

Romans Field School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110580
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	310352
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Bennett
Headteacher	Mr Wayne Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
School address	Shenley Road Bletchley Milton Keynes MK3 7AW
Telephone number	01908 376011
Fax number	01908 645320

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves the needs of pupils with a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils join the school at various times between the ages of 5 and 11 but the vast majority are currently in Years 3 to 6. The school provides day and weekly residential provision for up to 25 pupils. Although a mixed school, nearly all the pupils are boys and the boarding provision is for boys only. Attainment on entry is well below average. The school is to be federated with Milton Keynes Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The PRU is co-located on the Romans Field site and is led and managed by the headteacher.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated how well pupils achieve, how well teaching meets pupils' needs and how well leaders at all levels contribute to school improvement. She gathered evidence from discussions with staff and pupils, observation of parts of lessons, at breakfast and lunchtime, scrutiny of assessment information, records and pupils' work, and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are highly delighted with its work and many wrote to express their appreciation. One spoke of how her son 'has blossomed into a caring, respectful young man during his time at Romans Field' and another said that the school has 'literally saved' her son. Parents are unanimous in their praise of the staff and the way the school keeps them informed and makes them feel part of a team, committed to solving their children's problems together.

The school has a very positive ethos where pupils know that they are valued as individuals and are confident that there is always a member of staff available to help them to overcome their difficulties. Care and the promotion of pupils' personal development are exemplary. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the staff's consistently high expectations and combination of understanding and firm encouragement, and they clearly enjoy learning. Despite the negative experiences many pupils have had before coming to Romans Field, the attendance rate is above that found nationally in mainstream schools. As parents say, this is because pupils 'love going to school' and 'miss school if they are too unwell to go'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and relationships are excellent. Teachers treat pupils with sensitivity and provide clear guidance about right and wrong. As a result, pupils readily show staff respect and get on well with one another, working collaboratively in lessons and as a group, for instance, in musical performances. Behaviour is outstanding: pupils make exceptionally good progress in managing their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Behaviour is frequently excellent in lessons and good around the school. Pupils have a clear understanding about the importance of healthy living and take an active part in a wide range of sporting activities. They undertake various tasks around the school, contribute their ideas through the school council and have a strong sense of responsibility to act as sensible members of a close-knit school community. They gain many valuable personal skills and some are able to reintegrate into mainstream school. The good progress they make in gaining basic skills of literacy and numeracy prepares them well for the future.

Pupils join the school with attainment that is well below the national average overall and achieve well to reach below average standards, with a few higher attaining pupils reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. There are examples of individual pupils making outstanding progress in some areas, for example, in reading. Pupils with particular difficulties, for instance in literacy, are supported well.

Teaching is good. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well and are skilled at getting pupils to apply themselves and work hard. There is a very purposeful climate for learning in lessons and pupils are eager to talk about what they have been doing. Teachers and teaching assistants work as a seamless team, ensuring that pupils always receive a high level of support and guidance. Lessons cover a variety of activities and practical resources and interactive whiteboards are used well to sustain pupils' interest. Teachers explain clearly to pupils what is expected of them, but they do not always match work to the next steps in the learning of individuals or groups. Lower attaining pupils are, nevertheless, supported well to ensure that they succeed with tasks but the most able pupils are not always challenged as much as they could be.

The school gathers a wealth of assessment information and uses this well to set targets and track pupils' achievement, paying particular attention to the progress they make in spelling and reading and in learning their mathematical tables. Analysis of the progress pupils make in National Curriculum subjects is satisfactory but the school does not make full use of this to check on school effectiveness or as a way of improving teaching. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' personal development are outstanding and involve pupils closely in evaluating their own progress. The curriculum is matched exceptionally well to pupils' interests and learning needs. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. Learning is enriched by a wide range of educational visits that promote pupils' achievement and broaden their horizons, by good use of visiting specialists and productive links with mainstream schools.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding direction to the school's work, and is described by parents as 'excellent' and 'the best headteacher'. There is a strong, shared commitment to making the school as good as possible and the leadership and management of personal development are exceptional. As a result, the school is highly effective in engaging pupils with an educational history of severe behavioural difficulties and underachievement. In recognition of the quality of the school's work with pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and its standing in the community, the primary pupil referral unit has been relocated to the school site and is led and managed by the headteacher. The deputy provides good support to the headteacher in leading the school, and staff with responsibilities for subjects co-ordinate their subjects effectively. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and senior leaders are accurate in judging its effectiveness. Leaders monitor the school's work closely, and much discussion takes place about what is working well and what could be improved. Appropriate priorities are identified and effective action is taken which ensures that the school is well placed to improve further. Nevertheless, the analysis of data and planning for future developments are not always linked as closely as they could be to raising achievement and the school's self-evaluation form does not fully reflect a school that in practice has many strengths and some outstanding features. Governance is good. Governors support the headteacher very well and have been closely involved in the co-location and co-management of the pupil referral unit. They have begun to gather information for themselves in order to challenge leaders about the school's effectiveness.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The boarding provision makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement and development. Good attention is given to promoting pupils' health and keeping them safe. Pupils enjoy the time they spend in residence and they make an outstanding contribution to decision making, readily putting forward their ideas. Parents are closely involved in planning care for their children. Boarding provision is well organised and the school has made good progress in addressing recommendations made when this aspect of its provision was last inspected on 13 June 2007. It therefore meets the National Minimum Standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that development planning is linked, wherever relevant, to raising achievement and refine the analysis of information about the school's effectiveness to produce a self-evaluation form (SEF) that does better justice to the school's work.
- Build on the many existing strengths in teaching by ensuring that staff consistently plan lessons that challenge the most able.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Romans Field School, Milton Keynes, MK3 7AW

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. It was very interesting to see all the things you do and this helped to make my day with you very enjoyable day. Now I am writing to tell you what I found about your school.

Yours is a good school, and some things about it are outstanding. I can see why so many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the way the staff help you. As soon as I arrived in the school, I could feel what a lovely atmosphere it has, and when I joined some of you for breakfast and at lunchtime, it was easy to see how happy you are and how well you all get on together. You have fantastic relationships with your teachers and the other staff, and everyone does their best to support you. I was impressed by how well you behave, especially in lessons, and how hard you work. I could see that you really enjoy learning and when I looked at your books, I could see that you are making good progress. Some of you have done really well in reading. The teachers make learning interesting for you and the school provides you with many exciting opportunities to go on trips, to work with visiting theatre companies, take part in dance and aerobics with other schools and to do a lot of sport.

The headteacher runs the school very well, and he and other staff want to make the school even better for you. I have asked them to do this by:

- making sure the work you do in class is always exactly right for you, not too easy and not too difficult
- looking really carefully at everything they know about the school to see what is working best and what could be improved.

Best wishes

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector