

# Inspection of Roecroft Lower School

Buttercup Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 4PF

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Roecroft Lower School are happy and friendly to each other. In early years, children learn the expectations and routines that make them kind and helpful. As they grow older, pupils continue to behave well. This is because they receive clear reminders about behaviour linked to the school values.

Pupils benefit from the nurturing culture that leaders have developed. Pupils show respect for one another and for their teachers. Bullying rarely happens, but pupils say adults always deal with it, when it does. Resolving pupils' concerns means pupils are safe.

Pupils are keen to share what they know. However, pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not learning as best they could. Though they receive support, it is not organised well enough to help them to make the progress they are capable of.

Through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils are taught to reflect on and debate topical and sensitive issues. Pupils show a maturity about these important issues. They understand themes such as taking responsibility for their actions.

Pupils benefit from the range of extra-curricular experiences, such as music lessons, inter-house competitions and residential trips. These help pupils build their wider understanding of the world around them.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have designed a curriculum which focuses on the development of pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary. Leaders support teachers so they have strong subject knowledge. Subject leaders have mapped out the knowledge they want pupils to know over time for most subjects. Where this is not the case, teachers have too much flexibility in what they teach. This leads to variation in the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Teachers usually check what pupils know, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to review previous learning. Consequently, there is variation in what pupils remember. Pupils who are disadvantaged have extra teaching sessions to introduce new topics, but this does not happen every term. Pupils cannot always talk or write confidently about their learning. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND and those who find reading and writing difficult.

The reading curriculum details the skills and knowledge that pupils need to be taught. Most staff have been trained to teach the phonics programme, and do so well. Pupils who are not able to read confidently are correctly identified. They receive additional support, but this is not planned or delivered in a systematic way. Consequently, pupils are not catching up as quickly as they might.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND receive the social and emotional support they need to take an active part in school life. However, individual targets for some pupils with SEND are not specific enough. Teaching is not always adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, these pupils do not remember the key learning that they need, and they do not achieve well.

Children in the early years make positive relationships and are ready to learn. They participate well in all aspects of the curriculum. The curriculum is well designed and delivered. Children are confident in their early reading knowledge and skills. They achieve well from the start of the Reception Year. Staff ensure that children learn new vocabulary and concepts related to children's needs and interests alongside the knowledge they need to be ready for Year 1.

Pupils behave well. There is a calm atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils have positive relationships. Staff use consistent strategies that focus on positive reinforcement linked to the school's values. There are few recorded incidents of negative behaviours. Leaders do not systematically check for patterns in behaviour or link these to other concerns they have about pupils.

Pupils take on roles and responsibilities such as being subject ambassadors and house captains. These promote leadership and being positive role models. Pupils are proud to take on these jobs. Leaders offer a wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience in addition to the daily curriculum, such as choir, art and science clubs.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support from leaders regarding their workload and well-being. Staff value the training they have received.

The governing body has not met all its statutory duties. Leaders did not consult on the relationships education policy with parents. There are not adequate checks in place to hold leaders to account. Governors do not receive detailed information about patterns of behaviour or attendance for the most vulnerable pupils. Consequently, they do not challenge leaders about these areas.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have provided training for staff so they know how and what to report if they are concerned a child might be at risk of harm. However, leaders do not always check that follow-up meetings and incidents are accurately recorded.

Although pupils are safe, leaders do not have a systematic way of coordinating information about behaviour and attendance that may link to safeguarding. Consequently, leaders do not have adequate assurances that information about vulnerable pupils is used in the timeliest of ways.

Pupils are taught about keeping safe online and in the community. They have opportunities to discuss these topics in their PSHE lessons.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Strategies for leaders, including governors, to monitor the school's work lack attention to detail. This means they are not quick to identify patterns and resolve issues, such as how attendance and behaviour concerns help build a bigger picture around safeguarding. Leaders should develop a comprehensive system that enables them to analyse information efficiently, so they may swiftly resolve potential issues.
- Leaders have not planned the learning precisely enough in all areas of the curriculum. This means that, in a few areas, teachers deliver the curriculum less effectively, and pupils do not develop what they know as well as they might. Leaders should identify and sequence the key knowledge pupils must learn in all areas of the curriculum so that pupils build up a rich body of knowledge.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to recall and build upon their previous learning. Leaders need to develop shared strategies for pupils to recall and apply new vocabulary and knowledge. Leaders should train staff to use these well to secure all pupils' understanding of the curriculum.
- The additional support for pupils with SEND and pupils who find reading and writing difficult is too varied, both in its frequency and quality. Consequently, it is not helping those pupils to catch up quickly. Leaders should train staff to put in place consistent support that focuses tightly on what a pupil needs to learn next to help them access the curriculum.
- The governing body has not ensured leaders are meeting all statutory requirements. Governors must undertake training to ensure they understand all their statutory roles and responsibilities to be able to hold leaders to account, paying particular regard to safeguarding and the quality of education.

### How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

### Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109484
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242298
<b>Type of school</b>	Lower
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	392
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Arlene Hui
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hollie Cross
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.roecroftlower.co.uk">www.roecroftlower.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 November 2008

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, Roecroft Lower School has grown considerably in size from a one-form entry to a three-form entry lower school. The school has also moved into a new building on a different site.
- The governing body has not fulfilled all its statutory duties as leaders did not consult with parents on the relationships and sex education policy, which is a statutory requirement.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and senior leaders. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding practice, the lead inspector met with the deputy headteacher, who is the school's designated safeguarding lead, the operations manager and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.
- The inspectors considered 190 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 120 free-text comments. The inspectors also took account of 34 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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