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Mr Trevor Orchard  
Headteacher  
Roman Fields Education Support Centre  
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Hertfordshire  
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Dear Mr Orchard

### **Short inspection of Roman Fields Pupil Referral Unit**

Following my visit to the school on 7 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2014.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The leadership team, under your strong guidance and vision, has developed a very effective education for the vulnerable group of pupils and students who attend Roman Fields. Many of the pupils have been excluded from previous schools or are unable to access mainstream education, often due to their high levels of social, emotional and mental health needs. At Roman Fields, leaders and all staff have an unwavering determination, which encourages pupils to develop their self-esteem and succeed. The ethos at Roman Fields of 'never giving up' is evident in all aspects of the school's work. Staff look for ways to help pupils to succeed academically and socially and to move on from their previous negative experiences. Staff morale is

extremely positive, as all staff feel valued and involved in developing the life chances of the pupils.

Roman Fields is an extremely calm and supportive school. Teachers' individual knowledge of each pupil means that they are able to adapt learning situations to enable all pupils to access their full potential. The bespoke package of teaching, with highly skilled teachers, enables pupils to make strong progress in their learning and to develop skills in a range of areas.

Parents are extremely positive about Roman Fields and the changes that it has made for their children. Parents who used the free-text section of the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were all very complimentary. In the words of one parent: 'The school has not only been the best possible place for my son, it has had a massively positive impact on our entire family and quality of life.'

With the support of leaders and members of the management committee, you have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have ensured that teaching is now challenging so that all pupils achieve their best. Some pupils are still getting used to this high level of challenge but, nonetheless, they make strong progress. Since the previous inspection, you have improved the curriculum so that every pupil is accessing additional qualifications as well as those in mathematics and English. Assessment is now thorough, enabling next steps in pupils' learning to be identified. Staff track pupils' achievements extremely well. They also monitor closely the development of behaviour, and social and emotional aspects of learning. As a result, teachers provide effective interventions to help pupils succeed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Those with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that it is taken very seriously. The designated person is tenacious in following up any concerns. The school's records are thorough and detailed. Appropriate systems are in place to check staff understanding and to ensure that they are aware of the procedures and protocols to follow should they have any concerns. A very large majority of parents who responded to the online survey strongly agreed that their child feels safe at the school. Promoting regular attendance has a high priority. Staff investigate any absence promptly to ensure that pupils are safe.

The school website does not reflect the good practice in safeguarding. Some policies are too generic and do not show clearly when they have been updated.

Other agencies, such as those responsible for children who are looked after by the local authority, are very complimentary of the level of support for their pupils. They appreciate the quality of multi-agency support for a group of pupils with the most complex needs.

## **Inspection findings**

- You and your leadership team have continued to develop and improve provision at Roman Fields. The staff and parents are extremely positive about your leadership and that of your senior team. The management committee recognise the positive changes that you have made. They are supportive and, together, you have developed further the role of additional leaders who are able to take on some associate responsibilities if the school continues to grow.
- With the support of senior leaders, you monitor the quality of teaching carefully and know exactly what to do to improve teaching and learning further. You have tackled and eradicated areas of underperformance. The current staff feel valued and are, therefore, prepared to contribute considerably to the wider aspects of the provision.
- Many of the pupils only spend a relatively short time at the school, often arriving during the final years of compulsory schooling. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are filled rapidly to enable success in external examinations. The daily staff briefings and discussions about individual pupils help staff to agree clear strategies so that pupils can move on from previous negative experiences. This close tracking of all aspects of achievement enables staff to be aware of any areas where additional support is required. The few older students in key stage 5, who are completing bespoke packages of A levels, have effective support that enables them to achieve well and make a successful transition to university or college.
- The behaviour of pupils throughout the inspection was exemplary. There have been no incidents of exclusion during this school year and very few in previous years. Each pupil has an individual timetable which focuses on what they will need to fulfil for the next stage in their education and life. School examination results in English, mathematics and science show a high rate of success compared to similar provisions. Pupils also follow their own areas of interest, such as music, art, geography and cookery, to successfully complete examinations. High-quality artwork was on display throughout many areas of the school. There are also displays of positive role models for pupils, such as 'autism heroes', which are used to promote self-worth.
- Multi-agency cooperation is a strength of the school. Two qualified social workers work with the school to develop the life and social skills of pupils who have the most complex difficulties. This work also goes towards a recognised qualification for pupils, which then reinforces the view of the importance of academic success and achievement. The additional work with families enhances and helps in the understanding of pupils with autism spectrum disorder and focuses on their needs within a family situation.

- The school prepares pupils well to move away, gradually, from one-to-one learning to working in small groups and ultimately integrating fully into college, university or work placements. Programmes of introduction to the next setting are detailed and comprehensive. Mentors provide advice and support for pupils and their families on ways to succeed.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the Roman Fields website is improved so that it provides timely and dated information to parents and outside agencies
- they continue to develop the leadership capacity of staff across the school to enhance this provision, and develop further the ability to offer support to other services working with very challenging and vulnerable young people with autism spectrum disorder.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Mullan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors. We reviewed a range of published information, including the school's website, the self-evaluation document and the development plan. We examined a range of safeguarding documents, including case studies and records of attendance.

We visited a number of teaching sessions, in a variety of subjects, accompanied by senior staff, and observed pupils' behaviour in and around the provision at lunchtime as well as during entry into school for early morning registration.

We held meetings with senior staff, teachers and a member of the management committee. We spoke to a representative group of pupils. We spoke to the chair of the management committee and a representative of the local authority. We

considered 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 14 free-text comments submitted by parents and 21 responses to the staff survey.