

Roman Way First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117332
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312574
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mitchell Bailey
Headteacher	Mrs Suzanne Summerhayes
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Burns Road Royston Hertfordshire SG8 5EQ
Telephone number	01763241535
Fax number	01763244676

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The school draws pupils mainly from the surrounding housing estate on the outskirts of Royston. Children attend the Nursery part-time from the age of three, and join Reception in the September or January before they are five. Pupils leave at the age of nine, mainly going on to the middle school on the same site. Most children are of White British background, while around ten per cent are from a diversity of other ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils are at an early stage in acquiring English as an additional language. A significant minority of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a few have a statement of special educational need. Many children start school with skills that are much less developed than usual for this age, particularly in talking.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that goes the extra mile to help every child succeed. The school judges itself to be good, aware that it can always improve further, but it is better than this. Parents know this to be the case. They speak highly of the school, appreciating the way that it works with parents, and praising the quality of education and care it provides.

The school has come a long way since it was last inspected. Teaching has improved, the curriculum has broadened, and standards have risen. All this has happened because of exceptional leadership. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and sets its sights high. The school is extremely effective in harnessing the efforts of the whole staff team in working for improvement. Leaders at all levels share in evaluating the school's work and searching for solutions to problems. This gives the school an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Although the starting point for many children is quite low when they begin school, pupils of all abilities make excellent progress. This leads to standards that are above average overall by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4. In particular, the school is extremely good at helping pupils who find learning difficult to keep up.

Teaching is outstanding in the way that it helps pupils to make rapid progress in learning. Pupils are consistently well taught and provided with an excellent grounding in basic skills. Teachers manage classes extremely well, setting a good pace and ensuring that pupils become absorbed in their work. The school is working hard to develop pupils' speaking skills. It recognises the need to support pupils in thinking logically and explaining their ideas.

The curriculum is planned very effectively to maximise learning. The school makes excellent provision for physical education (PE), sport and music. It also offers an exceptionally broad range of extra activities. This includes a wealth of popular lunchtime and afternoon clubs, to which all staff contribute. The clubs, visits and special events that the school organises introduces pupils to new interests and areas in which they can excel.

Pupils develop extremely well as people because of all that the school offers. They develop a strong sense of responsibility, and pupils in Year 4 carry out many jobs to contribute to community life. They are trained as sports leaders and playground friends, and take great pride in being able to help others. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the school council and know that their views matter.

Pupils live up to the school's high expectations and this leads to excellent behaviour. The school provides outstanding care for vulnerable pupils and those with particular needs and encourages them to participate fully in school life. The progress of each child is guided very closely. Pupils thrive because of the way that the school values each one of them, fostering their enjoyment of learning and believing in their capacity to achieve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an exceptionally good start. Because children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage, their attainment by the end of Reception is close to that expected nationally in most areas of learning. The Foundation Stage is very well led with a deep understanding of how best to meet the needs of children joining this school. Consequently,

children rapidly become confident in learning and making choices and they are enthused by new experiences. Relationships between adults and children are very strong, and parents appreciate the ease with which children settle into the Nursery. Staff keep a very close eye on how well children are doing. They are highly skilled in planning to meet individual needs and ensuring that every activity adds richly to each child's learning. The staff are currently working to extend this further in their provision for outside activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to promote high attainment by building pupils' skills in speaking, in thinking logically and in explaining their ideas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in making rapid progress in learning from their low starting points. Building on good foundations, pupils achieve very well in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards are just above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The pace of progress is maintained in Years 3 and 4 so that a high proportion of pupils reach, and often exceed, the standards usually found at the end of Year 4. Outstanding achievement through the school owes much to the way that action is taken quickly and effectively if pupils are falling behind. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make excellent progress and those who are learning English as an additional language also achieve very well. Standards have risen steadily since the last inspection because the school has set sights higher for pupils. The school checks the progress being made towards challenging targets, which are usually met. The staff constantly consider how to help pupils achieve even better, for example in handwriting.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, is outstanding. They enjoy school enormously and attendance is good. Pupils contribute eagerly and thoughtfully to the many activities that enrich their learning, including class discussions and assemblies. Enthusiasm for learning spills over into work that pupils choose to do at home, as seen in examples of writing in Year 2. Pupils are highly tolerant of each other and receptive to new ideas and experiences. Disagreements do occur but they are rare, and pupils learn to deal with their own and others' feelings when upset. The school places a very strong emphasis on keeping safe, eating healthily and taking exercise, and supports pupils extremely well in putting their knowledge into action. Pupils make outstanding progress in contributing to the community, within and beyond the school. The skills they acquire, personally and academically, prepare them extremely well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Outstanding achievement is brought about by teaching that is consistently good and frequently excellent. Foundations are laid extremely well for basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers plan and teach with precision, investing learning with a sense of importance and urgency. They harness pupils' interest and

build up their confidence, showing them how to succeed. Teachers adapt methods and approaches to maximise learning, encouraging pupils to participate actively. They recognise the importance of developing pupils' language skills, for example, by reinforcing vocabulary and encouraging pupils to share ideas with partners. Expectations are high, but made achievable by teachers' insightful understanding of pupils and their individual needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly together, providing support where it is most needed. Additional programmes in literacy are taught extremely well. Pupils' learning is assessed thoroughly, and staff are quick to identify and take action to remedy any weaknesses in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The breadth of experiences provided is outstanding. The curriculum is planned extremely well to meet national requirements and to ensure progress from year to year. It is tailored very effectively to promote richness in learning and to make imaginative links between subjects. The use of ICT runs through the curriculum, so that pupils gain computer skills and put them to extremely good use. They have many opportunities in sport through the local sports partnership. Enrichment afternoons for older pupils, including specialist teaching in music, PE and Spanish, add depth and breadth to their learning. The curriculum effectively promotes understanding of other cultures, as seen in well-developed work about Kenya. Learning extends well beyond lessons. An excellent menu of clubs and special activities enriches the diet and opens up wide opportunities for pupils, giving them many chances to excel.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is underpinned by outstanding care, guidance and support for them as people and as learners. Under the headteacher's inspirational leadership all staff share a sense of urgency in helping children to overcome difficulties and to move forward in their learning. The school responds rapidly and flexibly to support those who are particularly vulnerable. The school communicates extremely well with parents, who find the staff approachable and reassuring. Partnerships with other professionals are excellent. Not content with seeking outside resources and expertise, the school rigorously checks how well any intervention is working: 'We don't have time for it not to work'. The school manages potential risks well and procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Teachers are very skilled at giving pupils immediate feedback on what they are doing well and how to improve further. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning and to their personal development and well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are reflected in high levels of motivation throughout the school to do the best for pupils. The headteacher leads with strength of vision while enabling others and cultivating exceptional teamwork. As a result, leaders at all levels contribute to the pursuit of improvement. Teaching and learning are monitored closely by the headteacher and subject leaders, and the staff are reflective and analytical in seeking and testing out solutions to problems. The school evaluates its own performance rigorously and critically. Staff, parents and governors regularly share in reviewing what the school does well and where it could do better, and the school acts on the outcomes of these surveys. As a result, the school's priorities

for development are widely shared and understood. The school uses its resources extremely well to achieve excellent value for money. Governance is good because governors fulfil their responsibilities well, provide positive challenge and actively support the school and its leadership.

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?	1
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 the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	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	1
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

1 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Roman Way First School, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5EQ

We enjoyed visiting you this week. Thank you for talking to us and helping us to learn about your school. I am writing now to tell you what we thought about it.

We think that you go to an excellent school and you make a lot of progress. The staff are very good at teaching you and helping you if you find learning hard. You do your bit too, by behaving so well and getting on with your work. We are glad that you enjoy writing and take pride in doing well at spelling tests.

It was good to hear that you help with so many jobs and that the school council comes up with good ideas about life at school. The sports leaders and playground friends are very helpful in making playtimes good for everyone.

We think that there are lots of very special things about your school. You are lucky to have so many clubs and so many interesting things to do. We thought the cup-stackers were amazing, and it was good to see so many of you in the choir getting ready for the concert in Cambridge.

Mrs Summerhayes and all the staff keep looking for ways to help you learn even better. They think it is important to give you lots of help in speaking well, thinking ideas through and explaining them to other people, and we agree.

You go to a wonderful school, and we hope that you go on enjoying everything that you do there. Thank you again for welcoming us.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Richardson

Lead Inspector