

Inspection of an outstanding school: Roman Fields Academy

11 Box Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 0DF

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2024

Outcome

Roman Fields Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

The executive headteacher of this school is Trevor Orchard. This school is part of James Marks Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Trevor Orchard, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Eugene Billeter. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school leaves no stone unturned to significantly improve the life chances of its pupils. Pupils who attend here all have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), primarily for autism. Pupils quickly settle, having had a very disrupted education prior to joining this school. They have often missed out on learning for long periods of time.

In their short time here, pupils excel and reignite their academic potential. They secure the qualifications needed for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Pupils are proud of their significant success that did not seem possible to them on arrival. The school restores pupils' trust in education and their self-belief. Pupils enjoy coming to this school.

Transition into school is carefully managed so that strong relationships develop between pupils and staff. Pupils' needs are analysed meticulously to provide a bespoke curriculum. Every pupil has a mentor. All staff know pupils' needs very well. Pupils appreciate and respect their caring approach. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

Pupils' interests are celebrated and developed, for example in music, cooking and art. Pupils have personal training at the school gym and access horse riding. Pupils participate in a range of sports, including table tennis in the games room. The school help pupils explore career aspirations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school and trust are relentless in their efforts to ensure all pupils succeed academically and socially. As a result, pupils do exceptionally well from their starting points. All pupils leave with GCSEs or equivalent in English and mathematics. Most pupils gain the five or more GCSEs needed for their future education or career choices. All pupils are supported to secure a place in education, employment or training. Some pupils stay to take their 'A' levels with the trust and then go on to university.

This success is due to how well all staff address pupils' specific needs. From the outset, precise learning and personal development targets are set and linked to pupils' EHC plans. These targets are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff accurately ascertain each pupil's gaps in knowledge and individual needs. They also look at pupils' wider talents and interests to match them to the most suitable qualification pathway.

Once gaps are known, staff ensure that the curriculum offer is fine-tuned to best overcome identified barriers. The curriculum is very clearly structured. Teachers pinpoint what pupils need to master and learn next. This means pupils secure a detailed understanding of what they need to know. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning and give each pupil precise feedback on how to improve. As a result, pupils catch up quickly.

Teachers are subject experts. The work pupils receive is ambitious. No limit is placed on what pupils can achieve. Furthermore, staff are highly skilled in approaches that help pupils with autism to learn best. Staff constantly, yet subtly, adapt each pupil's learning activities to reduce anxiety and manage their sensory needs. Staff act on advice from external specialists. They aptly address any worries pupils may have about taking external examinations.

The school ensures strategies to ensure pupils attend well and follow behaviour expectations are consistently in place. These too are often bespoke. Pupils soon start to attend school full time and regularly, having found this difficult prior to joining here. Pupils like their lessons and all contribute to class discussions. They listen considerately to each other and adults. Pupils are polite and courteous. They can articulate calmly how they are feeling. They demonstrate self-control and are safe at school as they build trust in the adults.

Pupils are accepting of each other. They show each other respect and personal space. Friendship issues are rare but dealt with well. Pupils know that discrimination is wrong. They are taught differing views about the world, so they get a balanced perspective. Staff sensitively teach pupils about healthy and safe relationships. Pupils are also prepared for adulthood through learning skills such as cooking and knowing how to deal with social situations outside of school, such as visits to museums and exhibitions. Pupils are supported to be independent and not overly reliant on adult support. Pupils take immense pride in their work. There is a comprehensive work experience programme.

The trust knows the school well and has ensured its high standards have been maintained. It holds leaders to account effectively. It is also mindful of staff well-being.

Staff work hard to meet the needs of pupils here. Staff acknowledge how supportive leaders are and appreciate the professional development they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Roman Fields School, to be outstanding in December 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148363
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323795
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Eugene Billeter
CEO of the trust	Trevor Orchard
Headteacher	Trevor Orchard
Website	www.romanfields.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Roman Fields Academy converted to become an academy school in April 2021. When its predecessor school, Roman Fields School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan, primarily for autism and related social and emotional needs. Many pupils have several diagnoses named on their EHC plan.
- The school admits pupils from referrals by Hertfordshire local authority. Many pupils have had significant disruption to their learning prior to coming here and have had several previous school placements in mainstream schools, special schools or the independent sector. Most pupils start here in Year 9 or in key stage 4.
- There are currently five pupils in Year 12. The sixth-form provision is moving to be a trust-wide provision based at the other school in the trust from September 2024.

- The school does not use any alternative provision at present.
- The school provides educational support to the Forest House Education Centre as part of a service-level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. However, this centre is not linked to the school as no pupils at the centre are on roll at Roman Fields Academy. Therefore, the centre does not come under the remit of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teaching staff and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of trustees and the vice-chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, trustee minutes and provision development plan.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school's improvement adviser from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The lead inspector also spoke with parents who requested a phone call. There were 26 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke with pupils from different year groups during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Fordham

His Majesty's Inspector

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