

Roman Fields

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136247
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	382046
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	10–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Margaret Angele (Consultant headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	11 Box Lane Hemel Hempstead HP3 0DF
Telephone number	01442 256915
Fax number	01442 254359
Email address	admin@romanfields.herts.sch.uk

Age group	10–18
Inspection date(s)	7–8 February 2012
Inspection number	382046



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. A total of seven lessons taught by seven different teachers were observed on site, which constituted three and a half hours of inspection time. The inspector also observed off-site provision that complements the curriculum. Meetings were held with senior leaders, the student council, representatives of the management committee and the local authority, the authority's autism advisory teacher and the unit's educational psychologist. In addition, informal meetings were held with many of the students and staff during communal sessions. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the unit's work, and looked at documentation on the curriculum and schemes of work, tracking data and students' work. A range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding, were scrutinised. The inspector analysed the ten questionnaires received from parents and carers, together with those from staff and students, and took one parental phone call.

Information about the school

Roman Fields makes alternative educational provision for students who have been permanently excluded, or are at severe risk of permanent exclusion, from school. It is designated as a pupil referral unit and is around the average size for such institutions. Students come from across the whole of Hertfordshire and all current students are in Key Stage 4 or the small sixth form. They are usually registered on a full-time basis, but an element of outreach support for local secondary schools is being developed. All students have a statement of special educational needs and the unit forms part of the local authority's planning to reduce the need for out of county placements for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, or similar special educational needs. All except three of the students are boys, while four are in the care of the local authority. The proportion who come from minority ethnic communities is well below that usually found and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally.

The unit was registered in November 2010 and this constitutes its first inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good pupil referral unit that is meeting the objectives for which it was established.
- Students' attainment is low because of previously broken education, but achievement is good when progress from their individual starting points is taken into consideration. The unit maximises individual progress through effective teaching and learning which challenges students to become engaged and do their best. Sixth form provision is good.
- Behaviour is good and the systems for dealing with challenging behaviour enable all students to learn in a safe environment. Students enhance their feelings of self-awareness and self-confidence, and the support they give each other reflects good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Systems for monitoring teaching show that the overall quality is good. However, as student numbers have grown, some sessions are led by sessional teachers which affect opportunities for developing their expertise and effective performance management.
- Individual or very small group provision enables students who have challenging behaviour to get on well together and learn effectively, so that their special educational needs are well met.
- Detailed tracking of progress from initial starting points allows the unit to gain a clear picture of individual achievements in learning and in social and emotional development. However, the unit does not currently integrate these different areas of monitoring into a single format that shows overall progress and development together.
- The consultant headteacher and the teacher-in-charge provide good leadership. They have a clear vision that has enabled the unit to be successful and there is good capacity to sustain improvement. Staff show strong commitment to the students, which helps explain the positive and harmonious atmosphere that pervades the life of the unit.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the tracking of individual progress by ensuring that all students have:
 - an individual profile that brings together educational, social and emotional developments into a single document
 - an individual education plan that contains clear targets for educational, emotional and social progress combining evidence from teaching and from mentoring.
- As the numbers of students on roll increases, ensure that there are sufficient full-time members of staff to meet identified needs, with a reduction in the need to employ sessional staff.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is low because students have histories of severely fragmented education. However, tracking shows they make good progress in relation to their starting points so that their achievement is good. Carefully tailored individual programmes enable everyone to work towards a range of external qualifications. This reflects the wide range of academic ability of students. Some do not arrive at Roman Fields until well on in Key Stage 4. While most leave at 16, late arriving students can benefit from the sixth form provision, which gives them time to engage with effective learning and demonstrate successful outcomes. Progress is measured in terms of academic, social and emotional development. Success is reflected in a comment made by a parent who said, 'My son's whole outlook on life has changed, he has achieved in ways I never felt he would'. Parents and carers are generally appreciative of the progress they see their young people making. Currently, there is no process for recording of academic, social and emotional progress in a single format, despite all three being seen as key elements. An overall picture is, therefore, not easily obtained at first glance, although all the information is there.

Every student has an individualised learning programme but all focus on developing the core skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology. As a result of the good progress they make, students are successful in moving on to courses in further education or into employment. Learning packages are well supported by placements with a range of external providers. Great care is taken to match the abilities and interests of students to placements, such as those in horticulture, plumbing or motor mechanics, which are monitored with care. They are, therefore, successful, several students saying they are developing expertise they would like to use in future employment.

Quality of teaching

The majority of teaching is one to one in quite informal settings. It is good because it

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

addresses specific individual needs, supporting students in making good progress and improving communication skills. As students grow in confidence and refine their social skills, they can learn in small group settings, such as a GCSE English group in which students were analysing the characters in the novel 'Of Mice and Men' with considerable perception and enjoyment. The small sixth form group are able to grow in confidence and demonstrate positive learning because they are taught effectively. Teaching assistants work effectively in supporting effective learning and there is a strong rapport between adults and students throughout the unit. This increases students' feelings of self-worth and they engage willingly in learning, sometimes for the first time. One parent, typical of support for the effectiveness of teaching, said, 'Everything about Roman Fields suits (my son's) disabilities and gives him the skills and confidence to develop and grow'. External providers who complement the provision with their expertise give learning an added relevance. The importance given to developing students' social skills and helping them to develop a better understanding of the options and challenges facing them reflects the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision for the students.

Teachers have high expectations, while appreciating the difficulties faced by students. They are quick to support and slow to criticise and, as a result, learning takes on a positive nature as students become engaged and motivated. The planned curriculum extends the knowledge, skills and understanding of all students. Students are keen to say that they enjoy their learning because they have such positive relationships with teachers. Lesson plans acknowledge the nature of learning difficulties and show the strategies that will be used to help overcome them. This reflects the detailed knowledge that teachers have of their students. Students are also allocated a mentor who works closely at a pastoral level, although there is room for more dovetailed working and recording of students' progress with their teachers. Since all learning programmes include elements of citizenship and of personal, social and health education, opportunities are taken to develop students' understanding of the diversity of society and the need to be a positive member of the community. This is reflected in good photographic displays of celebrations of world festivals and some vibrant artwork that has been done by students around the unit.

As a consequence of its success, the unit has grown and some teaching is currently undertaken by teachers employed on a sessional basis. While they share the same commitment to ensuring the success of students, they are not so involved in opportunities for professional development and have fewer chances to benefit from discussing their classroom practice with leaders and managers. This puts them at a comparative disadvantage compared with other colleagues.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and staff all comment on the positive behaviour in the unit even though a high proportion of students are admitted as a result of previous behavioural and emotional difficulties. This view is also seen in the students' questionnaires, which reflect stronger belief that behaviour is good the longer a student has attended. Some of the oldest students have now been trained to act as peer

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

mentors, reflecting a transformation in their attitudes towards making a positive contribution since they first arrived. Behaviour is, therefore, seen to improve over time and that observed during the inspection was very positive. In class, this reflected the commitment to learning; and around the unit generally, it reflected the strong sense of community and a positive rapport. For example, the whole unit community comes together for lunch which reflects a commitment to healthy diets and also to the enjoyment of each other's company in a social setting. Students enjoy coming to the unit and a large majority attend very regularly. A small group find it hard to come every day, sometimes as result of medical difficulties, but the unit works very hard to promote attendance and individual attendance is in many cases transformed since being admitted.

As students develop stronger self-awareness they increasingly appreciate the need to get on with others and respect their views. They develop an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. In the response to the questionnaire statement 'The school deals with all types of bullying very well', one student wrote that he had never seen any bullying, so could not comment. Students all say that when incidents of any kind occur, staff and sometimes students themselves move quickly to prevent any escalation. Cyber-bullying has been addressed well and students are well aware of the risks that it can pose. Parents and carers are right in their view that the unit keeps their young people safe.

Leadership and management

The consultant headteacher was appointed by the local authority to establish this new type of provision as part of its wider strategy to retain young people who might otherwise have attended residential out of county provision. She has implemented a radical design for meeting the needs of challenging young people in a way that sees them re-engaged with learning and emerging as positive members of their community. This includes effective leadership of the sixth form. Although only in its second year since being incorporated as a pupil referral unit, it can point to success in the outcomes for students who have attended and moved on to college or employment. On a day-to-day level, the headteacher is strongly supported by the teacher-in-charge and, between them, they have established a strong team of professionals who show a clear commitment to supporting the students and helping them transform their educational experience. Members of the management committee have been chosen to bring a range of valuable and relevant expertise to support the unit and they fulfil their role effectively, demonstrating positive commitment. This includes the responsibilities to promote effective safeguarding, which has a high priority that includes detailed training.

The curriculum is highly individualised, supporting students in coming to terms with their difficulties and developing a sense of self-worth that comes from experiencing success. This promotes good behaviour, and equality of opportunity, as students benefit from having their individual learning needs addressed. It also supports strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders and managers prioritise areas for development and are effective in utilising resources to maximise the

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

effectiveness of the provision. There is, therefore, a strong capacity to sustain improvement into the future. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are appreciative of the work being done in helping their young people to succeed, often for the first time.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Roman Fields, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 0DF

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave me on my recent visit to Roman Fields. I was glad I had the chance to talk with many of you and give you the opportunity to tell me what you thought of the place.

It was clear to me that you feel you have opportunities to do well and I agree. I am pleased to say that you go to a good pupil referral unit. You have the opportunity to learn and to succeed, which I realise has sometimes been difficult in the past. Because you all follow individual programmes, teachers are able to address your specific needs while at the same time helping you all improve your skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. You told me you get on well with your teachers and I could see that they like you as well. This creates a very positive atmosphere for learning. You all get on well together and I really enjoyed having lunch with you all in such a positive atmosphere – the food was nice as well!

In order to make the place even better, I have asked for a couple of things to be looked at. Firstly, there should be a single record that shows how each of you has improved your learning alongside improving your social and emotional skills – at the moment they are separate records and it is not always easy to get a clear overall picture. Secondly, some of your teachers are not employed full time, but just for the time they spend with you. This means they miss out on opportunities for helping them to develop their teaching skills so they can be even better at teaching you. I have asked if more of them could be employed full time.

Since Roman Fields opened, it has shown it can be successful in helping you to get more out of learning and to be successful before you leave school. You are playing your part by becoming positive learners and this is standing you in good stead for getting a college place or a job. Well done and good luck.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**