

Royisia Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117545
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	302331
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Brynjolffssen
Headteacher	Mr Peter Fielden
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2003
School address	Burns Road Royston Hertfordshire SG8 5EQ
Telephone number	01763241555
Fax number	01763246928

Age group	9–13
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Inspection number	302331

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Roysia Middle School is a smaller than average community middle school for 9 to 13 year olds living in Royston, an area with less deprivation than is found nationally, although the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above the national average. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and a small but increasing proportion of pupils learn English as an additional language. In general, there are slightly more girls than boys in each year group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above the national average but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below what is found nationally. Attainment on entry in Year 5 is broadly similar to that expected for the pupils' age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that it is a good school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, in particular the way teachers care for and support pupils so that they can flourish as young learners and achieve well. A key strength of the school is its small size and the way in which it treats all pupils as individuals. They all know each other and their teachers, and the school provides them with the care, support and teaching they need to progress to the next stage of their education. Its effectiveness is summed up in the comments of a parent who said, 'My daughter is in Year 8 and is ready to leave Roysia at the end of this term for which I am sorry, but this excellent little school has given my child the confidence and the ability to move on'.

Pupils join the school mid-way through Key Stage 2, having attained broadly average standards in Key Stage 1. However, the school's own assessments on entry show that a significant number of pupils arrive in Year 5 with underdeveloped literacy skills. An increasing number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities and a growing number join the school at times other than the start of term. The majority of pupils make at least satisfactory progress and attain standards similar to the national average by the end of Year 6. In Key Stage 3, pupils benefit greatly from specialist teaching and facilities and make good progress throughout Years 7 and 8, so by the end of their four years in school, overall standards are above those usual for their age. The school's monitoring shows that pupils generally perform better in mathematics and English.

Personal development and well-being are good because great emphasis is placed on making sure that pupils are healthy, safe and feel valued by teachers and other pupils. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their regular attendance which is above the national average. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils know who to go to if they have any concerns. Behaviour is satisfactory overall because, although most pupils behave well, a small minority disrupts the learning of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed well through a variety of learning experiences of different cultures in humanities, art, English, music and dance.

Care, guidance and support are good. The school is particularly effective at ensuring a smooth transition from first schools into Year 5. Parents comment warmly about how quickly their children settle down and enjoy school, and view the transition from first school into Year 5 as 'seamless'. Pupils are kept safe and arrangements for safeguarding them are robust. This is an inclusive school that aspires to accommodate and integrate pupils with very different needs: exclusions are rare and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Pupils achieve well because they are taught well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are invariably positive and this contributes to pupils' enjoyment of lessons. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable. They use interactive whiteboards with increasing confidence to retain the interest of learners and engage them in their learning. Regular assessments help to track pupils' progress and quickly identify those at risk of underachieving. Pupils acquire a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills through discrete, weekly lessons but do not always have the opportunity to learn using computers in other lessons. Teaching is not always sufficiently varied to provide challenging activities for the more able pupils.

The good curriculum meets all statutory requirements. In addition, all pupils study French from Year 5 onwards and this is supplemented by a residential visit to France. A weekly guidance lesson that includes personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers supports pupils' personal development and well-being. Curriculum enrichment in sport, music, and the arts is exceptionally good and a high proportion of pupils regularly participate in clubs and teams at lunchtimes and after school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads well and has created a common sense of purpose among staff which is building good capacity to make further improvements. All managers make regular use of assessment information to monitor and evaluate how well pupils are doing. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and identifies most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has successfully focused resources on raising standards in numeracy but this has not been extended to literacy in order to make up for the identified shortfall in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding on entry in Year 5. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and have supported the headteacher in resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils who adversely affect the learning of others.
- Provide further challenge in lessons for pupils of all abilities and interests by planning work that is suitably matched to their capabilities.
- Evaluate thoroughly the impact of improvements made in pupils' numeracy and extend what works well into improving pupil's literacy to raise standards in Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Assessment information indicates attainment on entry in Year 5 is broadly in line with national expectations but the school's own evidence shows that a significant proportion of pupils join with shortfalls in their literacy skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve standards similar to the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. Improved standards in recent years were not sustained in 2006. Results in English and science fell but remained above the national average in mathematics. The school has responded to this by targeting support at those pupils at risk of underachieving and by ensuring that pupils are much better prepared for national tests. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in Years 7 and 8. Regular teacher assessments show that they are making good progress in a range of subjects and that over half of Year 8 pupils are on track to exceed expectations this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, attend well and display very positive attitudes. Most generally behave well but a small minority of pupils, mostly boys, displays challenging behaviour in some lessons. Teachers are making considerable efforts to correct this and re-engage these pupils in learning, but this is not yet fully resolved. Pupils feel safe and on the rare occasion that bullying occurs they say that it is dealt with quickly by teachers. Pupils speak favourably about the merit system and feel that it motivates them to work hard and do their very best. An elected school council gives them the opportunity to take responsibility and work with senior managers to seek improvements to the school. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles through sensible eating at lunchtimes

and regular participation in physical activity. Raising money and visiting the local children's hospice enables pupils to contribute to the local community and develop skills that equip them well for the work-place.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are consistently well planned with starter activities, a range of stimulating tasks to which pupils respond enthusiastically, and final activities to summarise what has been learnt. On occasions, there is an over-emphasis on whole class teaching and limited use of group work. This slows the pace of lessons and allows the attention of some pupils to wane.

Teachers make regular assessments to gauge pupils' progress and set targets. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and provided with additional work within the curriculum and through enrichment activities in mathematics and computing. However, teachers do not always plan work that is sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils or provide activities that fully extend their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched by good opportunities for pupils to learn French and engage in an excellent range of activities that help them to enjoy school. Science and geography lessons highlight the richness of the world, and a weekly ICT lesson develops relevant skills to support learning elsewhere in the curriculum. Many pupils make use of the newly refurbished library and its computers to research and complete their homework. Pupils' knowledge of healthy lifestyles is reinforced well in physical education, science and guidance lessons where issues such as drugs awareness and personal safety are addressed. Pupils are grouped into ability sets for English, mathematics, science and French, and teachers carefully assess pupils' strengths and weaknesses to place them in the appropriate classes for other subjects. Each year, the oldest pupils work with a professional actor to learn and perform a Shakespeare play. Assemblies provide pupils with the opportunity to pray, reflect on moral issues and to celebrate and share class projects with each other.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are treated as individuals and many told the inspectors that they know everyone, feel safe and that teachers and other adults look after them well. Procedures for safeguarding the welfare of pupils fully meet government guidelines. Staff focus on individual pupils, get to know them well and build their self esteem and confidence. Assessment data is used effectively to track pupils' progress and is shared amongst teams to identify those who are not achieving as well as they should be. However, despite knowing their numerical targets in English, mathematics and science, some pupils are unaware of exactly what they have to do to improve their work.

Those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and vulnerable pupils achieve well because they are identified early. They are nurtured in small groups where they are made to feel valued and

special by teachers and teaching assistants. A school nurse is available to discuss health and personal issues and the school works with a wide range of outside agencies to support the well-being of its most vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by his team of middle leaders, share a corporate responsibility for the standards achieved and the personal development and well-being of pupils. The inclusion of all learners is central to the life of the school. Managers regularly liaise with parents to ensure that pupils remain on track to achieve what they are capable of. Middle leaders' monitoring of lessons has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Governance is satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory duties but they do not play a prominent role in challenging senior leaders to raise standards further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Roysia Middle School, Royston, Hertfordshire. SG8 5EQ

Earlier this week another inspector and I visited your school and found it to be a good school. Your help was vital in helping us to make this judgement, so thank you for allowing us to join you in lessons, talk with you and look at some of your work. We also spent time with some of your teachers, met with the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. We really enjoyed meeting with the school council who represented their school very well.

You are fortunate to attend a small school that treats you as individuals, where you all know each other and your teachers well. It provides you with the care, support and learning you need when you arrive in Year 5 and gives you the knowledge, skills and understanding you need to progress to the next stage of your education at the upper school. You told us that you enjoyed coming to school, liked your teachers and appreciated the range of activities provided for you in lessons and, in particular, the sports, music and arts activities at lunchtimes and after-school. Your parents also told us that you enjoy school and that most of you make the progress they expect of you.

You told us that a small number of pupils spoil it for others by misbehaving in lessons, so we have asked the school to improve this. We have also asked your teachers to plan activities in lessons that are really challenging so that you can work harder and achieve your very best. Many of you do better in mathematics than English and science in your Year 6 tests, so we've asked school managers to look at this and improve the results in Key Stage 2.

Your headteacher and his senior staff lead and manage your school well. You can help them by letting your school council members know your views on what you feel would improve your school and ask your representative to share these views with them.

Once again, thank you for your kind welcome.

We wish you all well.

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector