

Roman Fields

11 Box Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 0DF

Inspection dates

18–19 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. His clear vision, motivation and high expectations have ensured that this outstanding school is continuously improving.
- The management committee is highly effective. Members know the school extremely well and they have an excellent range of skills and experience to hold leaders to account.
- Leaders demonstrate strong knowledge and expertise in supporting pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Outcomes are outstanding.
- The curriculum is skilfully designed to focus on pupils' individual needs and stages of development. Stimulating themes capture pupils' interest and ensure that they make outstanding progress across all subjects.
- Pupils, including those in the sixth form, achieve extremely well and make substantial progress from their starting points. Pupils gain external accreditations and make significant gains in their social and personal development.
- Teaching is outstanding because adults who work with pupils know their individual needs remarkably well. Teachers are highly skilled and adapt activities so that pupils achieve extremely well.
- Staff treat pupils with dignity and respect at all times. The quality of care provided to pupils is exemplary.
- Disadvantaged pupils do as well as their peers because additional funding is spent effectively.
- The sixth form is excellent. Students have extensive opportunities to prepare for the next stage of their life.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding and at the heart of the school's beliefs and values. Pupils' specific needs and difficulties are carefully addressed through personalised plans. As a result, their outcomes are outstanding.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Teachers' expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves are very high and pupils respond accordingly.
- The attendance of pupils is improving dramatically and is maintained at a high level throughout their stay at the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value the effectiveness of support from adults and the difference it makes to the lives of their children.
- Not all pupils write at length, or often enough, in subjects other than English.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement throughout the school, by planning regular opportunities for pupils to write at length in a wide range of subjects so that the quality of writing in all areas is as high as that in the English department.
- Leaders share the strong practice the school has in supporting pupils with ASD and those with SEMH needs with a wider audience of schools, to bring about excellence in education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has created a culture of excellence. School leaders, governors and staff have the highest ambitions and aspirations for all pupils. They are united in ensuring that each pupil has the best possible experience of schooling. Leaders and staff ensure that each pupil's potential is revealed and success realised.
- Leaders and staff work tirelessly to ensure a safe, inclusive, happy and welcoming school. Pupils, taking into account their different needs and abilities, are thriving. They make excellent progress.
- Expectations are extremely high. Leaders insist on excellent standards for social behaviour among pupils and staff. The respect shown for one another and for staff is excellent.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and it is supported by clear evidence. Leaders know what the school does well and what needs improving. Regular visits to classrooms provide leaders with a clear overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Leaders use the information gathered to inform detailed school improvement planning.
- Leaders have made continual refinements to their assessment systems. Leaders set accurate targets for pupils and monitor pupils' progress against these targets thoroughly. Staff carefully analyse pupils' progress and intervene quickly to address any areas where pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Education, health and care (EHC) plans are carefully maintained. Specialist support staff, pupils and their parents all contribute to the review of pupils' plans. Relevant targets are set to promote pupils' personal development.
- Leaders and teachers are vigilant in the design and implementation of the thought-provoking curriculum. They have ensured that it is matched to pupils' individual needs. Leaders and teachers review the curriculum regularly to establish what pupils have or have not been able to achieve.
- With adult support, pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society. Pupils develop social skills appropriately, learning how to show respect and tolerance towards one another and adults. Opportunities to consolidate social skills are encouraged through the extensive range of school trips and visits.
- The school makes excellent use of its pupil premium funding, for example providing bespoke coaching, mentoring and counselling services to support pupils' well-being. Extra-curricular activities are designed to strengthen the socialisation and engagement of pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils progress remarkably well.
- Staff demonstrate the highest levels of care and commitment to pupils. They expertly manage each pupil's needs and share unreservedly in the headteacher's aspiration.
- Staff morale is high. Staff, including those new to the school, speak highly of school leaders and the high-quality training they receive. They say that leaders are approachable and that they listen to their ideas and feedback. One member of staff summarised the views of others, saying, 'It is a privilege to work at Roman Fields.'

- Parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed overwhelming support for the school. They value the kindness, care and understanding shown by staff. A typical comment was 'Roman Fields is like a breath of fresh air for both our daughter and us as parents.'
- The local authority correctly judges the school's performance as outstanding. It provides effective support when required.

Governance of the school

- Members of the management committee share the headteacher's ambitions. They have provided him with the support and challenge needed to secure further improvement since the last inspection.
- The management committee has an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. The minutes of management committee meetings show that members question leaders extensively. They debate those actions that are capable of making a real difference to the quality of education and care that pupils receive.
- Members of the management committee take their roles and responsibilities seriously. Members use their wide knowledge and experience to make sure that leaders have a precise focus on improving pupils' outcomes.
- The management committee is resolute in making sure that the school is a safe place for pupils to learn and develop. Members ensure that the school follows the latest statutory guidance on safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safer recruitment procedures are comprehensive. The single central record is maintained carefully and meets requirements. Recruitment is thorough.
- Leaders place a high priority on pupils' safety and welfare, and there is a strong culture of vigilance in keeping pupils safe. The designated safeguarding lead keeps very careful records which track precisely what the issue is, what action the school has taken and the impact of this action.
- The safeguarding policy meets current government requirements and is published on the school's website. Staff know the procedures to follow in the event of any safeguarding concern. Staff receive regular updates and training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.
- Staff are skilled and successful in helping to keep pupils safe. Pupils are taught well about unsafe situations and how to stay safe. They also receive appropriate guidance about e-safety and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.
- Staff ensure that pupils are safe by undertaking detailed risk assessments, carefully considering the vulnerabilities of the pupils in their care. Before undertaking activities, staff wisely ascertain pupils' moods and frame of mind. As a result, pupils are able to participate in off-site visits safely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because it is consistently well matched to the individual needs of each pupil. Leaders and staff have an unerring belief in pupils' abilities. They capture the interest and aspirations of each individual pupil and this is a formula for success.
- Leaders and staff have created an outstanding learning ethos across the school that enables pupils to develop a thirst for knowledge and achieve highly. The flexibility of staff to respond to the requirements of pupils is impressive. This creates a sense of there being no limit to what pupils can accomplish.
- Staff use a range of strategies including one-to-one support, therapy sessions, small-group work and whole-class teaching. The excellent communication between all adults ensures that these methods contribute effectively to pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers are skilled, highly qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. They routinely plan interesting activities that arouse pupils' curiosity and engage them in learning. Staff know their pupils well and use assessment information effectively to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- There are excellent working relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils. Staff consistently make good use of praise to encourage and motivate pupils to do well. Overall, the classroom environment promotes exceptional learning.
- Pupils' progress across the subjects is monitored closely. Leaders and staff meet regularly to identify any pupil who is not making the progress that they should and who needs to be given additional support.
- Pupils are routinely provided with challenging work to promote their thinking skills. Staff use questioning effectively to check pupils' learning and to help them deepen their understanding.
- Teachers check on pupils' learning regularly. By continually checking individual pupils' understanding, adults make an important contribution to securing the excellent progress pupils make. This is because teachers focus very precisely on what individual pupils can do and their next steps.
- The most able pupils are challenged effectively through demanding work to ensure that they must think hard and make the progress of which they are capable. The most able pupils tend to be entered early for some GCSE examinations, resulting in the highest grades being achieved.
- A strong feature of lessons is the emphasis on speaking and listening and building pupils' vocabulary. Teachers take the opportunity to encourage pupils to read aloud in the classroom to give them further confidence in reading to an audience and to improve their reading skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils have any additional needs identified and effective support helps them overcome barriers to learning.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to the inspector felt that their children were well taught. They appreciated the very regular contact the school had with them about their children, often via a telephone call.
- In English lessons, pupils are asked to complete extended pieces of writing to develop

their handwriting and composition skills. The development of writing skills is not as strong in other subject areas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Boosting pupils' personal development and welfare is deemed the key to unlocking their potential. Every pupil is known individually to staff. This ensures that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils can thrive and succeed.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and enjoy all that it offers. This satisfaction is shown in the way they behave around the school and in the way they speak to adults and each other. Pupils learn to mix well, formally and informally, resulting in an orderly, productive environment.
- Leaders place great emphasis on the welfare of pupils. Pastoral and welfare systems are fine-tuned to their needs. Pupils do not hesitate in approaching teachers if they have any concerns. Pupils know that teachers will provide the necessary support and take action to resolve any anxieties.
- Weekly assemblies celebrate academic success as well as reward pupils who have been successful role models to their peers. Pupils value the opportunities staff provide to help them learn more about themselves and make positive changes. One pupil said, 'I thought I'd never be able to like school again.'
- Non-academic targets are set for pupils by their teachers to improve life skills, such as self-help for some pupils on the autistic spectrum. This challenges pupils to achieve even more and, consequently, they do. Pupils' self-assurance grows as they proceed through the school and become increasingly independent.
- Pupils who are capable of undertaking work experience do so. Staff carefully seek out opportunities for pupils to develop their employability skills. These form aspects of pupils' career planning for further training, employment or going on into the sixth form.
- Pupils are well prepared and supported when making the transition back into mainstream secondary education or into the sixth form. Staff ensure that pupils settle well into the next phase of their education by maintaining a regular dialogue with the pupil and the new school.
- Pupils receive high-quality impartial careers guidance to help them make informed choices about the next stage of their education. They visit universities and meet guest speakers from a range of professions. These experiences inspire pupils to be ambitious for the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The pupils are typically calm and relaxed. They have excellent relationships with adults. Pupils appreciate the care and understanding that staff show them. The behaviour

records show very few incidents of poor behaviour.

- The school has well-established and highly effective systems in place for managing pupils' behaviour. When a pupil becomes forlorn or anxious, adults carefully examine the reasons for the behaviour and immediately modify strategies to allow the pupil to relax and enjoy their experiences.
- The school trains adults very effectively in techniques to manage difficult situations with pupils. Staff have a secure understanding of each pupil's needs and preferences, established through excellent communication with parents. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school and that their children's behaviour improves once at the school.
- Pupils learn through continual interaction and communication with adults how to take responsibility for their own conduct. Adults supervise pupils closely while allowing them as much independence as possible. Adults provide excellent role models.
- Bullying, including discriminatory bullying, is exceptionally rare. Pupils say they can approach any adult for support if they are concerned about their own welfare or that of others.
- The school has rigorous systems for checking on attendance. Any absences are assiduously tracked. The school promotes the importance of attending regularly by working closely with parents. Attendance improves considerably when pupils start at the school, reflecting their enjoyment.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils start at the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those typically seen. Several of the pupils have been excluded from previous schools or been unable to access mainstream education, often due to their high levels of SEMH needs.
- Many of the pupils only spend a short length of time at the school, often arriving during the final years of compulsory schooling. Assessment on entry to the school is thorough. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are filled rapidly to enable success in external examinations.
- Targets for individual pupils are broken down into small steps by skilful staff who have high expectations, but who understand the ever-changing needs of their pupils.
- Pupils' progress towards their academic and personal targets is planned in detail and regularly reviewed. As a result, each individual makes the progress of which they are capable in every aspect of their development.
- Pupils study for qualifications in English and mathematics and are offered a wide variety of subjects at GCSE. All courses are determined by each individual pupil's particular interests and ambition. An impressively growing number are entered for and succeed in GCSE in subjects such as English, mathematics and science.
- Positive relationships between adults and pupils encourage all pupils to give of their best. Consequently, pupils move forward, particularly with the development of their social skills, including concentration, attentiveness and communication. The majority achieve the goals set for them, resulting in a noticeable rise in their self-esteem.
- Outstanding teaching and highly effective individualised support results in all pupils

learning exceptionally well. Evidence in pupils' books, along with that on display around the school, substantiates teachers' and leaders' records. These records show outstanding progress across all year groups and subjects.

- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is at least as good as that of other pupils in their class. This is because the school meticulously monitors the progress of these pupils and identifies very precisely their individual needs. This means they receive the right support to enable them to succeed.
- Pupils with ASD make outstanding progress in developing their communication and social interaction skills. This is because staff use their expertise in ASD well, alongside their excellent subject knowledge, to ensure that these pupils achieve their potential.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress because of excellent teaching, which provides them with appropriately high levels of challenge.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The school's culture of high expectations and aspirations continues at 16 to 19. Leaders and staff recognise the individual potential of each student.
- The sixth form enables students to extend their learning and gain further qualifications. Significantly, it provides a safe, familiar environment for them to continue to develop the personal and life skills needed for adulthood.
- Students of all abilities are enabled to succeed in their learning. This is because the curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of individual students exceptionally well.
- Teaching and learning are innovative and highly effective. Expectations are high. There are thorough and rigorous checks on the quality and the effectiveness of teaching.
- Relationships between staff and students are positive. Students' excellent attitudes to learning allow them to make outstanding progress academically, personally and socially.
- Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well as a result of outstanding teaching over time. Students are challenged to develop their communication skills at all times. Staff support students well in developing their vocabulary. They know the very best way to engage students, ensuring the learning is related to everyday life.
- Careers guidance and planning for the future are admirable. There are excellent links with local businesses and students benefit from opportunities to take part in a range of work-related learning and work experiences.
- Students attend a careers fair. This provides students and their parents with an insight into local providers who can support them in their next stage of their education, training and care. Transition arrangements are carefully planned and appropriate. All students move onto apprenticeships, colleges and universities.
- Attendance for students in the sixth form is managed well. Students understand the importance of regular attendance leading to academic success.
- Students and parents feel secure about this provision. The safety of students is paramount.

School details

Unique reference number	136247
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10067136

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	8
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Eugene Billeter
Headteacher	Trevor Orchard
Telephone number	01442 256915
Website	www.romanfields.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@romanfields.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2018

Information about this school

- Roman Fields is a pupil referral unit for pupils who have histories of failure in adjusting in mainstream school or special school settings, resulting in either permanent exclusion or school refusal.
- Pupils from the whole of Hertfordshire are referred to the unit through the local authority. All current students receive one-to-one or small-group teaching in key stages 3 and 4 or in the small sixth form.
- All pupils have an EHC plan, mainly for ASD. A significant number are referred for SEMH. Some students have both ASD and SEMH.

- Most students are White British and none speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the unit receives pupil premium funding is above average.
- The school does not receive any Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.

Information about this inspection

- The school had a section 8 inspection in June 2018. The school demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. It was recommended that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning with senior leaders across a wide range of lessons and learning activities.
- Pupils' written work was evaluated during lessons and during a book scrutiny.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct while they were arriving at and leaving school, as well as during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils both informally and formally and met with parents.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the management committee and two other members of the committee.
- Telephone conversations were held with three local authority representatives.
- There were 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to consider and 27 free-text responses. There were 19 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. There were no replies to the pupil questionnaire.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation report and school development plan. Inspectors also reviewed minutes of meetings from the management committee, records of the monitoring of teaching and information relating to pupils' attendance and achievement. Safeguarding documentation and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Dick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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