

Royisia Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117545
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339030
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker 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 of pupils on the school roll	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Brynjolffssen
Headteacher	Peter Fielden
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. In total, 16 lesson observations were made of the 14 teachers in the school, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the progress pupils are making in their learning and school self-evaluation. Inspectors analysed 115 parental questionnaire responses and questionnaires returned by staff and almost all pupils. Meetings were held with nominated staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the school's assessment and tracking data for pupils across all four years
- whether teaching is sufficiently challenging for different groups of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation across all aspects of provision
- the impact of the school's work in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence.

Information about the school

Roysia is a small middle school serving a mixed residential area on the outskirts of Royston. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is more than twice the national figure. A significant number of these pupils either have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or have specific learning difficulties. The school works in close partnership with its neighbouring middle school and with the local upper school. Each has specialist status in mathematics and computing, awarded in June 2008. The declining number on roll since the last inspection has given rise to a review of local provision which is currently under way. Since Easter, the school has been led by the deputy headteacher because of the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Roysia is a good school that achieves good, and some outstanding, outcomes for its pupils. It has a well-deserved reputation in the local community as a caring school that effectively meets the individual needs of every child. Several parents wrote about the excellent support provided for their children and the positive impact this has had on their self-confidence and progress. One summed up the views of many other parents in writing, 'I have nothing but praise for all the staff at Roysia. My child is blossoming into a happy, confident individual'. The school certainly provides a secure and positive environment for pupils, but also has high academic expectations which it strives hard to achieve and sustain. The result is that pupils achieve impressively well both academically and in their wider personal development. Some outcomes are excellent, particularly in terms of the positive contribution that pupils make to their own school and the wider community, and the way that pupils of all ages keenly participate in what the school offers. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously and help to maintain the school's very positive climate. One Year 5 pupil articulated this well when saying that 'we look up to the Year 8 pupils as our role models'. Pupils of all ages behave well, work hard and are proud of their school. Most have exemplary attitudes to learning.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move up through the school and achieve standards that are generally above those expected for their age by the time they leave. This accelerated progress is primarily the result of high quality teaching and a well-structured curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of pupils. Very well-targeted support for all pupils enables them to make the best of the wide range of opportunities provided by the school and ensures that no pupil is left behind. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and has resulted in significant improvement in the performance and participation of individuals who might otherwise miss out. Teaching and assessment are good, and some is outstanding, but their effectiveness varies because exemplary practice is not replicated across all subjects. Some lessons lack sharp focus on what groups of pupils might achieve, and some marking is either too perfunctory or has too little impact on guiding improvement.

The school is very well led and managed. School self-evaluation is accurate and is soundly based on systematic monitoring procedures. Day-to-day management is excellent, but strategic planning lacks an incisive and sophisticated approach to self-evaluation, because routine monitoring does not focus sharply enough on the impact on pupils' learning, or the participation and outcomes for particular groups. School leaders have sustained good improvement since the last inspection and have a shared vision of what the school needs to do to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Replicate the exemplary practice that exists in teaching and assessment so that
 - all lessons set precise and ambitious outcomes for different groups
 - marking provides clear guidance for pupils, which is then followed up
 - the development of pupils' wider skills in literacy and numeracy is embedded across the curriculum.
- Develop a more sophisticated approach to monitoring and evaluation
 - by sharpening the focus of routine monitoring, particularly with regard to the impact on pupil outcomes
 - by providing incisive summative analysis
 - and then ensuring that self-evaluation guides improvement planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils start in Year 5 with standards that are broadly in line with age-related expectations, although a significant number have particular needs that present significant barriers to their learning. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and good progress in Key Stage 3 so that, by the time that they leave at the end of Year 8, standards are above those expected across most areas, including the school's specialist subjects. The pupils' positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their good progress: they sustain their concentration well, collaborate productively when working independently in pairs and small groups, and take a pride in their work. The pace of learning is most rapid when teachers define ambitious outcomes for different groups and then skilfully assess the pupils' understanding so that activities are constantly modified to extend or consolidate the pupils' learning. This was evident, for example, in the fast-paced Year 5 rapid reading programme lesson and in Year 8 when pupils were using their recent French trip to learn the past tense.

The school encourages pupils to be responsible and considerate towards others, and their positive response demonstrates particularly good social, moral and spiritual development. The pupils make an excellent contribution to their own school and also to the wider community, for example through the effective school council, the work of sports leaders, with charity events and the regular contribution of the '8 to 5 readers'. Pupils influence the school's development because staff seek their views and listen to their opinions. Pupils feel safe and know that rare incidents of bullying are quickly resolved. They have an excellent understanding about how to develop healthy lifestyles, and demonstrate this in their eating habits and in the high uptake and enjoyment of physical activities. By the time that pupils leave the school, they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because of the detailed attention the school pays to the needs of all individuals, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school works closely with families and external agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Several parents highlighted the transformational impact that the school has had on their child's attitudes. One parent commented, in particular, that 'the school has been so good at supporting not just my child but also me'. Concerted work on improving behaviour and attendance has had a very positive impact on the outcomes for individuals and for the school.

High quality teaching is based on strong relationships, lively and skilful delivery and systematic assessments of pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy their work, particularly when they are encouraged to participate actively and undertake practical inquiry. However, they make most rapid progress when work is skilfully modelled and when activities are carefully prepared so that pupils develop and consolidate their understanding through independent work in pairs and small groups, often with well focused additional support from teaching assistants. Lesson planning is thorough, but teaching occasionally limits what different pupils might achieve because the expected outcomes are either too ambitious or not sufficiently challenging for individual pupils. The best marking is particularly thorough, although its impact is not maximised when the pupils do not respond to the guidance given. The curriculum is well adapted to meet the pupils'

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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different needs, and provides varied enrichment opportunities for pupils to enjoy their learning and develop wider skills and interests. Cross-curricular provision is good, although opportunities to consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy are not consistently well planned. The curriculum is extended and enhanced by an impressive range of visiting speakers, trips and residential visits.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership is strong at all levels because senior and middle leaders have a shared vision for the school and are ambitious for the school and its pupils. The headteacher's absence has been a significant blow to the school, but the excellent middle leaders capably sustain and enhance the school's high quality provision. While pupils' safety and individual well-being are paramount, the school also has high expectations for their academic achievement. Procedures for tracking pupil progress are systematic and thorough and the school's improved performance demonstrates its success in embedding ambition and driving improvement.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorously implemented and reviewed. The school makes use of a wide range of different partnerships to promote pupils' personal well-being and has positive relationships with parents. Management systems run smoothly and good systems are in place for monitoring teaching and assessment. The pupils are routinely involved in school self-review, and their views are influential. The school's performance is carefully monitored, but some aspects of self-evaluation are not sufficiently incisive or sophisticated. For example, monitoring of teaching and marking does not focus sharply enough on the quality of pupils' learning, and evaluation does not analyse the impact or outcomes for different groups. The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion, based on a clear analysis of its own context and the needs of the community, but evaluation of its impact is not rigorous. The Governing Body is well organised and provides a suitable level of support and challenge. Most governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are visible in the school community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaire responses from parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive. None raised serious concerns. All respondents are happy with their child's experience and almost all are positive about every aspect of the school's provision and the outcomes for their children. Many took time to make additional comments about the dedication and impact of the headteacher and his staff and the way that the school has met their child's particular needs. The responses affirm the school's outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Roysia Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 191 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	56	46	40	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	60	46	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	54	50	43	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	53	50	43	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	63	55	51	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	49	55	48	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	42	63	55	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	56	49	52	45	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	53	50	43	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	44	55	48	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	44	58	50	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	64	56	51	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	59	46	40	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Roysia Middle School, Royston, SG8 5EQ

Thank you for your friendly welcome during our recent inspection. We were really impressed with your good behaviour, the way that you look after one another and your hard work in lessons. Your opinions, along with the survey responses from your parents, were helpful in confirming what we saw for ourselves. Here are some of the aspects that most impressed us:

- the effort and pride that you take in your work, including the excellent Year 8 exhibitions and the high quality art displays around the school
- the school's outstandingly good care and guidance, and the way staff support you individually and ensure that you all feel safe
- your understanding of how to stay fit and healthy and how well you participate in all that the school offers
- the positive contribution that you make to your school and wider community, for example through charity work, sports leaders and the Year 8 readers.

You make good progress in your learning because teaching is good and the curriculum provides you with an impressive range of different experiences and opportunities. This improves your academic standards but also develops your self-confidence and your wider skills so that you are really well prepared for the next stage of your education.

There are times when you could do better, so we have asked your teachers to improve some of the 'learning outcomes' that they plan for you and to improve the effectiveness of some marking. Most of you know what you need to do to improve your work, but you can help by checking that you understand what you are asked to do when your work is marked. We have asked the school to check these things and also to be a little more rigorous when they monitor and analyse the school's performance.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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