

Roman Way First School

Burns Road, Royston, SG8 5EQ

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils get a good start to school in the nursery and reception classes and make good progress.
- Most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 improved last year, and standards are rising throughout the school.
- Teachers show that they expect pupils to achieve well. They ask questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to deepen their learning.
- Teachers often demonstrate different activities and tasks so that pupils fully understand what they are being asked to do.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well around school and in lessons. They are very polite and courteous to visitors and to each other.
- The senior leaders regularly check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Their good understanding of how the school can develop further is used well to improve teaching and learning.
- The governors ask the headteacher and senior leaders challenging questions to hold them accountable for school improvement.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is particularly good and underpins all the school does. This means that pupils grow in confidence and develop good social skills and respect for the views of others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally teachers talk for too long in lessons. This means that pupils lose concentration and do not have as much time as they might to practise and develop their skills.
- More-able pupils are not always given work that challenges them from the start of the lesson, so they do not always make the progress they are capable of.
- Although marking in some books is very clear and shows pupils exactly how they can improve, this is not consistent across all subjects and in all classes.
- Not all leaders check work in books regularly enough to help them understand exactly how well pupils are learning. Some have not had the opportunity to observe how well different subjects are taught.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons, seven of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers.
- The inspectors took account of 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental questionnaires and 14 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: information from the school's checks on its performance; its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress; school improvement plans; leaders' records of classroom observations; safeguarding arrangements; and records of governing body meetings.
- They also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This 'first' school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care or those with a parent in the armed services, is below average. There are currently no pupils with parents in the armed services in the school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding, by ensuring that:
 - all work is matched closely to pupils' ability levels, especially to challenge the more-able pupils
 - lessons always move at a brisk pace, so that all pupils are fully involved in learning and have plenty of opportunities to practise and develop their skills
 - teachers' marking in books consistently gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work, and they are routinely given the opportunity to respond.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders regularly check how well pupils are doing by looking at lesson planning and work in pupils' books, checking progress data and observing teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good and most pupils make good progress. They typically join the nursery with skills below the levels expected for their age, and leave the school with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improving progress throughout the school means that standards are rising. Last year pupils left the reception classes with stronger skills than in previous years because of better teaching in the nursery and reception classes. Pupils currently in Year 1 are working at expected levels for their age.
- The results of the national screening check on how well pupils know the sounds that letters make (phonics) in Year 1 last year were below average, but good progress throughout the key stage now means that reading standards by the end of Year 2 are improving. Most pupils read with confidence and use phonic skills well to sound out unfamiliar words.
- The majority of pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. While progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good in Year 4, progress in mathematics in Year 3 has been a little slower than in other areas of the school because of weaker teaching in that subject. Year 3 pupils are making good progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium make good progress. The funding is used effectively to enable them to be taught and supported in small groups or individually as necessary. Their specific needs are quickly identified and appropriate support is provided to make sure they do not fall behind other pupils. As a result, their attainment in English and mathematics is broadly similar to that of other pupils. It was higher in reading in Year 4 and writing in Year 2 last year.
- All groups of pupils make equally good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Well-briefed adults use teachers' planning to make sure that pupils receive good help and guidance, both within lessons and when working in small groups outside the classroom.

The quality of teaching is good

- A common strength in lessons is the way teachers ask questions that make pupils think deeply about their learning. Pupils rise to the challenge and give thoughtful and mature responses. For example, while one Year 1 pupil was able to give a good example of how to use the word 'obey', another was able to explain that the word 'prey' means 'food for predators'. He then showed that he fully understood what a predator was.
- Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good. Teachers plan exciting activities, both indoors and outside, that really make children want to learn. For example, nursery children learnt new vocabulary such as 'beached' when reading a story about a whale and a snail. In the reception classes, some children enjoyed counting down for their space ship to blast off while others played skittles outside, with a friend carefully keeping score.
- The school quickly identifies the specific requirements of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teachers follow this up by planning work that is well matched to their abilities while developing important skills.

- Teachers usually have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Sometimes, however, more-able pupils start the lesson with similar work to the rest of the class. Although they then move on to harder work, staff miss opportunities to challenge these pupils right from the start of the lesson so they make the progress they are fully capable of.
- In the best lessons, teachers quickly explain or demonstrate what pupils have to do. This means that pupils are soon involved in learning activities. Occasionally, however, teachers talk for too long so pupils lose their concentration and do not have as much time to practise and develop their skills.
- Marking in books usually helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils in Year 4 receive clear guidance about what they have done well and what their next steps in learning are. However, the comments in some classes and subjects are not so helpful, and pupils do not always get the chance to respond to the guidance.
- Homework is set regularly. Pupils say they enjoy the home learning activities which involve completing practical tasks at home. These are linked to lessons and they enjoy sharing what they have done with other pupils in the class or with the rest of the school. In addition to supporting their topic work, this helps develop speaking and listening skills and self-confidence. A group of pupils from Year 4 made their presentation to a wider audience as they talked about the Romans at an area 'Youth Speaks' event.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in and around school. They automatically hold open doors for adults and show respect for each other. During the inspection, pupils of all ages were seen supporting each other with help or encouragement in lessons and playing together happily at playtimes. Their attitudes to learning are positive. As one boy said, 'It's more fun when the work is harder'.
 - Pupils say they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of what bullying is, and can talk about how this includes not just physical bullying but also hurting people's feelings. They say it rarely happens in school, but are confident that there are plenty of adults they can go to if they do have any problems.
 - Pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. For example, the fire and police services visit the school to talk about road safety and what to do in case of a fire. Pupils who act as 'buddies' or 'Roman Way Eagles' take their roles very seriously and ensure that other children are safe and happy at playtimes.
 - In lessons, pupils work well in groups and respond to the teachers' high expectations of good behaviour. Those who find behaving well difficult are sensitively guided by adults and respond positively to the consistently used reward system. All pupils value 'Golden Time' and try hard to ensure they earn back any time they have lost. Even when pupils lose concentration if the pace of the lesson slows, they do not disrupt the learning of their classmates.
 - The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure their children attend regularly. Attendance has improved recently and is broadly average. The school is working hard to maintain this improvement.
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The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher shows drive and ambition for the school. She works very closely with senior leaders and governors to ensure that they all understand its strengths and how it can be improved. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and any pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and helped to catch up.
 - The leadership team checks pupils' progress by using the school's tracking data, but not all leaders check work in books often enough. While the headteacher and some leaders judge the quality of teaching by observing lessons, not all members of the leadership team have had the opportunity to develop these skills.
 - Teaching has improved over recent years. Training opportunities have enabled teachers and other adults in the classroom to strengthen their skills. Teachers' performance is judged appropriately against how much progress their pupils make and how well they fulfil their different roles in the school. The individual targets set for teachers are used to measure whether promotion up the pay scale is justified by the results achieved.
 - The topics that pupils learn engage and excite them. Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are developed in different subjects and pupils talk enthusiastically about the 'wow' days, which always start topics in an exciting way. Visitors such as the 'Bug Man' and trips out give pupils first-hand experiences that enhance their learning by showing its relevance in the real world.
 - The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination through ensuring that all pupils are listened to and all have the opportunity to succeed. No group of pupils makes less progress than others, and all pupils are fully involved in class activities regardless of ability or need.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Pupils say they enjoy musical activities and the active choir, recorder, keyboard and ukulele clubs perform at different events. Pupils' good understanding of right and wrong is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning and to each other.
 - The local authority has provided good support for the school. It has supported members of the senior leadership team in developing their skills, and worked with teachers in the nursery and reception classes to improve the range of activities they provide.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors use information from the school's data, local authority and headteacher reports and observations made when visiting the school to ask challenging questions of senior leaders. This process gives them a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. The school finances are managed well and governors are very clear about how effectively the pupil premium is used to make sure that all pupils can take part in additional activities, as well as providing extra teaching support where it is needed. In addition to termly governing body meetings, governors meet regularly to talk about data on pupils' progress so that they can keep a check on standards throughout the school. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body also have regular meetings with the headteacher to ensure that agendas are always focused on school improvement priorities. The governors make sure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet current national requirements.
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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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117332
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	412560

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Inwood
Headteacher	Emma Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2008
Telephone number	01763 241535
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Email address	admin@romanway.herts.sch.uk

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