

The Romsey School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116421
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312300
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Marcia Headon HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1098
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Houghton
Headteacher	Mr P Warburton/ Mr G Bell
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Greatbridge Road Romsey SO51 8ZB
Telephone number	01794 512334
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Romsey School is a larger than average school with extensive provision for adult and family learning. It is a full service extended school. Pupils come from a wide catchment area including the outskirts of Southampton. Since 2004, the school has had specialist mathematics and computing status. The school includes a special unit that caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Slightly fewer than 5% of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is believed not to be English is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly above average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average. The school was awarded the National Community School Award in 2006 and the National Extended School Award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Innovation and creativity coupled with a relentless search for improvement have made The Romsey School a good school with many outstanding features. Standards are very high and pupils achieve well. Parents speak warmly of the school and its ethos and the fact that members of staff will go the extra mile for their pupils. One parent said, 'pastoral support has been superb. Five stars for the staff.'

Pupils enter the school with results that are above those expected nationally. By the time they leave, their standards are well above average. They make good progress and achieve well. Boys make better progress than girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) make outstanding progress. Pupils in every year group are clear about their current levels of attainment and what they must do to make progress. They are keen to do well. Key factors in the success of the school are the impact of the specialist college status on the quality of teaching and learning, the imaginative use of the services provided through the extended school and the rigorous academic mentoring which includes reports to parents on pupil attitudes.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The division of responsibilities between the executive headteacher and headteacher has allowed for a more detailed analysis of the quality of teaching and more tightly focused attention on the learning in the classroom. The school knows itself well and is accurate in its evaluation. It has taken full advantage of its specialist status in mathematics and computing to upgrade resources, develop skills and establish productive links with the wider community.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of opportunities offered through the extended school. They feel entirely safe in school and they understand their rights and responsibilities in an environment that is fair and supportive. They are proud of their school council that is very active and has had an impact on the environment by lobbying for and gaining a cycle route. The school is a well-ordered and highly inclusive community and has supported a number of very vulnerable pupils highly effectively. The support given to pupils at the autistic spectrum disorder base is truly outstanding which allows this group of pupils to be prepared fully for the next steps in their learning.

The curriculum is strong and meets the needs of most pupils well. The school has introduced a range of vocational courses and it recognises the need to extend the provision even further and to provide additional courses.

As a result of strong leadership at all levels, the school has an excellent capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of girls so as to equate with that of the boys.
- Extend the vocational curriculum provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In 2006 in the Key Stage 3 tests, standards were above those of most schools in all three core subjects. They were highest in mathematics. Pupils made satisfactory progress overall but good

progress in mathematics. The un-validated school data for 2007 Key Stage 3 tests indicate better progress overall with sustained good progress in mathematics.

In 2006 the percentage of pupils who gained five or more A*-C grades at GCSE was well above the national average. The unvalidated 2007 GCSE results confirm the continuing upward trend seen since the last inspection with 77% of pupils gaining five A*-C grades. An exceptionally high percentage of pupils gained five A*-C grades including English and mathematics. Standards are high in a wide range of subjects including mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and this reflects the positive impact of the specialist school status. The use of a wider range of teaching and learning styles has improved the motivation and engagement of the pupils. These results show a strong picture of very good progress by pupils since joining the school. The progress of boys is especially good and the school is aware of the need to focus on raising the achievement of girls to narrow the gap. The achievement in some subjects such as mathematics, ICT and geography is outstanding.

Pupils with LDD, including those in the autistic spectrum disorder base, make outstanding progress due to the careful monitoring of their progress. They receive very effective support and follow relevant personalised learning programmes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils empathise with others, and show compassion through the many charity events organised by the school council. Pupils reflect daily and listen carefully in tutor periods to others' opinions of thought-provoking statements. They are keen to assume responsibility through the many opportunities available in extracurricular clubs, community events, prefects and the school council. However, in some lessons the pupils do not get enough opportunities to explore other cultures.

Developing a healthy lifestyle features very strongly in the school. Pupils understand the importance of balanced diets and apply this to their own decision making. Participation in sport is very high. This is due to the outstanding facilities and the dedication of teachers and volunteers who coach and organise teams at evenings and weekends.

All pupils feel safe because of the effective measures taken to combat all forms of bullying. The school has developed innovative intervention with parents to help combat cyber-bullying. The effective 'buddy' system between Year 10 and younger pupils enables pupils to settle quickly in the school.

Innovative initiatives connect young people and adults. Pupils fully embrace the community values and make a significant contribution to strengthening the bonds between generations. For example, Year 8 pupils benefit from a visiting author and this then becomes a springboard for family and community reading and discussion about issues related to the First World War.

Attendance is good because pupils enjoy their lessons. One student remarked, 'This school is amazing!' Most pupils show thoughtful behaviour and have a high regard for their school environment. A very small minority of pupils indulge in low-level distractions that require teachers to work harder to keep pupils on task.

Skills in ICT, mathematics, and the comprehensive work experience and enterprise programmes equip the pupils thoroughly for the next stages of education and training. Effective partnerships with employers ensure pupils have the necessary insights into workplace skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

During the inspection, many instances of outstanding practice were seen with excellent student engagement and involvement in their own learning. In one outstanding Year 8 science lesson, the pupils devised their own tasks and evaluated their own decisions. Lessons are very well structured and both teachers and pupils make effective use of the new interactive technology available. Pupils and teachers share very good relationships that enable the teachers to focus effectively on pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and plan their lessons in detail setting challenging learning objectives. They use a wide range of learning styles, including many opportunities for practical investigations in science and the use of ICT.

High levels of praise are consistent components of lessons. All pupils are aware of their challenging targets and appreciate the guidance given by teachers on how these can be achieved. The wide range of extra support opportunities that take place outside school hours in subject areas, contributes effectively to pupils' learning. Student progress in many lessons is outstanding. However, in a very small number of lessons the pace slows when teachers need to re-engage or correct a few, mainly lower attaining pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum with outstanding features, especially that provided through the extended school. The curriculum covers all statutory requirements, and is carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils and promote achievement. A good range of options is available on entry to Year 10. The extended school provision attracts high levels of participation, and includes sports, languages, arts and family learning.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils at risk of underachieving benefit from individualised timetables, which include attendance on vocational programmes at college. These arrangements have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Vocational courses are offered in the school, including an innovative fishing programme linked to employment opportunities in the local tourist industry. The pupils on these courses are highly motivated by the practical activities. The school has acknowledged the need to improve the range of vocational courses, and plans to modify the way that personal, social and health education is delivered. The specialist mathematics and computer status of the school makes a strong contribution to the curriculum. Highly successful courses in digital applications have been introduced. The potential of ICT is maximised through the pupils' use of 'paperless' portfolios of work. The school's 'learning platform', an internet-based resource for pupils, staff and parents, supports the curriculum well and there are strong links with the family learning programme. There is good progression to mathematics and computing courses post-16.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Form tutors provide effective academic monitoring for their tutees and identify emerging issues in detail. This includes reporting on pupils' attitudes to their work that is having a positive impact. Pupils fully understand how well they are progressing and exactly what they need to do to improve.

The monitoring and support for vulnerable pupils and those at risk of underachieving is particularly effective in maintaining the engagement of these pupils and helping them to succeed. There are also successful, innovative activities that raise aspirations and self-esteem. As a result, the level of exclusions is extremely low. Close attention is paid to the health and social aspects that contribute to pupils' difficulties. There are very good partnerships with the full range of agencies which work with these young people. The support and guidance for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and learning difficulties and disabilities is exemplary.

Pupils have a good awareness of the opportunities available to them post-16. There is very good access to information, advice and guidance through the school's careers adviser, in addition to events and activities designed to raise aspirations.

Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe and protected are robust. There is rigorous attention paid to health and safety around the site.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The innovative management structure allows the executive headteacher and the headteacher to complement each other's strengths whilst having a common vision, which is shared effectively with the staff. The restructuring has cleverly given the opportunity for other senior managers to develop their leadership skills and as a result, the school's capacity for improvement is outstanding. The senior leadership team has an excellent understanding of the needs of the pupils and staff. They set challenging targets for departments over a wide range of measures and monitor them carefully. Any underperformance is tackled robustly and effectively. There are high expectations of all staff but at the same time a very supportive culture that is fostered through buddying. The positive impact of this approach is observable in well-structured performance management within departments. The middle managers are enthusiastic and highly effective. They are supported well by the school's management systems that help them to share good practice in their work and by good quality professional development. One member of staff commented, 'We are all on a journey, staff, pupils and parents and we want the very best for our pupils'.

The governing body have an excellent understanding of their role and hold the school to account most effectively. They review their own effectiveness systematically and are accurate in their evaluation of their performance. The school has addressed the issues from the last inspection successfully and is well placed to continue its development.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	1

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	2
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	1

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?	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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Romsey School, Romsey, SO51 8ZB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently and in particular for showing our visitors from Rwanda around your school. We enjoyed talking to you and agree with your comments about the wide variety of activities on offer and how well the staff support you.

Our judgement is that The Romsey School is a good school with many outstanding features.

What we liked most was:

- your commitment to your work and the results which you achieve
- your well developed sense of community and the way you listen to each other
- the opportunities you have through the extended school
- the high quality teaching and pastoral care which the staff give to you
- the excellent leadership of Mr Warburton, Mr Bell and the senior team.

To improve even further, we have suggested to the school that they should:

- increase the range of vocational courses on offer
- ensure that girls do equally well as the boys.

You have a part to play in this and we are sure that you will. We wish you all the best for your future.

Marcia Headon

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools