

Romans Field School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110580
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	356775
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Bennett
Headteacher	Wayne Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2008
School address	Shenley Road Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire MK3 7AW
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Age group	8–13
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

Social care inspector

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one social care inspector. Opportunities for lesson observations were limited, as two of the six classes were out of school on the second day on educational visits. Six lessons were observed, involving six different teachers, as well as an art therapy session. Meetings were held with school leaders, groups of pupils, the residential care coordinator and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including assessment and attendance data, behaviour and incident logs, and safeguarding policies and procedures. The 15 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by staff and pupils.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of the residential provision and extended day in supporting pupils' learning and personal development, and in enriching their curriculum.
- Leaders' use of statistical information to determine pupils' progress, and their analysis of data to check the rate of progress made by different groups, such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The use of partnerships to extend the curriculum for individuals and groups of pupils.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's behaviour management strategies.

Information about the school

Romans Field is a smaller-than-average special school. Its admissions criteria have changed since the previous inspection, with effect from September 2010. Pupils are now admitted from the age of eight years, when previously it was six, and they stay until the end of Year 8 instead of Year 6. Boarding arrangements have also altered. The weekly boarding places available have reduced from 25 to five. Up to 10 pupils can make use of this arrangement, however, as each one only boards for two nights each week. As a consequence of this, the school developed an extended day to enable day pupils to pursue after-school activities up to 8.00pm, Monday to Thursday. At the time of the inspection, 18 pupils were making use of the extended day on one day a week. This facility is available for around 10 pupils each evening, including those who are boarding that night.

Although the school can admit girls, there are none on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Almost half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A very large majority of pupils have a White British background.

The school acquired Healthy Schools status for the first time in 2010, and it also has the Activemark. A newly appointed headteacher will take up post in September 2011.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Romans Field is a good school. Good residential provision makes an important contribution to pupils' achievement and personal development. A parent who commented, 'I am really happy with the school, and so is my child' reflects the views of parents and carers generally, pupils and staff. Children and adults are happy and feel comfortable in the school. Outstanding relationships are a feature of Romans Field. High quality interactions take place throughout the day and they contribute greatly to the promotion of pupils' personal development, emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem. Pupils make good progress in these aspects of personal growth. They behave well in class and around school and at break times.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average. They make good progress and achieve well. The first students to enter Key Stage 3, in 2010, have made a good start to their studies. Teaching is good overall, as teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and they manage pupils' behaviour very well. Staff use assessment information well to ensure that pupils have learning activities that match their needs, even though the lesson plans themselves do not always highlight precisely what staff want individuals or groups of pupils to learn. The targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) do not consistently feature highly enough in lesson planning. Despite this, the school provides a good level of care, guidance and support. Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of the school's work, and especially good arrangements for delivering the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme support identified individual pupils effectively. Pupils benefit from a good curriculum that matches their needs and interests. The extended day is an innovative development that provides a rich variety of activities in out-of-school hours for all day pupils who wish to participate.

Governance is satisfactory, but not enough members of the governing body make formal planned visits into school to see for themselves what is going on. Good links with parents, carers and other organisations have been used to establish channels of communication and enable the school to integrate the contributions of all agencies and partners in ways that reinforce pupils' learning and personal development. For example, all parents and carers willingly collect their children when they make use of the extended day. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily.

There is good capacity for the school to sustain improvement. Leaders have demonstrated their ability to respond positively and creatively to change and have brought about a number of key improvements to provision. Staff accept new challenges willingly. Leaders reacted swiftly to the changed boarding arrangements, and to the notice from the local authority informing them that they would be having Key Stage 3 students with effect from September 2010. Self-evaluation is accurate; good management systems are embedded and leaders routinely collect information about the school's performance, such as the

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quality of teaching, and they know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They do not, however, always use the outcomes of their analysis of this information sufficiently to refine and re-align their priorities for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' learning in all lessons by:
 - developing a consistent approach to lesson planning that encourages teachers to focus on what they expect different groups of pupils to learn, and enables them to better determine the progress that pupils make
 - producing more effective IEPs and ensuring that teachers make routine reference to the targets that these contain when planning learning activities.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the governing body develops greater first-hand knowledge of the school's work
 - making better use of the information that leaders collect during routine monitoring to set priorities for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Although a minority of pupils are working at a level in line with national expectations when they enter the school, most have low attainment compared to all pupils nationally. Disruptive behaviour has frequently disrupted their learning. Once in school, however, pupils' attendance improves, and the school stabilises their behaviour quickly and reignites an interest in learning. This platform puts pupils in a good position to learn, especially those who transfer early enough to spend a significant length of time in the school. In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress in acquiring key literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, the gap has reduced and attainment is broadly average. Pupils therefore achieve well, and a few individuals make outstanding progress in reading. The Key Stage 3 students achieve equally well. No groups, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable or those known to be eligible for free school meals, perform significantly differently to others. Residential staff are aware of pupils' educational progress and they contribute to their learning by providing opportunities for them to practise skills they have acquired in school, such as by listening to them read. Care staff provide appropriate support when boarders have homework.

Pupils' overwhelming view is that they enjoy school. Their attendance is broadly average and they arrive punctually for lessons. This positive attitude is carried into lessons. They participate willingly in all activities and are always appreciative of their classmates' successes. This is indicative of their readiness to contribute to the school and wider communities. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school by, for example, being on the school council, acting as a buddy or taking responsibility for daily jobs. In addition, they have an excellent understanding of how to remain healthy, showing a very good appreciation of the importance of exercise and diet. Pupils are also knowledgeable about how to stay safe, recognising the potential dangers of water and railways, for instance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a growing awareness of the needs of others and of how their actions might affect them.

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Pupils make very good use of art therapy sessions and the SEAL programme to reflect and explore their own emotions, and to express these feelings through different media or in words.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are generally enjoyable experiences for pupils. Staff know individuals' capabilities and particular behaviours very well. Consequently, lessons are orderly as staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Time is used efficiently as pupils follow well-established classroom routines and targeted questions are used well to give teachers a good overview of how quickly pupils are learning. Overall, pupils learned at a good rate in the lessons observed. However, lesson plans sometimes lack precision. Teachers identify in broad terms what they anticipate pupils will learn, but not always in the detail needed to indicate exactly which new skills, knowledge or understanding they expect different pupils to acquire, or to establish their progress precisely. Nonetheless, teachers provide interesting and challenging activities to accelerate pupils' learning, rooted in their knowledge of pupils' previous achievements based on accurate assessment processes. Consequently, pupils work purposefully, either independently or with appropriate levels of prompting or support from adults. Staff have high expectations, and teachers and teaching assistants work closely as teams to maintain pupils' enthusiasm by enabling them to experience success.

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The curriculum prepares pupils well for moving into secondary education. It provides a good balance between a breadth of learning opportunities, a focus on key literacy, numeracy and information and communication skills, and good promotion of personal qualities such as team work and independent working. Community-based learning extends pupils' horizons and encourages them to practise in real-life situations the skills they have learned in the classroom. A good variety of educational visits and visitors into school, such as theatre and music groups, enrich their experiences. The extended day is a particularly significant factor in providing pupils with many opportunities to pursue their interests or develop new ones.

An overwhelming number of pupils confirm that adults in school care about them, and a very large majority agree that they feel safe. Almost all parents and carers agree with their children's views. This is indicative of the high level of care, guidance and support that the school provides, although IEPs do not record targets in sufficient detail, which restricts their usefulness. The school is particularly effective in the way in which it supports individual pupils. It does this through targeted support, which might include therapeutic input, participation in the SEAL programme or intervention packages triggered by an individual's relative lack of progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders demonstrate good ambition for pupils. They have a good record of integrating pupils into other provision that meets their learning needs better, including, for example, an appropriate mainstream school. Leaders reacted decisively to the changes that were made in the summer term 2010. They made a swift response to developing a Key Stage 3 curriculum, and their creative thinking opened up considerable additional learning opportunities for many day-pupils after school. Leaders know the school well. They regularly monitor its activities, such as lesson observations, and gather detailed information on outcomes for pupils, including assessment data and data on behaviour. They do not, however, always use these analyses as effectively as they should to collate and present conclusions.

Leaders show a strong commitment to equal opportunity for all pupils and the eradication of all forms of harassment. On the very few occasions when pupils act in an intimidating or discriminatory way, leaders deal with them quickly and decisively. The governing body was fully involved in the establishment of good safeguarding policies and procedures that protect pupils and ensure their safety and well-being. In addition, it fulfils its duty to ensure that all statutory requirements are met in the school and residential provision, and

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is very supportive generally. However, the extent to which it can challenge leaders based on members' first-hand knowledge of the school is limited because planned visits do not occur often enough. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. The school effectively removes potential barriers to individuals' learning, helped to a great extent by its very good understanding of pupils' families and home circumstances. This enables the school to make an important contribution to assisting pupils' inclusion in their local community. Leaders work effectively to get pupils involved in activities and clubs near to where they live.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Boarding provision

The boarding provision is of good quality. All key national minimum standards are met, and some are exceeded. The school has addressed the recommendation made in the previous inspection report relating to routine monitoring by the governing body, by allocating an additional governor to take on this responsibility. The accommodation is homely, comfortable and resourced with age-appropriate games, books, toys and equipment. Boarding is arranged so that boarders have sole use of a bedroom. Boarders enjoy their accommodation, which is in a good state of repair and decoration. There are no signs of wilful or malicious damage.

Boarders are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle. Healthy eating is promoted; boarders receive a good variety of nutritious food, and they are consulted routinely about menus. Mealtimes are relaxed, sociable and orderly occasions. Boarders benefit from opportunities to engage in a range of physical activities that assist with promoting self-confidence and developing social skills. Staff provide good role models by eating with boarders and participating in a number of the activities. Robust systems ensure the safe storage and administration of prescribed medication. As care staff undertake training in

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first aid and the safe handling of medication, boarders have access to a suitably qualified adult at all times.

Good safeguarding procedures and practices are in place. They promote boarders welfare and ensure that they are accommodated in a secure and caring environment. Boarders agree that they feel safe and supported and have confidence in taking concerns and issues to staff. They confirm that bullying is not an issue and that staff always deal effectively with any incidents that do occur. Staff know the protocols to follow in the case of a boarder going missing, although such incidences are very rare. Good procedures ensure that boarders are protected from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. Robust and established procedures for the vetting and recruitment of staff are consistently applied, and they ensure that boarders are cared for only by suitable adults. Staff undertake regular training in safeguarding and they have a good understanding of their child protection responsibilities. The school has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Boarders behaviour is good and managed effectively, with little need for the use of any measures of control. Boarders have a clear understanding of the standard of behaviour expected of them, and they are personally motivated to achieve this. Boarders are encouraged to reflect on any inappropriate or unwanted behaviour and to consider what impact this has on others. They are consulted routinely on matters that affect their daily lives and on key decisions about the future. The boarders confirm that their views are listened to and that they are able to influence and bring about changes that are significant to them. Good relationships exist between care staff and the boarders. Boarders state that they are cared for by people who know them well and who take an interest in what they are doing. The promotion of equality of opportunity is apparent throughout the residential provision, and diversity and differences are celebrated. Good communication is maintained between residential and education staff; significant information is routinely shared.

Admission to the residential provision is planned carefully. Prospective boarders have an opportunity to experience boarding before making a commitment. The residential objectives of each boarders placement are recorded in accessible care plans, and the boarders are aware of the targets that go with them. The objectives are regularly reviewed and progress against targets is recorded. Boarders are supported well in maintaining contact with their families. They enjoy their residential experience and receive consistency and continuity of care from a small, competent and committed boarding staff team. There are sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet both individual and group needs. Boarders benefit from being cared for by staff who are well supported, and who receive appropriate training. The residential team are effectively led and their practice is carefully monitored.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- All National Minimum Standards are met.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Approximately a third of parents and carers returned their questionnaire, and their views align closely with those of the additional inspector. There is common agreement about the vast majority of the work that the school does, and the impact that this has on their children's academic and personal development. The main area of difference relates to whether the school meets their children's particular needs; although where this was the case, there were otherwise positive responses to other questions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Romans Field School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 15 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 48 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	60	5	33	0	0	1	7
The school keeps my child safe	10	67	4	27	0	0	1	7
My school informs me about my child's progress	9	60	5	33	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	40	7	47	1	7	1	7
The teaching is good at this school	9	60	5	33	0	0	1	7
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	67	4	27	0	0	1	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	47	6	40	1	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	47	6	40	7	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	40	6	40	3	20	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	60	5	33	1	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	40	7	47	0	0	1	7
The school is led and managed effectively	12	80	2	13	0	0	1	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	60	5	33	1	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Romans Field School, Milton Keynes MK3 7AW

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. Special thanks go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with me. Romans Field is a good school. The boarding house is also good.

I was very impressed with how well you behave and get on with your classmates and adults. It was good to see that so many of you accept responsibility for doing jobs around the school, such as being a buddy. You obviously enjoy school and a lot of you benefit from the good activities that you can enjoy in the evening. You know a great deal about how to remain healthy, and have a good understanding of how to stay safe and of situations that might put you in danger.

Lessons are good and you make good progress in your work. You obviously appreciate the fact that staff take good care of you and that there is always someone you can talk to if you are worried or have concerns.

The people who run the school do a good job. They have ideas about how to make the school even better and I have asked them to do the following in order to help them to achieve this.

- Make sure teachers help you to learn as much as you possibly can in every lesson by planning to help you reach your personal targets.
- Plan for more governors to visit you in classes more often.
- Get all of the people who run the school to use all of the information that they collect about its work when writing plans for the future.

You can help by continuing to go to school as often as you can, and by carrying on working hard and behaving so well. Finally, I wish each of you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell Lead inspector

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