

AUTISM ACCREDITATION PEER REVIEW



SERVICE REVIEWED: Roman Fields Provision

DATES OF REVIEW: 28, 29 March 2017

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OVERVIEW OF PROVISION

Roman Fields, a provision of Hertfordshire County Council, was registered in Nov 2010. It provides personalised alternative education packages for young people who for a variety of reasons have had limited engagement with education. It is a county wide provision based near Hemel Hempstead. Referrals are made via the Special Educational Needs provision panel and if agreed by the panel, places are then financed as part of the 'core placement budget'. Roman Fields can accommodate up to 40 young people. Of the students on role at present (36), 28 (75%) have autism as their primary need. Many of the students who join the school have low self-esteem as they are yet to experience the kind of environment where they are able to flourish. Most have been excluded from other schools, experience high anxiety and low self-esteem. Previous attendance level of students was frequently very low, including one young person who attended 10% and is now in school fulltime.

The flexible and creative nature of the provision enables young people to be re-engaged and motivated through bespoke timetables that build on their strengths and interests as well as access to accreditation from a variety of awarding bodies. The provision supports young people with a wide range of ability including entry levels, vocational qualifications, GCSE and A Level. The achievements of the young people are a point of pride for Roman Fields staff and students.

Each young person on roll has an Education Health and Care plan. Most of the young people are on the autism spectrum with a minority presenting with Social Emotional and Mental Health challenges, whilst a few have a combined diagnosis of both autism and SEMH. The vast majority of the students on role are in KS4 (14-16) and KS5 (16-18) with a core offer of Maths, English, Science and ICT or Business. Other curriculum areas include Humanities, Art, Economics and Music, up to GCSE and beyond. The remainder of each young person's timetable is designed around their individual interests. Vocational courses are offered on site and through partnerships with colleges and alternative education providers. Much of the teaching is in small groups with support from Teachers, Tutors and Teaching Assistants or on a one to one basis with the intention of allowing them to develop confidence socially, emotionally and educationally.

The provision works closely with all agencies involved with the young person to maximise the exchange of information and ensure close communication. From the time of admission Roman Fields actively looks at the student's abilities and areas of interest in order to secure successful onward transition. The provision is based on a community usage site and is an integral part of Hertfordshire County Council's commitment to providing equality of access for all. The physical environment consists of a range of buildings occupying a secure, fenced site accessed through electronic gates. The largest building has a restaurant, games room, sensory room and a number of class/social rooms. Additional classrooms are provided in two large mobile type units. A single story sports hall and adjacent multi gym area, as well as a large field and outdoor exercise equipment, provide for physical options.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Observations

The review team observed a wide range of lessons across the curriculum or small group activities, as well as, lunch and recreational time. A total of 18 observations over approximately 9 hours were spent observing practice.

Interviews and Discussions

Meetings were held with the Senior Management Team, Headteacher, Autism Lead, SENCO, WEX Manager, Staff Group, Parents Group, Young People, School Counsellor, Family Support Worker and the School Council. A staff debrief meeting was attended at the end of the school day. A telephone conversation was held with the school's Educational Psychologist. Some brief informal discussions were held with teaching staff and tutors following observations.

Documentation

The review team also reviewed a range of documents including school policies and pupil related information including:

- School Development Plan including Autism Action Plan
- Stakeholder Information: Data & Analysis, The views of our learners (Spring and Summer 2016)
- Interim Development Report
- Autism Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Case Studies
- Accreditation Panel Report [(2014)]
- Contact Sheets
- Pupil Passports
- Sensory Passports

- Hertfordshire Autism Consultation Toolkit
- Good News File
- Individual Education Plans
- Structured Session Folders
- Photographs of activities and events
- Programme Information
- Annual Review Reports
- Staff Training Log,

KEY FINDINGS

As a result of this process, the following actions were identified for the service to work on:

Actions for development	Reasoning
Commitment - C5 - How does the school/college ensure that policies, procedures and working documentation promote a consistent and clear approach, rooted in an understanding of best practice, in supporting autistic students? The review team consider an area to work towards is to enhance the Roman Fields Autism Policy by defining the “eclectic mix of established and researched approaches and interventions” referred to and by providing further information on the issues relating to sensory needs, communication difficulties and flexibility of thought.	Roman Fields Autism Policy provides a rationale and aims to support provision for “the best possible education for young people with an autistic spectrum condition.” Whilst some issues related to sensory difficulties are addressed under a section on the environment, more detail defining the issues faced by the young people would be beneficial for those accessing the policy as part of the school documentation and induction. One sentence mentions difficulties with flexibility and to enable understanding of this important aspect of challenge for young people with ASC further information would be valuable. The policy refers to an eclectic mix of approaches and interventions and whilst the ‘SPELL’ approach is named, no further detail is included. Some members of staff have been on specific training and other interventions have been introduced to the whole staff team. Drawing awareness to this and providing the opportunity for staff to further explore these interventions by prompting them through the policy would be beneficial to support ongoing awareness raising.
Enabling the Autistic Person – E3 - Differences in Social Communication - How is each autistic student enabled to understand and participate in different social interactions and social situations, and with different people? An area to work towards is to further provide creative opportunities for peer social interaction throughout the	As discussed further in the body of the report, social relationships between staff and students were seen to be of a very high quality with sensitivity, individualised approaches and a clear awareness that staff have an individual understanding of the needs of the young people they are supporting. Due to the nature of the provision and the high level needs of the students, many sessions are delivered 1:1 with each communication exchange from the teacher/tutor to an individual student and response to the teacher/tutor. In some sessions two or three young people occupy the same physical environment without any interaction between them. At such times, further opportunities to enable the young people to interact

day both within curriculum sessions and less structured activities.	would support their social communication with peers. For example, deliberately planning to ensure students share resources, are encouraged to ask questions to each other, observe a peer and comment on what they see, etc. would begin to build confidence in relating to peers and building trust in these relationships. Throughout the day there are opportunities for larger groups of young people to share space in the games room, dining area and recreational area. The staff ratio at these times is high and staff facilitate the students well but it was observed that the majority of the interaction was staff to pupil, much less peer to peer. Once again, the team would encourage the staff to intentionally encourage peers to interact both actively and in facilitated conversation.
Enabling the Autistic Person – E6 – How is each autistic student enabled to organise themselves and carry out tasks with minimum staff prompts? (e.g. the way activities are broken down and structured) The review team consider an area to work towards to be the implementation of bespoke visual supports for individual students and sessions. This includes appropriately presented timetables to increase independence and to prepare for transition to future placements as well as visual supports within lessons to reduce verbal instruction and enable young people to carry through a task unaided.	Positive examples of the use of appropriate and individualised visuals were seen during observations. In some situations the students coped very well with verbal instruction and the need for visual was not evident. Where provided, the young people were well supported to focus on the task and accomplish it with the prompts, word banks, well prepared guide sheets and visual instructions. This was, however, somewhat inconsistent in that there were sessions where the use of visual supports would have better enabled independence. Similarly, individual timetables presented in a format appropriate for each students would enable young people to navigate the day independently and to be supported in the predictability of the day. One students' IEP states that she will have a visual timetable to follow but this was not seen during observations. A full day's timetable is centrally located but the A4 size, covering all sessions for all students is not easily accessible for individual reference. Recognising the importance of routine in reducing anxiety, the provision of timetables for the students to reference throughout the day would be helpful. This will also help prepare them for transition to college environments where they will, almost certainly, require the skills of following a timetable a necessary part of their new routine.

The following areas were also identified as examples of what the service does well.

Specific areas of strength	Reasoning
Self-reliance and Problem Solving – E5 - How are activities differentiated and personalised to take into account each autistic student's strengths, challenges, interests and styles of learning?	From the earliest stages of a student being admitted to Roman Fields, the importance of understanding the background and establishing individual needs and interests is prioritised by the school. Without exception, the young people referred to Roman Fields have had traumatic school experiences, withdrawal from the system, exclusion from other schools

The individual, bespoke programmes motivating young people to access learning, achieve success and participate in positive work experience opportunities, through the use of their special interests, is considered an area of strength.	and provisions (in some instances multiple), resulting in fragility, anxiety, mental health issues and a lack of trust. The individualisation begins with the transition into RF – paced appropriately, visits sensitively designed, introductions to staff and peers facilitated and a programme devised to motivate and enable success. High expectations are maintained and Roman Fields has been successful in transforming lives through this personalised instruction and planning. For example, one young man who had been out of school for a lengthy period, missing out on his education, achieved 5 GCSEs after seven months of being admitted to the school. Others have moved from refusal to communicate to developing the confidence to use their voice again. One lesson plan showed Plan A and Plan B based on the demeanour of the student on the day. Lesson Plans include key data followed by, “How does this inform my teaching of this young person?” Strategies and expectations follow. Work experience is highly valued with a view to developing life skills and opportunities for future employment. One young man who has a focus on film genre is responding well to a placement at the British Film Institute. Photographs demonstrated his pleasure with this opportunity. The commitment of Roman Fields is such that interest continues even after the student has left, as evidenced by a young person who no longer attends the school who has been supported by Roman Fields to access employment based on the school's awareness of his interest in gardening and facilitating an opportunity in the community. Another opportunity has been created in a library for a student who loved books. She is now enjoying providing reading sessions for children and learning library skills.
Consultation - C30 - How does the school/college ensure families are fully consulted and treated as partners in the support of their family member, according to the age, capacity and wishes of the autistic student? An area of strength is the high level of support to parents/carers and input to the home situation, demonstrating commitment to a consistent	The results of the parent questionnaires and comments provided later in the report, provide evidence of this positive characteristic of Roman Fields. In addition to this information, the review team had an opportunity to meet with a group of parents and to speak to others by telephone. The level of support provided for parents/carers and the way their lives have been transformed by the school's daily commitment to their children is highly praised. Parents/carers commented on the improvement in family life and relationships with parents and siblings, as their child's anxiety has been addressed and reduced. One parent reported that the consistency of school attendance has enabled her to return to the workplace resulting in an improved economic situation for the family.

approach across environments and concern for the needs of the 'whole' child and family.	Communication between the home and school was highly praised. Each student has a mentor and almost without exception the mentor contacts the family on a weekly basis. The information flow is two way with timely response from the provision when parents/carers contact the school. One parent commented that it is "a team effort, rather than me having to fight for him." This is borne out by comments from the Educational Psychologist, the Family Support Worker and the School Counsellor who all play a role in supporting both the individual student and his/her family. A monthly parent/carer support group is offered at the school where various topics are addressed and guest speakers sometimes invited. These were reported by parents to be helpful from an information standpoint as well as offering the opportunity for parents/carers to meet each other and offer mutual support. One parent said that she no longer feels alone knowing that others face similar challenges.
Emotional Wellbeing – P29 - How does the school/college evaluate staff interactions with each autistic student to ensure they reinforce the autistic student's sense of self-worth, dignity and self-esteem, including when delivering personal intimate care? The ethos of Roman Fields, demonstrated through the calm, supportive learning environment, the mutual respect of staff and pupils, the value given to the contribution of each member of the school community and the high expectations for success is an area of strength.	Without exception, in all contexts across the review, the student/staff interactions were positive, affirming and sensitively delivered. Humour was used to effect and there was a sense of staff and students being comfortable in each other's company. Affirmation was forthcoming with links to the reason for the praise, e.g. "I knew you could do that yourself" and "That's a good word to use. Is there a better one in your word bank?" Clear explanations were offered when necessary and questions were turned back to the student rather than the member of staff providing easy answers. This supported the thought processes of the young people and encouraged them to take responsibility for their learning. The ethos was calm and quiet, the environment well organised and well resourced. The personal needs of individuals were respected and used to ensure learning could be maximised. A number of students benefit from soft background music to aid concentration and this was provided through iPods or music systems. The staff spoke positively about their role within the provision and the consistency of the staff team demonstrates that they value the opportunity of being part of the team. In every respect positive relationships underpinned the review Team's observations, meetings and discussions. Case studies and documentation evidenced the progress that young people make at Roman Fields. Whilst the academic progress with some students is remarkable, it is the wider

	aspects of well-being that are enabling these young people to access learning and begin to re-establish self-confidence, self-esteem, independence and relationships with others. These qualities will provide the foundation for future opportunities. The Headteacher expressed his concern for the employment opportunities of his students, recognising the small percentage of individual on the autism spectrum being appropriately employed. Roman Fields is working to secure positive futures for the students they support.
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Progress made towards previous recommendations

Recommendation	Action Taken
Core Standard 3: Professional Training & Development & Staff Information Resource The panel recommend that the school should develop and implement a systematic training programme for all staff relating to the development of an understanding of autism and the specific ways in which needs may be met.	Since the last accreditation review Roman Fields has developed a systematic training programme and worked to develop the understanding of autism across the provision. A training log was seen to include a wide range of relevant courses including sensory processing, challenging behaviour, anxiety, visual structures, comic strip conversations, social stories and emotional regulation. Daily debriefing sessions provide opportunities for staff to share good practice and discuss strategies related to pupils with autism and the necessary consistency to respond to needs. Additionally, twice weekly (1 hour) teacher led sessions on specific teaching strategies for ASD young people are held over the course of the academic year. The provision's Autism Lead is a fully qualified teacher who has worked with autistic youngsters in mainstream schools for a period of 12 years. She was an AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) prior to joining RF, a qualification awarded to the exceptional minority who are recognised as experts in their field and therefore able to support others to become better teachers. Much of the autism training is delivered by the Autism Lead sometimes with the support of the Educational Psychologist. Three members of staff have completed or are pursuing MAs related to practice in autism. Additionally, four members of staff have recently completed the Autism Online Course through The Open University. Other complimentary courses undertaken by individual staff include counselling, attachment and trauma, Cognitive and Behaviour Therapy. Two members of staff attend the annual NAS conference and cascade information to colleagues. Staff are supported to pursue areas of interest, e.g. one member of staff studying Art Therapy. Target Autism has provided two full days training

	to Roman Fields, one to audit practice and the second to train on Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories. Learning walks inform the Roman Fields management team of best practice and needs to address through training and staff are encouraged to watch for relevant courses to further their own understanding. Relevant books are made available for staff to enhance understanding through reading.
Specialist Standard 5: Teaching/Learning – Methods The review team feels that the strengths of the staff would be enhanced by further understanding of autism, e.g. a greater understanding of: - the impact of sensory issues for students with autism - how social and communication difficulties impact on learning - how to encourage flexibility of thought and behaviour The team support the provisions intention to deliver a training programme for staff which addresses these areas and sees this as a potential area of development for the provision.	As described above, Roman Fields has offered opportunities for training and development to support the greater understanding of autism across the provision. A specialist educational psychologist provided training to all staff on sensory issues. Training on 'Energy Accounting' is planned for the summer term 2017. Sensory Profiles have been developed. They are written from the student's perspective and address individual needs beginning with "What I know about myself" and then listing Things I like and Things I don't like. For example, one young person identified liking to chew, going barefoot, smelling things and silly putty as likes in contrast to disliking hair being washed, heat, socks, high pitched sounds and complete silence. The latter fits in with the 'white noise' present in some sessions through soft music. Observations evidenced that staff are confident in working with students on the autism spectrum, that consideration has been given to the sensory environment and that resources to support identified issues are available. This is further discussed later in this report.

FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

	SCORES					
	Number of Questionnaires sent out (please request from service if not available prior to review):					24
	Number of Questionnaires returned:					16
	UNSCORED	VERY UNHAPPY	UNHAPPY	SATISFIED	HAPPY	VERY HAPPY
Contact	0	0	1	0	2	13
Support	0	0	1	0	1	14
Advice	0	0	1	0	2	13
Involvement	0	0	1	0	1	14
TOTALS	0	0	4	0	6	54
PERCENTAGES	0 %	0 %	6.25 %	0 %	9.38 %	84.37 %

Comments included:

Contact:

- They have been brilliant at keeping us informed
- Sometimes regular mentor comments not forthcoming
- I am contacted by phone and email whenever necessary to support behaviour.
- Lots of communication and support. Frequent contact.
- Phoned with daily updates. We really appreciate this.
- The school communicates very well using various means.
- Staff at Roman Fields always keep me up to date on progress or problems. Nothing is too much trouble.
- It is difficult for the school to keep in touch because my 18 year old autistic son has given them strict instructions not to! Nevertheless, they keep my wife and I updated through emails for which we are very grateful.
- My son's tutor calls me regularly. The quality of her feedback is amazing. No one, not even my husband, understands my son better. She is truly impressive.

Support:

- Been great – he struggles and they have been very patient, understanding. The staff are amazing and accommodate his needs.
- Brilliantly. I cannot express in words what a fantastic school this is.
- Roman Fields staff have got to know him well in order to support him fully.
- The school has been fantastic at supporting xxxx.
- Very well. They have used lots of strategies to help xxxx settle.
- Very happy with the progress my son has made since starting Roman Fields.
- On several occasions Roman Fields have gone out of their way to support and encourage xxxx. There is always that feeling about how much they actually care about the young people. Exceptional. 😊
- They bend over backwards to accommodate him in every way. At present, one teacher even provides home visits.
- They truly understand my son for the first time in his life. After 2 years out of school he now goes daily, has virtually no sick days and doesn't want to miss school, even when he's poorly. Amazing!

Advice:

- My son struggles, The school has been amazing with the support they provide
- They have supported our son in both pastoral and academic to the highest standards. They have his best interests at heart.
- We have discussed his needs at length.
- I can always ask for support when I need to and the school has been fantastic helping us in so many ways.
- The mentor is exceptionally good at keeping us informed.
- Roman Fields have advised and supported xxxx in every way, encouraging him to be the happy young person he is. They have advised and given necessary help in all stages of his education.
- They have always 'been there' for us. I know that they will help whenever I need them and that they have done their utmost to support our son. He has been in several special schools and ranks Roman Fields - as do we - as the best.
- They completely understand my son's needs and the depth of their understanding has even taught me, his own mother. They alert me to issues so I and the school can work closely and well together.

Involvement:

- Have contact with the school on a regular basis. Any problems they discuss with us and are very supportive in helping us help our son.
- I am involved in aspects and in contact with teachers and his mentor
- Feedback and parents' evenings are always informative. Very happy.
- We have been involved with the school and his integration from day one. The school has been great at keeping us involved.
- Roman Fields always keeps me up to date with phone calls, meetings, emails and letters. I seriously cannot fault them in any way.
- They really look at my son's needs and match them to individually tailored plans which work. I cannot praise them enough and they involve me every step of the way. We are blessed to have our son at this amazing school. It has saved my son and our family. We all now have brighter futures.

In addition to the parent questionnaires, the review team had an opportunity to meet a group of parents and to speak to three others by telephone. In every situation the praise for the school was unwavering and many of the parents express the view that they have regained their child and have had massive improvements in the home and family relationships. Another parent commented, "We also have fun laughing together about things – it's great – and helps me feel happier too!"

OBSERVATION SCORES

Topic	Not Met	Partially Met	Majority Met	Fully Met
Differences in social communication	0	0	8	10
Self-reliance and problem solving	0	0	4	14
Sensory Experiences	0	0	0	18
Emotional well-being	0	0	0	18
TOTAL	0	0	12	60
PERCENTAGE	0%	0%	16.7%	83.3%

Throughout observations there was evidence to demonstrate that the staff of Roman Fields are committed to providing for and nurturing the pupils they support. It is clear that individual needs are considered and planned for through differentiated support and delivery within lessons.

A wide range of sessions were observed, including maths, social studies, English, technology, life skills, geography, food science, drama and sport. Where fully met, the sessions were well planned, pupils were fully engaged, activities were motivating and communication was tailored to individual needs. It was clear that the well-being of young people was a priority throughout. Where sessions were scored as majority met some shortfalls were observed and are further addressed in the areas to work towards within the body of the report.

FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

Topic	Comments
Differences in social communication	The school's personalised approach is enabled by staff having a solid understanding of the difficulties each of their students face in communicating and interacting effectively. This, in turn, means that they have effective support measures in place. The positive relationships between staff and students, in which they address each other on a first name basis, go a long way toward creating a very calm, relaxing and secure learning environment where students can express themselves with confidence. Staff are very aware of both the type and amount of language they use in the classrooms and differentiate depending on which student they are speaking with. The feedback given to students is always positive and is instrumental in building their self-esteem. Staff consistently model appropriate communication and interaction.

The use of visual aids is also differentiated to support students at different levels around the school. The review team saw many instances where students were able to understand and follow verbal instructions without any visual aids, some where the students required just demonstrations and some where students used a range of different visual aids and labels. For the most part students were able to cope. However, as previously mentioned above, the team witnessed some occasions where students would have benefitted from visuals that were not in place, i.e.; a list of instructions, a word bank for remembering key vocabulary, personal timetables to aid transition and tools for students to communicate thoughts more effectively. Timers are used regularly, learning objectives and outcomes displayed and referred to and, for the most part, adequate processing time allowed.

On more than one occasion staff were seen to recognise that students were communicating anxieties through the behaviours they displayed. Staff skilfully communicated to the student that they recognised their anxiety and gave them options that were designed to reduce this without drawing other's attention to it. For example, telling one student that they may find it cooler and be less distracted if they worked on a separate table in the corner. One member of staff seized upon the opportunity to discuss body language during a business class and relate it to the topic they had discussed in class, injecting some humour into the session and asking the anxious student if he would like to demonstrate what might be appropriate body language and why.

Individual Education Plans are in place for all students and include social communication targets. Targets are personalised and include areas of 'social awareness', 'personal boundaries', 'body language' and 'social interaction'. It was evident in the 'Student Context Sheets' supplied to the team in all lessons, and in the support mechanisms adopted by staff, that IEPs and other relevant documentation inform their teaching and the interactions they have with students around school.

It states in school documentation that students are supported in new social situations through the use of social stories and comic strip conversations. The review team did see some generic social stories whilst there but did not witness either those or comic strip conversations being used with students during the two-day review. We encourage the school to develop both social stories and comic strip conversations so as to support student's needs as part of the individual support to students.

Where sessions are taught to two or more students some positive interactions were seen to take place. The review team feel that if opportunities for social interaction and communication are detailed in planning documents then this would happen more frequently. During the 2-day review the team were unable to evidence peer interaction in many sessions, due either to student absence or to the fact that a large number of sessions are delivered on a 1:1 basis. There are short recreational sessions at the beginning of the day and at lunch time where students can access a range of areas to socialise and interact. These include a games

	room, a quiet room, school yard and field and an exercise area. During the observations a group of students were observed playing cricket with members of staff. Whilst playing, staff were praising and encouraging individuals and modelling how to interact appropriately and take turns. As mentioned earlier, staff develop positive relationships with all students and engage in positive interaction with them throughout the day, to which they respond appropriately.
Self-reliance and problem solving	Planning documents make reference to the importance of problem solving activities and staff plan for these effectively during sessions. The review team witnessed a wide range of problem solving activities that challenged each student at an appropriate level and staff are skilled in questioning students in a way that promotes detailed thought processes. This was very evident in one particular Social Studies session on emotions where students communicated an elaborate insight as to whether certain emotions are positive or negative. The school work closely with individuals in helping them to understand their condition and the difficulties they may face as a result, This means that students identify a range of strategies and resources that they can use to self-regulate, such as head phones and fidget toys, and are aware of places to go when they are nearing crisis. On a number of occasions students were seen to communicate their needs and make choices in how the learning environment/session should be altered in order to enable them to remain on task. The structure of sessions, along with appropriate amounts of support and challenge and use of visual aids, mean that the team were able to witness students complete a wide variety of tasks independently. There were a couple of occasions where staff were too quick to step in and provide students with answers but, for the most part, students were encouraged to think of their next steps, complete physical tasks themselves and work through problems with the resources they had in front of them. In addition, students are presented with choice on a regular basis and encouraged to do so independently. This can involve choosing which task may best enable students to demonstrate learning, negotiating how best to prepare themselves and/or their environment prior to learning taking place, or choosing where and what they should eat for lunch. Staff were regularly seen to discuss the importance of new skills in the student's development, relating the conversation to real life situations. The Roman Fields' school day follows a rigid structure that enables students to predict and reduces their anxieties. The day begins with an opportunity to relax and read, as the team saw one young man doing each morning, play a variety of games in the games room, or sit and chat with peers and/or staff in the canteen room. After a short registration period, where staff explain if and why students are expected late or are absent, any changes to the school day are communicated to the students before they are taken to their

	learning sessions. After each session staff return, with the students, to the same area where they will meet their next group and move together to the next lesson. This pattern is followed throughout the day and students are very familiar with the process. As mentioned earlier, in areas for development, providing students with personal timetables may further reduce student reliance on staff and enable those confident students to transition more independently.
Sensory Experiences	The calm, quiet ethos of Roman Fields accommodates the sensory needs of its pupils. In every observed session and incidentally around the buildings there were no incidents of distress related to sensory issues. Some students had ear defenders available, others had fiddle toys to enjoy while a small group of young people, as mentioned previously, were supported through the use of quiet music of their choice either in an iPod or music system in the room. Sensory Passports are developed with each young person and outline the likes and dislikes relevant to their individual needs. A further example, to that in the recommendation discussed previously, is a young man who described that he can feel dizzy if the lights are too bright and that his eyes become unfocussed at times. All rooms are equipped with window coverings to manage natural light and consideration was given to the seating of students within rooms. He also described finding jeans itchy and wearing shorts and track bottoms – consistent with observation. He stated a like as lifting weights and doing Jiu-Jitsu. He was observed enjoying the latter in a session and showing aptitude for the skills involved. The school's very well equipped fitness suite and outdoor fitness gym enable him and others to pursue a wide range of fitness activities. Pupil context sheets also provide information to support sensory issues. For example, staff were reminded on one that "it is necessary to make sure the room is not too hot or too cold as he is not always able to say he is feeling uncomfortable." As addressed in the previous Area for Development, the Autism Policy would be more robust if further information on sensory issues is outlined. This would enable staff to readily access explanation and be pointed in the right direction for further reading and research. See also the notes on the previous review recommendation on training. A quiet room is available to provide breaks as necessary and a sensory room enables opportunities for self-regulation. The young people have been involved in creating a sensory garden. Within the recreation area there is an outdoor gym with a range of exercise equipment suitable for vestibular and proprioceptive movement. The fully equipped physical fitness suite was seen to be providing high quality equipment to support these needs. Movement breaks are enabled. On one occasion a young person appeared restless and was encouraged to take a short break and move to a different area of the classroom with different seating

	to continue his activity. A range of de-escalation techniques are supported and encouraged. This includes reducing demands, reminding students to remove layers of clothing and providing the necessary resources to reduce sensory anxiety.
Emotional Well-being	As expressed throughout this report, the well-being of each individual student is paramount to the ethos and commitment of the school. This was evident during the review through observations, discussion with staff and parents and a telephone conversation with the Educational Psychologist who supports the school. Her comments referred to Roman Fields as a secure base for the young people where trust can develop, where staff are sensitive to each individual, accept each student for who he/she is and bend over backwards to make the experience within the school successful. The school counsellor makes home visits prior to admission and then supports a paced transition designed to meet the individual needs of students. This may include visiting when the school is empty to familiarise the young person with the environment and the resources available. He sees students on a 1:1 basis through personal requests, drop ins at his office or through staff alerting to need. One example of individualised support is weekly shopping trips with a young man who would otherwise not have the courage to go to public places. Over time, confidence is building. The provision works to support young people in understanding their own presentation of autism which is recognised as important and was seen as a target on some IEPs. Training on anxiety and autism has helped staff to have a better understanding of these issues and throughout the review skilled interventions were seen to support and maintain calm. One young man started his lesson with a cup of coffee as he suffers from fatigue at that point of the day and has highlighted this as something that helps him. Another prefers to have his hood up but when attending a very well-chosen work experience placement and explaining the need to present himself differently within that context he has managed to cope well. WEX (Work Experience) is recognised as very important by Roman Fields with a passionate concern for the future opportunities and employment for their young people. Placements are carefully chosen and well supported. A dedicated member of staff supports the process and the individual is facilitated to nominate his/her interests in seeking appropriate placements. Targets are set and issues such as time keeping, teamwork and dress code/presentation are discussed and prepared for. All staff are trained in Hertfordshire STEPS to support positive behaviour management. Incident records are maintained and demonstrate the reduction in challenging behaviour over time (by 95%). Throughout the review the positive strategies employed by staff enabled young people to self-manage their behaviour and maintain calm. Where appropriate, demands are reduced to support and enable the young person to cope with anxieties that may be developing. On one occasion a student was asked to take some time out to calm when struggling to co-operate. The school's SENCO is qualified in access arrangements for examinations and the staff carefully consider how best to support students at this stressful time. Some creative arrangements

	have been made, e.g. room environment, number of people in a room, prior support from the school's counsellor and one young man permitted to dress as a film character. Roman Fields provides a range of optional activities for enrichment and broadening interests. This includes holiday activities, reward trips, drama sessions, school plays, pre-school choice activities, enterprise, charity projects and external offers such as horse riding and climbing. Each Thursday after school the young people have the opportunity to participate in an after school club to experience a range of activities. The school environment supports well-being through a range of displays that highlight positive images of people with autism. In the dining/gathering room past and present 'autism heroes' are displayed while in the science room the focus is on scientists on the spectrum. Facial expression and emotion displays also feature as prompts. Roman Fields has a dedicated Life Skills house on campus to support the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education curriculum. The programme includes Healthy Living as well as City and Guilds Employability Skills covering physical health and wellbeing. An observation within this setting focussed on the Keeping Safe Unit of City and Guilds and the student involved demonstrated a good understanding of the topic, recording information independently in his file. He was encouraged to articulate his understanding of the risks and did this well. Observation of a school council meeting also evidenced the emphasis on well-being within the school. A discussion was held on how to support a new student entering the school with the young people committing to help show him around, sit with him at breaks and to try to initiate conversation. The staff member asked if anyone wanted to 'be in charge of him' and a student responded, "You can't really be in charge – that's like slavery." The difference was discussed! One of the council members showed his presentation for Autism Awareness Week – a focus on Isaac Newton that will be presented to peers. Roman Fields runs a Character Building Programme that supports the understanding of emotions and emotional well-being. This is addressed across the curriculum and was observed with a Social Studies session and a drama lesson where students demonstrated self-awareness and understanding.
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CONCLUSION

Throughout the review, as evidenced in observations and interviews, it was clear that Roman Fields is committed to providing nurture and support for its students. Ofsted (2014) and the previous NAS Review report (2014) acknowledged the provision's commitment to using each student's abilities and areas of interest to secure successful onward transition as well as the 'never give up ethos' to enable success. This was evident throughout this review. When

problems arise, solutions are found. When parents/carers are struggling the school responds with collaborative support to solve problems and find ways forward. The underpinning attitude expressed throughout the review was a complete commitment to enabling each Roman Fields young person to experience success through sensitive, tailored programmes and believing each individual can achieve with the right level of understanding. This is demonstrated through the daily debrief sections held at the end of the day when each young person is discussed – celebrated for positive achievements and ideas shared to address any issues that have arisen. The review team had the opportunity to attend one of these sessions and observed that members of staff confidently shared their perceptions and every voice was valued. As discussion occurs, a member of staff takes notes that appear on the interactive screen and serve as a record and aide-memoire.

Documents, including case studies, demonstrate the provision's careful analysis of individual students and the interventions used/support provided to enable improvement and success. This was further demonstrated through discussion with both staff and students. Given the nature of the young people referred to and admitted to Roman Fields, the progress made academically and emotionally, the positive affect on parents and siblings, it is evident that the provision is a valuable asset to Hertfordshire County Council through making a positive difference in the lives of its young people and the extended family network.

A comment made by the Educational Psychologist highlights the overall ethos of the school when she stated that the Headteacher runs an 'ethical school'. As the complexion of the school has changed to one where the majority of students are diagnosed with autism spectrum conditions, the staff have been carefully appointed and share the aims of the school "to ensure that our young people's abilities are recognised, celebrated and developed to enable them to achieve their potential both now and in the future." Additional hours have been added to enable the end of day debriefing sessions and regular staff training. These opportunities ensure the focus of autism is regularly addressed and the needs of students are being supported in a cohesive and consistent way.