school. As a consequence, their attendance is above that typically found in similar schools. For most pupils, this is a substantial improvement on their previous attendance at a mainstream school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Over the last year, there has been a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. Teaching is consistently good with some teaching that is outstanding. As a result, the pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.
- Leaders have high expectations of the teachers' performance and teachers have corresponding high expectations of their pupils. The pupils are set challenging targets. Activities are well planned to build on

what the pupils know and understand and are adapted successfully to take account of each pupil's needs and abilities. The most able are stretched appropriately to achieve more highly.

- Reading is taught particularly well. Daily lessons reinforce and extend the pupils' confidence with phonics skills. They read a range of fiction and texts which give them information across the range of subjects. The school library has been extensively enlarged and re-equipped. These strategies have enabled the pupils to make very good reading progress.
- Writing is well promoted and as a result the pupils have made good progress in writing clear sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. Pupils have extensive practise in writing sentences and longer pieces. Teachers ensure that they practise and develop their writing skills in each lesson, particularly their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Mathematics is taught well. Activities challenge the pupils to make good progress. Teachers have the responsibility to build in opportunities for practise of number skills and other concepts, such as shape and size, across a range of lessons. For example, the pupils measure and weigh in cookery and physical education and demonstrate their awareness of shape and size in art.
- Teaching assistants are regularly briefed on the needs of individual students and adapt their support accordingly. However, on occasions, this is less effective, when those who are new to the role have not received sufficient training to ensure they always support pupils' learning effectively.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and make sure that the pupils know how well they have done and precisely what they should do to improve it. This has been effective in increasing the pupils' confidence and motivation to succeed and has had a strong impact on their good progress. On many occasions, pupils evaluate their own success and this leads to productive discussions with their teachers about how to make their work better.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school has very few records of pupils' progress before September 2014. The headteacher has introduced robust and comprehensive systems of checking on and tracking the pupils' progress. Initial assessments revealed that pupils generally enter the school, often at different times during the school year, with attainment well below that typical for their age. Their attainment generally remains below what is expected in mainstream schools.
- Despite this, almost every pupil, in all year groups, has made good progress over the year and the rate of progress continues to accelerate. A growing minority of pupils have made rapid progress. The school sets challenging targets for each pupil. Almost all pupils are on course to meet these targets. There is strong evidence in pupils' books that they achieve well.
- The pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. There has been particularly good progress in reading due to an extensive training programme for staff and the rigorous checks on the pupils' achievement. There are detailed plans to improve writing standards still further. Almost all the pupils meet their targets in mathematics through good teaching and the high expectations of the pupils' achievement.
- The pupils' good progress in literacy and numeracy has a very positive effect on their confidence and improved achievement in a range of subjects. After a history of poor relationships in previous schools, the pupils become confident and enthusiastic learners. This prepares them well for the next stages in their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who attract additional funding, make equally good progress to other pupils in school. There are no differences between their performance and that of their classmates. Some individuals have made rapid and sustained improvement this academic year. There are similarly no differences in the progress of pupils with additional learning difficulties, and those who speak English as an additional language, and their peers. The most able pupils have increasingly challenging targets and as a result, are making good progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110580
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	462389

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Read
Headteacher	Diane Elleman
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 June 2013
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