

Roman Way First School

Burns Road, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5EQ

Inspection dates

4 July–16 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Despite recent efforts, the ethos and culture of safeguarding is not well established throughout the school. As a result, safeguarding is ineffective.
- Leaders and governors do not have sufficient capacity to stem the decline in standards since the previous inspection.
- Leaders are not bringing sustained improvements to the school's provision. Improvements in attendance, behaviour or achievement are either short-lived or too narrow in their impact. This includes the provision for groups of pupils, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Governors and the local authority have not held leaders sharply enough to account for standards in the school.
- Pupils' achievement is variable. Pupils do not make the good progress of which they are capable, in key stages 1 and 2, particularly for boys in reading and writing.
- Leaders have not established consistently high expectations about behaviour. Staff's guidance to pupils is too varied, especially when pupils misbehave or fall out with their friends.
- Teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do to deliver appropriate learning activities to meet their needs. In particular, activities do not routinely meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Although improving, standards in the early years have not risen rapidly enough. Children's early reading and writing skills remain an area of weakness.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has sought external advice and guidance about how to raise standards. Her recent work to improve safeguarding arrangements has improved some of the support for the most vulnerable pupils.
- The work to help the small numbers of pupils with the most complex needs, and their families, is a strength in the school's provision.
- Outcomes in phonics in 2017 improved and are now in line with the national average.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the safeguarding arrangements in the school by:
 - undertaking all appropriate statutory checks on staff
 - ensuring that leaders, staff and governors have understand the most recent safeguarding guidance and safer recruitment practices
 - making sure that all adults who work in the school are appropriately trained in the school's own safeguarding systems and processes
 - continuing to review and ensure that referrals to external agencies are timely and effective in getting pupils, and their families, the right help when they need it.
- Rapidly increase the capacity and quality of leadership and governance by:
 - ensuring that leaders have clarity about their roles and responsibilities and adequate time and support to fulfil them
 - making sure that there are well-embedded school-wide systems to improve, and monitor, standards in attendance, behaviour and achievement, and that these are used effectively by leaders and staff
 - pinpointing suitable benchmarks, including national figures, so that the impact of planned actions can be measured and improvements to the quality of provision can be effectively reviewed
 - ensuring that governors hold leaders to account for standards across the school, the effectiveness of safeguarding and the impact of the pupil premium funding on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that teachers have a thorough understanding of what pupils know and can do, so that they plan activities that match their abilities
 - providing better quality guidance to teachers about the strategies required to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that lessons engage pupils with their learning so that they remain focused and make good progress.
- Continue to raise standards in the early years by:
 - supporting children, especially boys and the most able children, to make rapid progress in their early development of reading and writing skills
 - developing the outdoor environment so that it is a space that supports the learning and progress of children in a creative and interesting way.

- Bring greater consistency and effectiveness in leaders' work to support pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - creating and embedding behaviour systems so that staff have consistent, effective strategies to support pupils and to record incidences of poor behaviour
 - continuing to review the whole-school personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum so that it is responsive to the changing needs of pupils, and the local community.
 - further developing the monitoring of attendance rates to work more effectively with parents and external agencies, so that pupils' attendance improves.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Despite some recent improvements, leaders and governors have not ensured that safeguarding processes are being undertaken as robustly or systematically as they should be. As a result, safeguarding is ineffective.
- The capacity of leaders to bring about sustained improvement is significantly limited. Too often, leaders have numerous responsibilities but not adequate time to undertake these roles effectively.
- Systems for monitoring attendance, achievement, behaviour and aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures are not understood or used effectively by all leaders. Consequently, leaders do not know the difference that they are making in raising standards in the school. They are not able to identify the areas urgently needing attention, and act swiftly.
- Leaders have not maintained the good academic standards identified in the previous inspection. Outcomes in the early years and key stage 1 have declined and the progress that pupils make in key stage 2 is no longer good.
- Until recently, leaders' evaluation of the quality of provision has been overly generous. The deputy headteacher, who has recently been appointed as the acting headteacher, knows the weaknesses in the school's provision. She has taken initial actions to seek external support to raise standards in the school, although it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities does not ensure that these pupils achieve and develop well. The relatively new leader for SEN has acted quickly since her appointment to provide support and intervention for pupils with the most complex needs. However, she has not been given the capacity to ensure that staff have the appropriate skills and strategies to support pupils' learning in classrooms.
- Middle leaders have undertaken training to develop their roles in subject leadership. However, they do not have regular or sufficient opportunities to check standards in their subjects. As a result, they do not know what is working well and where improvements are needed.
- Staff morale is varied in the school. While staff are proud to work at the school, a significant minority identified concerns about the quality of leadership and the support that they receive, especially in securing improvements in pupils' behaviour. Although staff morale is improving, leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do to build the confidence of staff in the leadership of the school.
- Parents are generally positive about the school's work. Some are particularly glowing about the support and help that their children receive from the school's family support worker. However, a small minority of parents are concerned about the quality of leadership and management, standards of behaviour and communication with parents.
- Additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used more effectively than in previous years. For example, additional staff are deployed to give

extra help that is tailored more closely to each pupil's needs. In particular, this funding is being used to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils with the most complex needs. However, it is not yet ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make good progress across the key stages nor is it securing sustained improvements in their attendance.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum offers a broad range of subjects, including a PSHE curriculum that covers pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils say that staff encourage them to be friendly to one another and respect other people. There are also opportunities for pupils to see democracy in practice, through the school council's recent visit to a governors' meeting.
- A lack of consistency in how staff deal with behaviour means that, on occasion, pupils' understanding of how to resolve disputes and appreciate the differences between different faiths, cultures and lifestyles is not well developed.
- The local authority has routinely visited the school to check on the school provision. However, this has not, until recently, challenged leaders sufficiently about the standards in the school. These visits have not ensured that the wider issues in the school's safeguarding arrangements have been adequately explored.
- Additional funding for primary school physical education and sport are used effectively, both to increase opportunities for pupils and to train staff. Pupils understand the importance of physical exercise for a healthy lifestyle. They are encouraged by staff to look after their own physical health.

Governance

- Governors have not ensured that leaders fulfil statutory requirements to safeguard pupils effectively. Despite being regular visitors to the school, governors have not ensured that the safeguarding processes in the school are well embedded and effective. This includes in the recruitment of staff, and the maintenance of the single central record of staffing appointments.
- Governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently over standards in the school. They have an overly generous view of the quality of the provision. Consequently, although they have asked questions, they have not ensured that they have sought secure reasons for the decline in academic standards nor have they identified other issues that need addressing such as attendance and behaviour.
- Governors have worked hard to support leaders since the previous inspection in other areas of the school's work. In particular, they have worked very diligently to ensure that the new school building has been completed efficiently and effectively. They have also been instrumental in supporting leaders to create the new website, although this has been delayed in its implementation.
- Governors understand the actions taken to support pupils who require additional help and guidance, academically and emotionally. As a result, they are beginning to review the use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have SEN and/or disabilities, with increasing effectiveness. However, they have not ensured that this funding is making enough difference to disadvantaged pupils' achievement and attendance.

Safeguarding

- The culture of safeguarding pupils is not embedded across the school. Consequently, the arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders have not ensured that all statutory pre-employment checks have been made on staff. Some of these checks were undertaken during the inspection. However, leaders and staff did not have a thorough understanding of, and were not clear about, the basic requirements expected in the most recent statutory guidance.
- Despite some recent improvements in the quality of training, leaders have not ensured that all staff who routinely work in the school, but are not directly employed by the school, are thoroughly checked and vetted. Although leaders found evidence of these checks during the inspection, they had not sought this evidence previously.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff who work in the school have received training on the school's own safeguarding systems. Consequently, although staff do make referrals, they are not thorough enough.
- In the past, referrals to external agencies have not always been timely or effective. Too often, the signs of potential concerns have been missed, and appropriate referrals have not been made to the relevant external agencies. Although recent actions have improved the timeliness of these referrals, this work is still being developed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not sufficiently use their awareness of pupils' capabilities and starting points when planning tasks. As a result, some activities are either too difficult or too easy. This limits the progress of all pupils. In particular, there is not enough support to help those who need to catch up, or for those pupils who are ready to achieve more, such as the middle-prior-attaining pupils.
- Teaching activities do not engage pupils well enough with their learning, most notably boys. On these occasions, pupils become less involved in lessons, lose the motivation to learn and make slower progress. This sometimes results in a deterioration in the quality of pupils' work.
- The teaching of writing is not good enough. Pupils undertake the same tasks, regardless of their ability. Moreover, while teachers' expectations are raising standards in spelling, they are not ensuring that pupils apply the correct use of punctuation and grammar in their writing.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not effective enough. The leader has not been given the time to provide teachers with sufficient guidance and training so that they know how to provide effective strategies to help these pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Despite improvements in the teaching of phonics for younger pupils, other pupils are not as well supported to develop their independent reading skills. Staff, recognising that reading standards are not high enough, have introduced an innovative challenge

to encourage pupils to read more regularly at home. This is not yet ensuring that pupils make good progress.

- Teachers provide pupils with guidance about the next steps they need to take in their learning. However, they do not follow this up to make sure pupils understand how to address errors in their work, or gaps in their understanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants that support one-to-one interventions for pupils, ensure that they meet the needs of pupils. In particular, this work is helping pupils with the most complex needs to develop their phonic understanding.
- Mathematics is improving more securely than reading and writing. Teachers know, understand and follow the school's approach to teaching calculation. They ensure that pupils understand subject-specific language, and regularly refer back to prior learning as a starting point. However, pupils are still not making good progress in all year groups in their mathematics development.
- Teachers provide homework that reinforces learning in school, or enables pupils to practise basic skills such as spelling. Home learning tasks, connected with topic work, encourage pupils to research areas of interest. The vast majority of parents responding to the online survey agree that their children receive appropriate homework for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders do not monitor their records well enough to spot emerging needs in pupils' welfare development. For example, records show that there were a small but significant number of incidents of pupils using inappropriate language towards pupils of another ethnic group. However, staff responses to these issues were inconsistent, and did not identify wider needs in pupils' understanding about the importance of respect.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the internet and for their road safety. The overwhelming majority of pupils responding to the online survey stated that they feel safe in school.
- Leaders and staff are starting to have some impact on supporting vulnerable pupils. They make good use of external specialists to support pupils' emotional wellbeing, such as art and music therapists. The work of the school's family welfare officer is supporting a number of families and pupils successfully. The breakfast club provision ensures that pupils benefit well from a healthy meal and from sharing a social time with fun activities.
- Pupils welcome opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. For example, they welcome the opportunity to talk to governors about their learning. Pupils also enjoy being playground buddies and helping younger pupils.
- Most parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Parents are particularly positive about teaching and the

impact of the family support worker. However, a significant minority of parents are concerned about the quality of communication with school leaders, the quality of leadership and about the behaviour and safety of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Too often, pupils lose interest in lessons and disengage with activities. In particular, when teaching and learning does not interest boys, they lose motivation and behave inappropriately.
- Leaders have not established an ethos of high expectations or a behaviour management system that brings about rapid improvements in pupils' behaviour and their understanding about how to behave well. Consequently, staff's response to pupils' behavioural needs is inconsistent. A significant proportion of the staff who completed the online survey agreed that they did not feel well supported by leaders to deal with poor behaviour.
- Leaders' actions are reducing the frequency of incidents of more extreme behaviour in the school. However, the use of fixed-term exclusion for poor behaviour remains much higher than average. This is only just starting to reduce.
- Leaders do not review the attendance of all pupils well enough to identify issues, and rapidly put in place systematic and effective actions to affect change. As a result, the attendance of pupils is not showing sustained improvement over time, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying. They say bullying sometimes happens, but that incidents are dealt with quickly by adults. However, records show that on occasion, staff deal with bullying inconsistently.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards in both the early years and key stage 1 have declined since the previous inspection. In 2017, the outcomes for children and pupils were below the national average for the second year running. Although mathematics is slightly stronger, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not high enough.
- School assessment information and work in pupils' books also shows variations in the progress made by pupils currently in school. In particular, the progress made by boys is less than that of girls. These differences are across year groups and in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The most able pupils achieved well in the key stage 1 assessments in 2017. However, these pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not well supported across all year groups to make the rapid progress of which they are capable. A high proportion of pupils also commented in the online survey that they do not feel that the work they receive challenges them.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve well in 2017 in key stage 1. Their achievement in meeting both the expected standards and higher standards was very low. Additional

funding supports the most complex emotional needs of these pupils appropriately, but it is not being used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well in all key stages.

- Pupils' writing shows they make some progress, which accelerates in Years 3 and 4. However, while spelling is accurate and handwriting is improving, the use of punctuation and grammar is often inaccurate, and this is not being addressed by staff.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not well supported in their lessons to make good progress from their starting points. Through additional one-to-one intervention, some who have the most complex needs are beginning to make better progress than they did in the past. This is particularly the case in the development of phonic knowledge and understanding.
- Results of the phonics screening check have improved significantly this year, largely due to staff heeding the advice and guidance from specialists from the local authority. They are now in line with the national average.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children enter the school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Standards in the early years have declined since the previous inspection year-on-year, and the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development fell significantly in 2016. Despite improvements in 2017, the outcomes in the early years are still below average.
- As in the rest of the school, assessment of children's prior attainment is not used well enough to plan their next learning activities. As a result, tasks given to children can lack sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able. These children's effort and the quality of their work then diminish.
- Most-able children too often repeat activities and work unnecessarily. Where children show that they have the prior knowledge, teachers do not ensure that these children are challenged to achieve more. Consequently, the most able children became disinterested and underachieve
- Although staff provide opportunities for mark making and other early writing skills at the start of every session, children, particularly boys, rarely choose to do them. However, when staff use children's own learning choices to promote writing, children are much more inclined to 'write'. For example, during the inspection, children, excited by a forthcoming trip, decided to make their own train. Timely intervention by a member of staff led to children writing to produce tickets.
- Children are starting to make better progress in reading. In 2017, more pupils reached the age-related standard in reading. In particular, the teaching of phonics and other early reading skills is starting to improve.
- Leaders and adults work hard to ensure that children are looked after well. Staff check equipment and resources daily to ensure that they are safe for children to use. Welfare requirements are met. Staff organise activities that help children develop an early understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, emergency services such as the fire brigade visit and explain how to stay safe.

- Classrooms are well-resourced and stimulating. Equipment is accessible to children. In particular, staff have developed well-resourced reading corners in classrooms to engage children in their early reading. This is starting to make a difference. However, the outdoor learning environment is not yet well resourced or stimulating. It is not an effective learning space.
- Most parents are positive about their children's experiences in the early years. Transition arrangements into the Nursery and into Reception ensures that children settle quickly and feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	117332
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031570

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Julie Inwoods
Headteacher	Emma Edwards
Acting headteacher	Pat Baxter
Telephone number	01763 241 535
Website	www.romanway.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@romanway.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is slightly smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The school operates two part-time Nursery classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- The school also has two Reception classes.
- All other year groups are taught in mixed-age classes. Year 1 and 2 are taught together in three classes, and Year 3 and 4 are taught together, also in three classes.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school is in the process of expanding to two forms of entry (up to 60 pupils per year), starting in September 2017.
- The school operates a breakfast club five days a week.
- An after-school club also runs every day. It is independent of the school and inspected separately.
- There has been an acting headteacher in place since November 2017. This position is an interim measure for one year in the temporary absence of the substantive headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school building and site.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 86 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors considered the views of 15 members of staff and 30 pupils who responded to their online surveys.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, and minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.
- Following the original inspection in July 2017, Ofsted decided that additional evidence was needed to secure judgements. On 16 November 2017, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted inspector visited the school to gather further evidence. On this occasion, the deputy headteacher was in the position as acting headteacher. During this one-day visit, inspectors reviewed safeguarding information and systems, visited short parts of lessons, met with pupils formally and spoke to some pupils in lessons, as well as looking at pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to parents, held meetings with a range of leaders, and spoke to the local authority and chair of governors by telephone. Inspectors also reviewed leaders' information about behaviour, and attendance.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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