

Roman Fields

11 Box Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 0DF

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, leaders and the management committee are providing good leadership and management. Together they have sustained good improvement, especially in the quality of teaching and students' achievement, since the previous inspection.
- The new headteacher is providing strong and purposeful leadership and clear direction for the school. He is receiving good support from staff and the management committee.
- Students' behaviour is good and the unit's efforts to ensure students are safe are outstanding.
- Students' learning and progress are at least good because teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and know their students very well. They make good use of this information to plan challenging activities to extend students' thinking.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with students and manage their behaviour well. As a result, students have positive attitudes to learning and show respect towards staff.
- Students' achievement is good. They make good progress in English and mathematics, and towards their GCSE courses.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder make outstanding progress towards their targets in English, mathematics, science and computing. The majority of students make outstanding progress in science and computing.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- Students in the sixth form are making good progress towards their examination courses. Good leadership has assured good teaching and students are well prepared for further education, training and employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, students do not acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly enough.
- Leaders are still developing the new arrangements for the curriculum and assessment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited ten lessons with senior leaders to look at the impact of teaching on students' learning. Nearly all teachers were seen.
- The inspector looked at samples of students' work.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, three members of the management committee, two representatives of the local authority and one group of pupils. Informal discussions also took place with different pupils at lunchtime and break time.
- The inspector met a group of ten parents and took account of 13 responses to Parent View, including eight comments. He also looked at the questionnaire responses returned by staff.
- The inspector observed the unit's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of management committee meetings, the local authority review of the unit's work, information about students' progress over time and the destinations of students leaving the sixth form.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Roman Fields is a pupil referral unit which makes alternative provision for students who have histories of failure in adjusting in mainstream school or special school settings, resulting in either permanent exclusion or school refusal.
- Students 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 Stage 4 or in the small sixth form, which provides for students in Year 12 only.
- All students have a statement of special education or an education, health and care plan, mainly for autistic spectrum disorder. A significant number are referred for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some students have both autistic spectrum disorder and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Most students are White British and none speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the unit receives pupil premium funding is above average at almost half of students. This is additional funding for students entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- Students attend a range of alternative providers on a part-time basis for vocational courses. These include: Hertfordshire Regional College in Ware; Haydon Training in Stoke Mandeville; Construction Training Partnership in Harlow; the Sanctuary Art and Media in Watford; Farmyard Fun World in Bushey; Tec at Tabard in Radlett; and Oakland's College in Welwyn Garden City.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there has been a significant increase in the number of students with autistic spectrum disorder referred to the unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the few remaining weaknesses in teaching, increase the proportions of good and outstanding teaching, and raise achievement by making sure that:
 - students always acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly in all lessons
 - leaders complete the development of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher is providing excellent leadership and direction for the school in relentlessly driving improvements forward in a short space of time. He has improved the quality of the curriculum by increasing the amount of teaching time for English, mathematics and science. He has ensured the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been thoroughly addressed and he has successfully gained autism accreditation for the school. He is receiving good support from senior leaders and teachers with leadership responsibilities in ensuring good teaching and in creating a strong culture in which teaching, learning and good behaviour flourishes through its 'Never Give Up' ethos.
- Teachers with leadership responsibilities are monitoring the impact of teaching on students' learning over time effectively. They are making good use of the outcomes to improve their subjects and shape priorities for improvement in the unit's development plan.
- The unit has an accurate view of itself, which is securely based on the outcomes of the rigorous monitoring of the impact of teaching on students' learning and achievement over time. Outcomes are used well in the robust management of teachers' performance. Weaknesses in teaching are quickly identified and supported, and good teaching is linked to salary increases. Newly qualified teachers receive good support and training to develop their practice.
- The curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the different needs of each student. Each student benefits from an individual curriculum which includes the opportunity to take a wide range of examination courses, including GCSE in mathematics, English and science. Students also follow GCSE equivalent courses, such as computing, and a range of vocational courses including sports leadership, child care, construction and motor vehicle maintenance.
- The new curriculum has developed around a core of English, mathematics, computing and business studies. Vocational pathways for students are under review. New arrangements for assessment are developing, with robust systems for assessing students' attainment on entry and the review of the progress each student has made against their individual targets on a termly basis. The unit is moving towards the transfer from statements of special educational needs to education, health and care plans.
- Students benefit from good careers education and work experience programmes, enabling them to make informed choices about their futures. Leaders rigorously monitor the progress, behaviour and attendance of students attending alternative providers through daily case management meetings. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through assemblies, religious studies, food technology, geography, art and music. Students' self-esteem is built up through the celebration of their successes, and the use of praise and encouragement. They have good opportunities for reflection and students' moral development is promoted by the systematic implementation of the code of conduct. Students learn about life in modern Britain through a range of topics, such as parliamentary democracy, in citizenship.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to broaden the breadth of curriculum experiences for individual students which has led to them achieving above expectations in their GCSE examination courses.
- The unit promotes equality of opportunity well, ensuring that students with different learning needs and from different backgrounds achieve equally well. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and is dealt with effectively by staff.
- The local authority is providing good support and challenge for the work of the unit through regular visits to review progress and agree targets for development. This is valued by the headteacher, staff and the management committee.

■ The governance of the school:

- The local authority and management committee are effective. Members of the management committee have an accurate view of their effectiveness and use this information to improve further. They make good use of data to challenge the work of the school, particularly for its additional spending of the pupil premium funding. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching through receiving regular reports from leaders and through first-hand visits to the school. They use this information well to establish clear performance objectives for the headteacher and to influence the unit's priorities for development. They effectively oversee what the school does to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance.
- The management committee have good oversight of the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of British values. They ensure that the legal requirements for safeguarding are extremely robust and implemented most effectively. They rigorously review policies to ensure they are up-to-date and are equally rigorous in checking that all staff and visitors are thoroughly vetted before they work with students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Incidents of disruption in lessons and exclusions are rare. Students respond well to the consistently good management of their behaviour. Those with extreme challenging behaviours make good progress in their conduct during their time in the unit. Students behave well when they attend their off-site placements.
- Students say behaviour is good. They have a secure understanding of why good behaviour is important in the unit, at home, in the work place and in society. Students' good behaviour is having a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially in building their confidence, self-esteem and respect for others. They have good relationships with one another and with staff, and are polite and courteous to visitors. Parents, staff and the local authority confirm that behaviour is good.
- Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They rightly say that bullying is rare and is always dealt with effectively, should it occur. If they are concerned about any issues, they feel confident to discuss these with staff.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and take a great pride in their achievements, which is reflected in the neat presentation of their written work. They eagerly join in activities provided by the unit and are keen to learn. This is reflected in the rapid progress most students make in their attendance and punctuality to lessons.

Safety

- The unit's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Different students said they felt very safe in the unit and when attending outside placements.
- Robust systems are in place to promote good attendance, with rigorous monitoring and immediate contact home in the event of any absence. Extremely close daily monitoring of students' attendance in their off-site placements is carried out by the unit. Any unusual patterns of absence which might impact on the welfare and safety of students are thoroughly checked, with immediate action taken to involve local agencies when necessary. Parents and staff rightly believe that students are safe.
- All potential health and safety risks in the unit, in off-site premises and on unit visits are rigorously assessed. Students move safely around the unit and in their off-site placements. High levels of staff presence and engagement with students at breaktimes and lunchtimes promote their safety extremely well. All students, including those in the sixth form, handle practical equipment and tools safely. They use mobile phones and computers safely in the unit and in their off-site placements.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The quality of teaching and its impact on students learning over time is good; sometimes it is outstanding. This was seen during visits to lessons, in the unit's own lesson observations since its previous inspection, in the information about students' progress, and in the observations of lessons carried out by the local authority and the National Autistic Society.
- Students' good behaviour and attitudes to learning have a positive impact on their progress.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and very good knowledge of their students was seen during visits to lessons and confirmed by the school's own monitoring of lessons. In lessons and in pupils' books, teachers have high expectations for learning. They make good use of assessment to inform students of how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for students' learning, using their knowledge of students well to clarify any misunderstandings and develop their skills further. This was evident in the modelling of how to measure accurately during a practical investigation of the effect of heat in raising the temperature of a fixed volume of water.
- The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics is good. This leads to students' success in examination courses, and enables them to apply the skills of literacy and numeracy in real life contexts. The teaching of communication and social interaction skills for students with autistic spectrum disorder is outstanding, enabling them to make outstanding progress during their time in the unit.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and know their students very well. They make good use of this information to plan challenging activities to extend students' thinking. Teachers have excellent relationships with students and manage their behaviour well. As a result, students have positive attitudes to learning and show respect towards staff. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow so that students do not always acquire new knowledge skills and understanding quickly enough.
- Although teaching is sometimes outstanding, not enough is outstanding across the unit and a few weaknesses remain. The unit's own evaluation of teaching over time shows that a small proportion of teaching requires improvement, which is also reflected in the school's data and pupils' books. Occasionally, students are not acquiring new knowledge skills and understanding quickly enough because students' thinking is not always extended sufficiently.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Students enter the unit with low levels of attainment due to the complexity of their special educational needs and their previous histories of educational failure in other schools. Good leadership and good teaching ensures that students settle in quickly, re-engage with learning and make good progress.
- Students' work, the unit's information about their progress over time and regular staff monitoring of students' learning in lessons demonstrate good achievement over time. This is reflected in students' examination successes at GCSE, including mathematics and English, and in their vocational courses such as the BTEC diploma in information and communication technology. It is also seen in the high proportion of students who are meeting or exceeding their individual targets in reading, writing, mathematics, science and computing.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder make outstanding progress in communication and social interaction skills. This is because staff use their expertise in autism well, alongside their excellent subject knowledge, to ensure that these students achieve their potential.
- Students attending off-site providers such as Haydon Training, Oakland's College and the Construction Training Partnership make good progress in their vocational courses such as sports leadership, musical composition and social care.

- Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and the very few with communication difficulties make equally good progress as their classmates towards their examination courses, including English and mathematics. This is because they receive good one-to-one teaching and good support from teaching assistants when they learn in small groups.
- Disadvantaged students make the same progress as their classmates in English and mathematics, and in their examination courses, as a result of good additional teaching and support to broaden the range of learning experiences. This has enabled a few pupils to gain a wider range of GCSEs at Grades A* to C than predicted from their prior attainment, and to significantly narrow the gap between their achievements and those of similar students nationally.
- More-able students make equally good and occasionally outstanding progress compared with their classmates. For example, in 2014 some students gained eight grade A to C at GCSE and BTEC qualifications, and are now following A-level courses in a sixth form college.
- The few students in Year 12 make good progress in their GCSE and vocational examination courses. They make equally good progress in work-related learning and independence skills, enabling them to transfer to colleges successfully. The unit's records show that nearly all students are sustaining their placements one year on.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Good leadership has assured good quality teaching, students' good achievement, and their good safety and well-being. All potential risks, both in the unit and when students attend off-site provision, are thoroughly assessed with their behaviour and attendance closely monitored.
- Students receive good careers guidance, enabling them to make positive and informed choices about their futures. Strong links with local businesses enable good opportunities for work experience. Strong links with colleges and good opportunities for community involvement ensure that transition to colleges on leaving school is smooth.
- The curriculum is well conceived, providing each student with a bespoke package of academic and vocational courses, including mathematics and English, which enable them to follow their chosen pathways.
- Staff have excellent relationships with students and manage behaviour well. Students show great respect for staff and are courteous and polite to visitors. They have positive attitudes to learning and take a great pride in their achievements in the unit.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	136247
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447990

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Trevor Orchard
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
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