

# Roecroft Lower School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 109484              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Bedfordshire        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 324966              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 19–20 November 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Joanne Harvey       |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | First  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 4–9  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 123  |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0  |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years                                     | 0  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Mr Neil Alston   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Mrs Julie Pearson and Mrs Mary Pledger                         |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 17 October 2005  |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                                       |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                                       |
| <b>School address</b>  | Church Road<br>Stotfold<br>Hitchin<br>Hertfordshire<br>SG5 4NE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01462730336  |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01462 735 488  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size lower school on a large and attractive site within the town of Stotfold, serving the southern half of its community. It is unusual in that it has two headteachers who job - share. It takes pupils who are aged four to nine years from what is a mixed social and economic catchment area. They enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with a range of levels of knowledge and skills. However, whilst they are broadly average in some areas, they are often below average in their early literacy and numeracy skills. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is lower than average. Almost all pupils are from a White British background and none is in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or a disabilities is below average and there are currently no children with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved a National Healthy Schools accreditation and an Artsmark. Plans are in place for the school to move to a new building on a new site in 2010.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Roecroft Lower School is outstandingly effective in enabling pupils to achieve exceptionally well and to leave as well-rounded individuals who are more than ready to tackle future challenges. The school benefits from tremendous support and appreciation from the vast majority of parents and one comment, echoed by many, illustrates this: 'The staff are friendly, caring, understanding and compassionate. They obviously love their jobs and the children'. At the heart of the school's success lies the commitment of every adult and child to the 22 values in its Values Education Programme. Everyone adheres to these in order to ensure success in the school's aim of 'Together, creating a better future for our children'.

From whatever starting points, pupils make outstanding progress and, by the time that they leave school, standards are significantly higher than those expected for pupils of this age and are often exceptionally so. A number of factors contribute to this exceptionally good achievement, the first being the pupils. They are great ambassadors for the school, their behaviour is exemplary and their desire to do well and to do the right thing shines through. Pupils benefit enormously from understanding how to stay healthy and how to manage risks in their lives. They contribute extremely well to the school community and they know that staff value their contributions and suggestions highly.

This extremely successful school has significant strengths in all areas of provision. Teaching and learning are outstanding and are characterised by very respectful relationships and high levels of engagement and challenge for all. The curriculum provides excellent learning opportunities, within and outside the school, that are carefully planned to meet everyone's needs. Leaders recognise that the next step is to develop further their creative approaches to teaching aspects of their 'curriculum for the 21st century' in order to continue ensuring the maximum engagement and achievement for all. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils feel safe, secure and respected and their personal development is extremely good. The academic guidance given to pupils has rapidly become a strength of the school and is outstanding, with teachers giving clear guidance to the next steps in learning. Because the pupils make such good progress in their learning and experience such a dynamic curriculum, they are prepared outstandingly well for the future.

Leadership and management are excellent at all levels. Responsibility for the rigorous implementation of systems to check the work of the school has been shared and everyone is playing their full part. Issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully and expectations and ambitions for the future are high. Hence, the capacity to continue to improve is outstanding.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children do extremely well in the EYFS because their needs are met exceptionally well. They settle quickly because of the excellent support of staff, who welcome them warmly and get to know them very well. The school's Value Education Framework begins here. Children feel secure and ready to learn because of the outstanding relationships formed between the staff, the children, and their parents and carers. Practitioners work extremely well together in carefully planning and teaching exciting learning activities and topic themes, inside and in the outdoor area. These activities are based on an accurate knowledge of children's progress and needs and

an excellent understanding of the EYFS curriculum. Teaching is often outstanding. For example, staff frequently capitalise on opportunities to question children in order to extend their learning. They demonstrate how to ask important questions, to concentrate and see tasks through, how to collaborate and to be good friends.

There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those initiated by children, with children being given time to discover and explore their ideas. As a consequence, children often make outstanding progress from whatever their starting points. They achieve the levels expected of them and often exceed them by the time they enter Year 1. Their personal development is remarkable, with independence being established and they take responsibility for resources right from the start. A high quality of care and welfare is assured, with all the requirements being met, and children are taught how to minimise risks for themselves. Highly effective and extremely well organised leadership ensures that the EYFS runs like clockwork on a day to day basis.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further extend and embed across school the creative and integrated approach to delivering the school's 'curriculum for the 21st century'.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The track record of extremely high standards achieved in teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 has dipped only once in recent years, in 2007. As a consequence of swift intervention, standards rose again in 2008 to be exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards are being maintained in Years 1 and 2. Exceptionally high levels of knowledge and skills are also the norm for pupils by the end of Year 4. High quality focused support has ensured that everyone is doing as well as they can in Years 3 and 4. These pupils are consistently achieving the challenging targets set for them and the dip in standards experienced by current Year 4 pupils when they were in Year 2 is no longer evident. Considerable success has also been achieved in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment and in ensuring that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The overwhelming commitment of everyone to the consistent application of all elements of the school's Values Education Framework helps to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils play a full part in drawing up, developing and helping to maintain the strong set of values, principles and beliefs that define the school community and contribute greatly to its success. They talk easily and with pride about why this is so important and how everyone takes responsibility for making the school a super place to be. Pupils clearly demonstrate their tremendous enthusiasm for learning and hard work as they set about their tasks. They love coming to school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils demonstrate an extremely mature sense of justice and fair play and highly respect the feelings and beliefs of others. They collaborate and solve problems together well and go out of their way to care for one another. Pupils' contribution to the school community is excellent. For example, the school council, playground buddies and monitors carry out, with relish, many tasks and responsibilities around the school. Pupils raise funds for charities, participate in local events and enthuse about the enterprise opportunities they are offered.

They have an outstanding awareness of what is needed to keep fit, healthy and safe and leave the school extremely well prepared for the next phase of their lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching is never less than good and has many outstanding elements. The cumulative impact of this consistent level of teaching explains why pupils make outstanding progress overall. Relationships, behaviour management and the contribution of teaching assistants are excellent across the school. Teachers go the extra mile to make learning engaging but demanding and the pupils are ever ready to rise to the challenges set. Several were keen to say that their teachers are at the top of their list of what they like best about the school. There is a high level of expectation that pupils will find things out for themselves, examining different avenues of exploration. They are encouraged to take risks in their learning, assess their own progress and evaluate the outcomes. They are given many first-hand experiences and opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding in practical ways. Teachers ensure that collaborative working between pupils becomes second nature. They rigorously use assessment and tracking information to guide meticulous planning and this ensures that no learning time is lost.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school places an excellent emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and mathematics skills but also goes beyond this. Information and communication technology is fully integrated into lessons and adds significantly to pupils' learning and enjoyment. Pupils are able to participate in practical activities, for example in science and the humanities, and have many opportunities to put the skills they have developed in one subject to the test in another. Pupils of all abilities benefit from activities that are both challenging and thought provoking. Individual intervention and extension activities keep all pupils on their toes. The extremely well thought out programme for personal, social and health education programme contributes very well to pupils' personal development. Outstanding enrichment activities considerably enhance pupils' experiences. These include many visits, visitors and after-school clubs, ranging from karate to cookery, that are highly valued by pupils. There is no complacency. Whilst keeping a close eye on maintaining the current high standards for all, leaders of the school are quite rightly planning to further increase the 'wow factor' of their 'curriculum for the 21st century' with, for example, even more themed teaching.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

This is an extremely caring and supportive school; at the heart of its ethos is to ensure that each pupil is happy and well cared for. The establishment of excellent personal and learning behaviour is a concern shared by all staff and is central to pupils' success. Pupils state that there is always someone to talk to if they have any concerns. They talk enthusiastically about how they are consulted and how they can make a difference to what happens in school. Excellent support is on hand for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or vulnerable pupils, often in partnership with outside agencies. Procedures for safeguarding are securely in place. Academic guidance has shown significant improvement since the last inspection and is now a

strength. Pupils' progress is extremely thoroughly tracked and the information collected is used highly effectively to guide planning for each stage of pupils' development. They have an excellent awareness of their individual targets for improvement and how to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership is outstanding at all levels. The considerable complementary strengths of the two headteachers contribute extremely effectively to giving clear direction to the work of the school. They have successfully united a strong staff team, all of whom are highly committed to maintaining the school's unique ethos and values, and this is a key to the school's success. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work ensure that everyone has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Extremely well focused action planning demonstrates high expectations for the future. A good illustration of this is the intention of leaders to strengthen community cohesion still further, despite this already being a good feature of the school's work. A significant contributory factor to school improvement has been the full establishment of leadership and management at all levels. This has been particularly successful in areas such as making the tracking process more rigorous, and ensuring that everyone plays their part fully in driving the school forward. The governing body plays a full roll in the life of the school, offering challenge and practical support. There is an extremely strong commitment to ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of all that the school has to offer.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

**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 capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 1   |

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?              | 1 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve?   | 1 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?                     | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?                          | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 1 |

**Achievement and standards**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress                           | 1 |

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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 |
| The extent to which 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 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 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 eliminated   | 1   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 2   |
| 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  | 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**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Roecroft Lower School, Sotfold, SG5 4NE.

Many thanks to you all for making my visit to your school so enjoyable and worthwhile and one that I will remember for a long time. I really enjoyed talking to you about work and school, and a special thanks to the pupils who met with me to discuss their views. It was great to hear how much you love school and all the terrific activities you take part in, both during and outside of the school day. It was good to hear how safe and secure you feel, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you have any concerns.

One of the best things about your school is you - the pupils! I thought your behaviour, enthusiasm and desire to do well were all outstanding. You are all so proud of your Values Education Programme and this certainly helps you to do well. The contribution you make to the life of the school is something to be proud of. Add to this your knowledge about healthy lifestyles and just how well you all get on together and it is true to say you are excellent ambassadors for the school. Well done!

I found so many good things about Roecroft School that I have to agree with you and say that it is an outstanding school and a great place to learn. Teachers and other staff work really hard to provide you with work that interests and challenges you to do your best. Because of this, they help you achieve exceptionally well. The curriculum has many interesting activities on offer and lots of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. The school is excellent at helping you keep safe, fit and healthy and the way that it cares for you is outstanding. The headteachers, staff and governors are excellent in how they work together so well to make sure you all have a high quality education. They know the school very well and everyone wants it to keep getting better and better. I have to agree with them that the next thing for them to do is:

- develop even more of the creative activities and topic themes that you told me that you all love so much, and that help you to learn and remember everything so well.

I know you will want to continue playing your part in the success story that is Roecroft Lower School by working as hard and behaving as well as you do now. I wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector