

Roysia Middle School

Burns Road, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5EQ

Inspection dates

8–9 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors have created a school culture where pupils are encouraged and supported in order to achieve well academically and develop emotionally and socially. As a result, pupils are confident learners.
- The new executive headteacher has quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses within the school. Recently introduced actions are having an impact in improving pupils' progress.
- Teachers plan work that is generally well matched to the ability of the pupils. However, challenges set for the most able pupils do not always provide opportunities to sufficiently extend their learning.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and, as a result, they are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard and take care with the presentation of their work. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils' handwriting is neat and legible.
- Pupils leave Year 8 having made good progress in a range of subjects. They are well prepared for upper school.
- Pupils are happy and are proud of their school. They enjoy coming to school and as a result attendance is above average.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school provides a safe learning environment. Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils receive high-quality support to overcome barriers to learning.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum and have access to specialist teachers and rooms. The curriculum makes strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects in addition to English and mathematics. Progress in key stage 3 humanities is much stronger than in key stage 2. This is because younger pupils are not provided with work that allows them to sufficiently develop their subject knowledge.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support to senior leaders. However, they have not ensured that the school's website meets all the statutory requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning to raise pupils' outcomes to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that key stage 2 teaching of humanities matches the effective practice in key stage 3
 - ensuring that all pupils take more care with their handwriting and presentation of work
 - providing pupils, especially the most able, with appropriately challenging work
 - continuing to embed and develop the recent actions taken by senior leaders to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Ensure that the school's website meets statutory requirements in the information it provides.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- At the time of the inspection, the interim executive headteacher had been in post for less than half a term. She has very quickly identified the strengths of the school and the areas for development. She has correctly prioritised what needs to be done to address any weaknesses in the progress of some groups of pupils. The executive headteacher is committed to the school's motto, 'We care; they flourish'.
- The executive headteacher is well supported by senior leaders. She has quickly gained the confidence of staff, parents and pupils. Actions taken to improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils, is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Good teaching has been secured because leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rigorously. Where weaknesses are identified, swift action is taken to support staff through training and coaching. Staff are keen to improve their teaching and are appreciative of the training and support they receive.
- The school is using the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. School leaders have accurately evaluated the barriers to their learning and precise tracking enables pupils to receive effective support. The funding is used to provide academic, social and emotional support, and enables disadvantaged pupils to have full access to school trips and visits. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils study science, humanities, languages, the arts, technological subjects, computing and sport. Pupils in both key stages benefit from specialist teaching in subjects such as languages and art. Pupils are offered a variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs which are well attended.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and understanding are woven throughout the curriculum in lessons and assemblies. Democratic values are promoted through pupil posts of responsibility. For example, the school council meets weekly with senior staff where they discuss a range of topics. Opportunities to learn about diversity are plentiful. Pupils appreciate and respect the diversity of living in modern Britain. This is evident by the respect they show for one another and their acceptance and support for pupils with additional needs.

Governance

- Governors ensure that members of the board have the necessary skills to fulfil the role. As a result, the governing body effectively carries out their duties. Governors understand the strength and weaknesses of the school. Governors also receive appropriate up-to-date training.

- Governors are committed to ensuring that the school is an inclusive community where each pupil is treated as an individual and provided with the support they need in order to succeed academically and socially. They carefully check attendance and behaviour records as well as progress information. Governors understand the impact of additional funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who are receiving 'catch-up' support.
- Governors understand their role and provide senior leaders with a good level of challenge and support. They ensure that good teaching is appropriately awarded through the school's appraisal system. Governors check that the school premises are both safe and secure and that policies and procedures are up to date and fit for purpose.
- The governing body has not ensured that the school's website meets the statutory requirements. The reports on the impact of pupil premium and sport funding do not contain all the necessary information. The section on governance does not include all the required information on the governing body or the annual financial report for the last academic year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that policies and procedures are up to date and meet the latest guidance. Staff are appropriately trained in keeping pupils safe, including the 'Prevent' duty. Adults know the signs to look for and procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a pupil.
- Procedures for referring child protection concerns are robust. Leaders keep detailed and accurate records of concerns, contact with parents and other agencies.
- Appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers. The identity of all visitors is carefully checked before they are allowed into the school.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used to provide pupils with the opportunity to learn a range of sports. Participation rates are high and pupils enjoy their lessons. Leaders have also been able to fund a range of after-school sporting clubs at no cost to parents. Pupils participate in a number of sporting competitions against other schools.
- Pupils say they are safe in the school and parents and staff agree. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations and have a detailed understanding of the dangers associated with using the internet and social media. They also learn about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse in personal, social and health education lessons.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and the school's records support this. Pupils understand the difference between falling out and bullying, and the different forms of bullying. They are confident that adults will listen to any concerns they might have and resolve them. Pupils value the 'Ask Ash' facility. This allows them to report concerns via a website and receive bespoke advice. They say 'Ash responds quickly and gives good advice'.
- Parents agree that bullying is dealt with effectively and that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well and plan interesting lessons for them. In general, teachers are quick to identify when pupils need extra help with their work or need to be moved on in their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language receive good support from teaching assistants. Teachers make sure that teaching assistants know what pupils are expected to learn and achieve each lesson. As a result, pupils are able to complete their work and most make good progress over time.
- Positive classroom relationships mean that pupils feel able to ask for help and are not worried about making mistakes. Pupils cooperate well with one another and support each other in their learning. Classrooms are industrious places as pupils want to learn and achieve. Pupils are developing resilience and inspectors witnessed pupils persevering with their work. This ethos is summed up by the following pupil's comment, 'Learning is about challenging yourself.'
- Teachers follow the school's feedback and assessment policy. As a result, most teachers provide pupils with precise feedback on the strengths of their work and areas for improvement. Almost all pupils consistently make the necessary corrections to their work as a result of teachers' assessment.
- Teachers use probing questions that enable pupils to develop their ideas or deepen their understanding and knowledge.
- Teachers provide most-able pupils with work that has additional challenges or extension activities designed to deepen their knowledge, skills or understanding, particularly in French, art and English lessons. However, this is not consistent enough.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunity to write in a range of subjects and for different purposes. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught as discrete elements, especially in key stage 2. Teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work are not high enough.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are happy about the standard of teaching, homework and the information they receive about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Providing individual support for pupils' personal development and well-being is a high priority for all staff. Parents value the level of care provided. This typical comment expresses their views: 'Roysia has the most caring, supportive and the most consistent approach of any school my children have attended.'
- The school is fully inclusive and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or other additional needs are fully integrated into the school community. These pupils say that the school is welcoming because pupils and adults 'accept you for who you are; they don't try to change you'.

- The school provides exceptionally high-quality support for pupils with a wide range of emotional, social and learning needs. School staff know the pupils and their families well and careful planning ensures that pupils receive the support they require. Staff are highly effective in bringing together the required agencies to support the well-being and learning of the pupils. The special educational needs coordinator also ensures that staff are appropriately trained to support pupils.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take on posts of responsibility such as sports leaders and ambassadors, school councillors, peer mentors and the '8 to 5 club' where Year 8 pupils read with Year 5. Visits, after-school and lunchtime clubs, sporting competitions and school discos all contribute to pupils' health, social development and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. The dining room is a calm and pleasant environment where pupils from all year groups sit together to eat and socialise.
- Pupils are proud of their school and they are keen to talk about their learning and the opportunities provided by the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of good behaviour and what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They understand that poor behaviour is not acceptable.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually good and pupils told inspectors that disruption is rare and, if it should occur, adults quickly deal with it. If disruption should occur, pupils say 'It's best to ignore it as laughing encourages them.' School records indicate that disruption to lessons is uncommon.
- Pupils value the recently introduced rewards system. They are eager to collect behaviour credits which they trade in for rewards they value.
- The school monitors the attendance of pupils carefully. The attendance officer and special educational needs coordinator provide high levels of support for families and pupils who are frequently absent from school. As a result, persistent absence is reducing and whole-school attendance is above average.
- All staff and almost all parents agree that behaviour in the school is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders effectively establish the standard of attainment on entry of Year 5 pupils using a national assessment programme. This is used efficiently by teachers and senior leaders to track pupils' progress from these starting points. In 2016, the proportion of Year 6 pupils making expected progress from their key stage 1 assessments varied for different groups of pupils. For example, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics was well below average whereas the progress of lower-ability pupils in writing was above average. The percentage of pupils meeting the age-related standard in all three subjects, reading, writing and mathematics, was average. Pupils leaving Year 8 make better than expected progress representing good progress from their starting points.

- Recent changes to the way mathematics is taught is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Work seen in pupils' books indicates that most-able pupils are challenged by more demanding work and least-able pupils receive support that enables them to make good progress over time.
- In previous years, girls have made better progress than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. Changes to the curriculum and methods of teaching for current pupils are starting to have a positive impact on boys' progress. Inspectors saw many examples of high-quality writing by boys in a range of subjects, and boys enjoying reading.
- Pupils read well. Inspectors listened to a group of pupils of varied ages reading. Lower-attaining readers are able to use a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. Their fluency is also developing. The most able readers read with accuracy, fluency and expression. All pupils read a range of books. The school has purchased new books on themes that are of interest to boys in particular. Boys told inspectors how much they enjoy these books.
- The support strategies for pupils who did not reach the required standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 are highly effective. As a result, these pupils are making rapid progress and catching up quickly.
- In 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils declined on previous years, especially in mathematics where it was well below average. Leaders have analysed the reasons for this and quickly put into place targeted support for these pupils. Current school progress information and work of pupils currently in the school indicates that the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, is improving rapidly. Most of these pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils who receive support in order to 'catch up' with their learning told inspectors that the extra support not only helps to improve their learning but makes them more confident learners.
- The most able pupils make good progress. Historically, achievement in mathematics has been stronger than in reading and writing. Work in pupils' books indicates that current pupils are now making good progress in a range of subjects. Pupils are able to write accurately using spelling, punctuation and grammar correctly. In subjects such as science, by the end of Year 8, pupils are able to draw accurate conclusions based on scientific enquiry and to research topics in depth. However, teaching does not routinely ensure that pupils have high-quality activities that fully extend the skills, knowledge and understanding of the most-able pupils.
- Pupils generally make good progress across a range of subjects. In key stage 3 humanities, pupils are given work that provides the opportunity to develop subject-specific skills, such as map reading. Work also provides opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical and English skills to provide high-quality work. However, in key stage 2, progress is not as rapid as too often pupils are given work that does not allow them to extend or apply their learning. Achievement in science is good across both key stages.
- By the end of Year 8, pupils leave the school as confident, enthusiastic learners. They are well prepared for the transition to upper school.

School details

Unique reference number	137657
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10023414

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	David Brynjolffssen
Headteacher	Laura Rawlings
Telephone number	01763 241 555
Website	http://roysia.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head.roysia@rsat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with the Department for Education’s guidance on what academies should publish about governors, annual financial reports for the school, and the spending of pupil premium and sport funding.
- The previous headteacher left at the end of the autumn term. The headteacher of Greneway Middle School, which is part of the academy trust, is currently acting as interim executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized middle school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language has increased since the last inspection.

- An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or have an education, health and care plan or statement.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is in line with the national average.
- The school received the additional funding for pupils in Year 7 who did not meet the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6.
- The school meets floor standards. These are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence in order to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors, accompanied by school leaders, looked at the work in pupils' exercise books and spoke to them about their work. Inspectors observed learning in all classes. They were accompanied by senior leaders for some of these visits. They also made a number of short visits to lessons accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read, and attended two registration periods and class assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the school's leaders, three governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils from each of key stages 2 and 3.
- The views of parents were taken into account through the 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 29 text responses and a letter that was sent to the lead inspector.
- The views of 23 staff and 36 pupils who responded to the online questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Jonathan Culpin	Ofsted Inspector

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