

Romans Field School

Shenley Road, Milton Keynes, MK3 7AW

Inspection dates		26–27 June 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Adequate	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not yet good because teaching is inconsistent.
- In some classes, expectations are not high enough for all pupils to work at a fast enough rate to improve their skills, and sometimes work is too easy or too hard.
- The teaching of phonics (matching letters and sounds) is not good, and as a result, reading is not improving fast enough.
- Sometimes, too few resources are used to support learning in mathematics.
- A few younger pupils say they do not always feel safe because of the challenging behaviour of a very small minority of other pupils.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in monitoring the school and bringing about improvement.
- School information about pupils' progress is not managed well enough and does not provide a clear view of how well pupils achieve.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers have not been rigorous enough and there has been too little training to improve teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching in science, art and physical education is at least good and pupils make good progress in these areas.
- Attendance has risen steadily and is now above that found in other similar schools.
- There are many examples of individual pupils' behaviour improving during their time at the school so that reintegration into mainstream schools is increasing.
- The curriculum provides some exciting activities that pupils' enjoy and which provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and know what needs improving.
- There are strong links between the residence and the school which impact well on pupils' personal development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight lessons, and made a few short visits to focus specifically on pupils' learning. In addition, an inspector observed playtime, looked at pupils' books and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Head of Care, other senior leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, teachers and care staff, and some pupils in the school and in the residence.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, school self-evaluation, and safeguarding information for the school and the residence.
- In the residence, the inspector looked at a number of school documents, spoke to staff and pupils, and observed activities in the evenings.
- There were too few responses to the online survey (Parent View) to take account of parents' and carers' views of the school. Account was taken of 10 responses to the inspection questionnaire from staff.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Davies

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small special school for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Some pupils also have associated learning difficulties.
- Most pupils are White British and no 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, children looked after by the local authority and children from service families) is above average.
- The residence is attached to the school. It caters for up to 12 pupils weekly, and provides integrated social care for pupils during the week. There is no weekend or holiday provision. The residence also provides short-term respite for pupils when necessary.
- The school caters for boys and girls, but there is currently only one girl at the school.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a greater proportion of teaching is good so that the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics improves, by:
 - making sure that teachers have higher expectations of each pupil and plan tasks that meet each pupil's needs and abilities in every lesson
 - ensuring that appropriate resources are always available to help pupils succeed, particularly in mathematics
 - providing training for all staff in the teaching of phonics
 - rigorously monitoring and recording the small steps of progress that pupils make on a regular basis so there is a clear view of their progress.
- Ensure that the challenging behaviour of a few older pupils is well managed so that all pupils feel safe at school.
- Improve systems for managing the performance of staff so that all staff have opportunities to improve their skills, undertake training and seek promotion.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress by providing training for governors so that they understand how well the school is performing.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:
 - The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (NMS 13.3).
 - Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (10) issued by the Secretary of State, (MNS 14.1).
 - The school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of the authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by

the placing authority. (NMS 15.7).

- The governing body, trustees, partnership or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 29.1).

■ Additional good practice recommendations to be considered by the residence:

- ensure that case files for individual pupils contain details of any medication administered and of any sanction or physical restraint
- review the practice of sanctions being issued by the school being carried out in the residential time
- review and update the school's policies and procedures to reflect current practice and government guidance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment is low because of past absences from school and often because of disrupted schooling. Too few pupils across the school make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics; consequently, they are not all prepared well enough for their futures.
- Lack of information about pupils' achievement on entry to the school limits opportunities to measure progress over time. In some lessons, pupils do not do enough for themselves because too much is done for them and, as a result, their progress is limited.
- The use of phonics has been introduced in some classes, but staff have not received training and there is no whole-school approach to ensure consistent practice. This has an impact on pupils' progress in reading and writing as they move through the school.
- Achievement in science is good because pupils enjoy the practical nature of the subject and because they are challenged to find answers. Consequently, progress in science is better than it is in English and mathematics. Year 8 pupils, for example, made good progress as they improved their understanding of the difference between infections caused by bacteria and those caused by viruses, linking the development of antibiotics well to the growth in world population.
- Achievement in mathematics is variable because resources to help pupils complete calculations successfully are not always evident, and therefore pupils often struggle to find answers and do not make the progress expected of them.
- Those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and pupils with learning difficulties, benefit from additional support so that they achieve as well as other pupils and make similar progress to their peers in English and mathematics.
- Some exciting activities engage pupils well. For example, horse riding, art therapy and residential experiences are all helping to raise enjoyment of learning and pupils' aspirations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is too much variety in the quality of teaching. At times, expectations are too low, and planning to meet pupils' individual needs is not always evident, leading to some pupils finding the work too difficult while others find it too easy. As a result, progress is often patchy.
- In some classes, staff do not expect pupils to find their own resources, complete their tasks or help to clear away. Sometimes, pupils are handed resources that they could easily find for themselves. Staff regularly tie aprons for secondary-aged pupils, and pass them pencils, pens and other resources. This affects pupils' ability to take responsibility for themselves.
- In the best lessons, there is clear evidence of high expectations of behaviour and work. At these times, pupils concentrate and respect the demands made on them. They follow the rules that the teachers set and learn new skills. For example, pupils in Year 8 learned new techniques about fielding in cricket as they practised different ways to stop a ball. They enjoyed the lesson and behaviour was very good.
- All staff have received training in supporting positive behaviour and in safe restraint procedures, so that pupils' behaviour is effectively managed and most lessons are calm.
- Teaching in English is variable because not all teachers make effective use of phonic approaches to help pupils improve their reading and writing skills. Lack of accuracy in teaching sounds limits pupils' opportunities to improve at a faster rate.
- There are some good examples of teachers improving pupils' social and moral skills through curriculum tasks. Good emphasis on morality was evident in a topic on 'Myths and Legends' where pupils talked knowledgeably about right and wrong in a Greek legend.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' achievements lacks rigour and, as a result, the amount of progress that pupils make over time is uneven. Not all teachers show pupils how they could improve their work, while others mark pupils' work well and give them clear points for

improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Most pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Pupils say that any bullying at the school is usually dealt with successfully. Older pupils are very aware of issues related to cyber-bullying.
- Attendance is rising despite pupils' often poor experiences in previous schools. Some have been out of school for lengthy periods before coming to Romans Field because of their challenging behaviour, and social and emotional difficulties.
- There are many good examples of pupils' behaviour improving during their time at the school, but not all pupils learn to manage their own behaviour quickly enough.
- Challenging behaviour by pupils is usually dealt with appropriately by staff, but a few younger pupils told an inspector that the behaviour of some older boys, and the carrying out of necessary restraining techniques, makes them feel scared. They say they would like their own playground time so that they could play football by themselves.
- Pupils in the residence say they feel safe. They have good opportunities to make choices of activity and have a say in what they would like to do.
- Older pupils have good opportunities to experience the world of work through links with some local businesses.
- Pupils' awareness of the wider world has improved because of some good enrichment of the curriculum. Regular assemblies promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through stories. In one such instance, pupils of all ages joined in with impromptu acting and dressing-up to illustrate a story about 'staying safe', promoting enjoyment and understanding of safety and working together.
- Effective links between teachers and the residential staff ensure that pupils are well known by all staff and always have someone to go to if needed.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- There has been some unavoidable disruption to the leadership team over the past two years which has had a negative impact on improvement. Too little focus on managing data to show pupils' achievements means that outcomes are unclear. There is a lack of appropriate strategies to give an accurate picture of how well each pupil achieves.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and improved since the previous inspection and is having a positive impact on pupils' eagerness to come to school. The curriculum has yet to make a difference to progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Because attendance is now similar to that found in mainstream schools, reintegration to those schools is increasing, with eight pupils successfully returning to mainstream in the past two years.
- Despite high levels of behaviour management training, there has been too little emphasis on training for staff in other areas. For example, teachers and teaching assistants have not received training in the teaching of phonics and this has resulted in the inconsistent quality of the teaching of reading and writing currently seen at the school.
- The school is now receiving appropriate assistance from the local authority's support services, who recently and accurately identified the need for improvements to progress and teaching. However, support since the headteacher arrived two years ago has been limited. Pupils are sometimes placed at the school with no evidence of their prior attainment.
- Procedures to manage the performance of staff are not rigorous enough. There are some examples of the best teachers being rewarded to gain promotion through this process, but regular monitoring of performance by leaders or governors is limited. In their questionnaires, a few staff said they would like more training to improve their skills.

- Leaders promote equality and eliminate discrimination by making sure that all pupils, including those who benefit from pupil premium funding, are helped through additional support so that they make similar progress in English and mathematics to their peers. They make sure that the only girl at the school has the opportunity for inclusion within a mainstream school each week to maintain friendships.
- No parents or carers were available to talk to about the school, but school questionnaires last year showed that most parents and carers had positive views of the school.

The governance of the school:

– The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear view of the direction governors want the school to take, and governors are committed to the school. However, the governing body has suffered from a lack of resilience due to an inability to attract new governors as others leave, and has not developed the capacity to be sufficiently involved in thoroughly checking pupils' achievement. Governors have not developed the skills to enable them to identify clearly enough what is working well and what needs improving. As a result, they have not challenged leaders well enough in the past two years. Governors are aware that teaching requires improvement, but there has been too little emphasis on improving the performance of staff through training. Systems to manage the performance of staff are in place, but they have not been rigorous enough to bring about the improvements necessary to raise achievement. Governors are not clear how the school rewards good teaching or tackles underperformance. Governors make sure that finances are well managed and that the money allocated for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is spent on those pupils.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are good
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is inadequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is adequate

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is adequate. The boarding facilities are extremely well organised and residential pupils benefit from a well-structured and orderly routine. Residential pupils enjoy their time in the residence, particularly because of the activities.
- Most of the arrangements to safeguard pupils at the school are appropriate. However, there are some weaknesses in current recruitment and health and safety procedures which could potentially have an impact on the safety of young people in the residence. The school has made progress towards meeting the recommendation imposed at the last social care inspection. Monitoring of the residential care practices now occurs but does not yet take place at the required frequency.
- Some of the school policies and procedures are overdue for review.
- The outcomes for boarders are good. Residential pupils behave well and feel safe in the setting. Because of the high levels of support they receive, pupils make good progress and develop self-esteem and emotional resilience.
- Residential pupils understand about healthy lifestyles. They keep fit and healthy, and eat nutritious meals while at the school. Pupils enjoy the nights they spend in the residence.
- The quality of care is good. Residential pupils settle well because of the introduction they receive and the continuing support from staff. Communal facilities and individual bedroom accommodation are of an exceptionally high standard. They are extremely well maintained and are valued by pupils, who develop social and life skills by participating in an extensive and varied range of activities.
- The health and care needs of young people are very well met because staff are familiar with their care plans, which are detailed and thorough. There are good examples of multi-agency

working, such as with the child and adolescent mental health service, to help young people gain access to the services they require.

- Young people are protected because staff are trained in child protection and the school acts on advice from child protection strategy meetings.
- Behaviour is well managed because of the positive and nurturing relationships that residential pupils have with staff and the positive proactive strategies used. Bullying is not perceived to be an issue.
- There are no incidents of restraint in the residential setting and very few sanctions. However, there are occasions when sanctions imposed during school time are carried out by residential staff. This has a negative impact on the morale of some pupils and on their enjoyment of the residence.
- Records kept are mainly thorough. However, details of sanctions, restraints and medication administered are not currently recorded on children's files. Residential pupils therefore do not have access to information recorded about them.

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>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	110580
Social care unique reference number	SC015085
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	400193

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of boarders on roll	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Bennett
Headteacher	Paul Morton
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 July 2011
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