

# Robert Peel Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109522
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356568
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	301
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Warriner
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Saunders
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Dapifer Drive Sandy SG19 1QJ
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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who visited 23 lessons taught by 18 teachers. Inspectors spoke with staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance records, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, notes of governing body meetings, school development planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 128 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are pupils of all abilities being helped to make consistently good progress from the start of the Nursery to the end of Year 4?
- Is the school doing all it can to ensure that pupils do not miss lessons due to avoidable absence?
- What has been the impact of the school's initiatives to give additional support to those pupils who need extra help with their learning?
- How effective is the school in raising pupils' awareness of different cultures, beliefs and ways of life across the United Kingdom and wider world?

## Information about the school

This first school is larger than an average primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British, with others coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Only a very small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of their needs relate to moderate learning difficulties. Robert Peel Lower has Healthy Schools status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. What most stands out about Robert Peel Lower is the strength of the partnership that the school has forged with parents and carers, many of whom wrote to inspectors with heartfelt accounts of the support they and their children have received. Typical was the comment: 'I can never thank the school enough for all they have done to help and support my child and us as a family.' Several parents and carers reserve special praise for the headteacher who 'always goes the extra mile'. This is exemplified by the consistently good quality of care and support provided for all pupils, and particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. Parents and carers commend the way the headteacher and staff 'are all approachable and value our opinions'. They declare that, 'Communication is excellent.' Parents and carers also greatly appreciate the regular adult education courses run at the school for them to develop their own skills.

From starting points that are mostly below those typical for their ages, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They continue to progress well as they move up the school, so that pupils leave Year 4 with levels of attainment that are at and sometimes above age-related expectations. This good achievement is the result of good teaching and a curriculum that is made stimulating and fun, so that pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn. Pupils make good progress in their personal development as well as academically. Behaviour is good, even though the school includes some children who join with behavioural difficulties. As a parent commented, 'This is the result of the school teaching children about mutual respect, and the friendly and helpful attitude witnessed among staff and pupils alike.'

In this well run school, staff keep a careful track of how well each child is doing and extra support is put in place when pupils fall behind or where they have additional learning needs. However, teachers do not always make full use of the assessment information they have at their disposal to plan lessons that extend the more-able pupils. Work is mostly matched to pupils' different capabilities in English and mathematics but, in other subjects, too often all are given similar worksheets or writing templates to complete. Where this occurs, it limits opportunities for pupils, and especially the more able, to extend their writing skills by using and applying in other subjects what they have learnt in English.

The headteacher, leadership team and governing body have an accurate picture of the school's many strengths and of areas that can be further developed. In their sharp school development plan, for example, they have correctly identified that pupils have had relatively few opportunities to learn about other cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world. Although this remains work in progress, leaders' success in maintaining pupils' good achievement and personal development show the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by ensuring that teachers routinely make full use of the information they have about how well each child is doing to plan lessons so that:
  - work always challenges and extends more-able pupils
  - there is a reduced reliance on worksheets and templates that limit opportunities for more-able pupils, in particular, to write at length and to use and apply what they learn in English by writing in other subjects.
- Implement the school's plans to extend opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and ways of life in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

'My child was very shy and reluctant to participate in group activities. The school gave him extra support to encourage him to put his hand up and work with the other children. He has really blossomed with this support and has become very confident at school.' This comment from a parent mirrored similar accounts from several who described their children's good personal development at Robert Peel Lower. Pupils get on well together and they settle to work quickly and without fuss. They are attentive in lessons and this means that their recall of previous work is good. Year 2 pupils, for example, were asked to imagine themselves as residents in London in 1666 as a prelude to writing their own Pepys-style diary account. They drew well on what they had learnt the previous day to come up with thoughtful adjectives to describe the sights and sounds that might assail them. Relevant links made between subjects mean that pupils learn about fire safety during their study of the Great Fire, and pupils confirm that they feel very safe at school. Their good understanding of how to keep healthy underpins Robert Peel Lower's Healthy Schools status, with many pupils taking part in the wide range of sports and other clubs outside the ordinary school day. These also include a vibrant school choir that is one of the ways in which pupils go out to play an active part in the wider community. Within the school community, they enjoy taking on responsibilities, including as school councillors, confident that their ideas are valued and will be listened to.

Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number learning English as an additional language. Although more-able pupils are capable of making even faster progress in lessons, they nonetheless still achieve well. In 2010, for example, almost all of those who had attained the higher Level 3 in the Year 2 assessments two years earlier went on to attain Level 4 in their Year 4 tests. Current attainment, and that in each of the years since the last inspection, has been at least in line with that expected for pupils' ages. Pupils' attainment in key skills and average attendance rates prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

'My son loves school and talks enthusiastically about each day's activities and the creative ways staff present topics.' This comment from a parent sums up the impact of the links that teachers make between different subjects in order to make learning relevant and fun. Year 3 pupils honing their skills in using contents pages and indices in English, for example, worked with enthusiasm because they were set the task of using an array of non-fiction books to find out specific facts about the lives of polar bears. This also reinforced some of their learning in science about habitats. The school has taken the decision, much appreciated by parents and carers, to divide pupils into small teaching groups. These include a nurture group, aimed at helping pupils to develop their confidence and boost their self-esteem. The support provided to parents and carers, including a regular 'drop in' group for those with toddlers, greatly strengthens the links between home and school. This, in turn, has a positive impact on pupils' progress, especially for those pupils whose personal circumstances might otherwise erect barriers to learning. The school is rigorous in chasing up unexplained absences but it does not correlate attendance and attainment data in order to underline the impact of absence on pupils' academic performance.

Relationships throughout the school are good, so that pupils are often motivated to work hard and do well because they are keen to please their teachers. Staff establish and unobtrusively reinforce orderly routines, discouraging, for example, calling out in lessons.

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In some lessons, however, answers are only taken from volunteers, which can mean that not every child is actively involved. Teaching assistants and other adults, including parent helpers, are mostly used well to support learners, and especially those who need some one-to-one discussion to ensure that a key point has been learnt. Work is marked regularly and gives helpful guidance to pupils on what they need to do better. Teachers do not all, however, make such good use of assessment to ensure that lessons challenge the more-able pupils to the full.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, leadership team and staff have a shared vision that is communicated clearly to parents and carers. It is of a caring school where equality of opportunity is paramount and all are helped to succeed. The impact of this is most obvious in the rapid progress made by pupils with additional learning needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The careful monitoring of individual pupils' progress has also meant that the school has responded quickly where any differences have arisen, for example between the performance of boys and girls. There has been less emphasis on directly monitoring lessons. Although the headteacher regularly visits lessons, looking carefully at individual pupils' progress, other leaders have had less opportunity to visit lessons. The notes on leaders' lesson observations do not always identify clear points for improvement. There are also no systematic arrangements for ensuring that subsequent lesson observations focus on whether staff have acted on the feedback they have been given.

The governing body is very supportive. It is not just dependent on staff for knowing what goes on in school because its members visit and compile their own short reports. These usually have a specific focus and often comment particularly on the impact of initiatives to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. The governing body ensures that there are good arrangements for pupils to be protected and kept safe. These go beyond the basic requirements because of the extra care taken to support pupils whose circumstance may make them more vulnerable and because pupils themselves are involved in risk assessment. Last year, for example, school councillors took part in a site check to spot any potential safety hazards. The school's evaluation of its contribution to community cohesion identified that its involvement in the wider community is not as well developed as its involvement in the immediate locality. As a result, the school has drawn up plans to give pupils more opportunities to learn about other cultures and ways of life beyond their everyday experience.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Strong links with home and facilities such as the 'drop in' sessions for parents and carers mean that children settle quickly into Nursery. Thanks to the caring ethos and well-established routines, children grow in confidence and independence. They are increasingly confident in choosing activities and in working on their own and in small groups. They select an appropriate time to have their snack, choose their fruit option and pour their own drink.

In this well-run provision, children are well motivated and enjoy the wide range of opportunities available to them. They are keen to discuss their learning and are equally happy to work indoors and outside. Some opportunities for developing and reinforcing language skills are missed in the outside area, however, because activities are not always labelled. When children spoke about their learning and what they liked best, one summed up the views of many in declaring, 'All of it!' This was echoed by a parent, who told inspectors, 'I am always amazed at what the children learn in a fun and loving environment.' Adults work well together as a team and support children's learning through sensitive intervention and questioning. They have good relationships with children and, as a result, children progress well. From starting points that are mostly below those expected for their ages, children are now attaining levels that exceed those expected by the end of the Reception Year. This is an improvement on the picture at the time of the last inspection.



**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The response from parents and carers was greater than average for primary schools, and the views expressed were exceptionally positive. Parents and carers praise every aspect of the school and many voice particular thanks for the support given to those children and families who have needed extra help. Parents and carers especially commend the way the headteacher and staff are always approachable and work very closely with them. Inspectors were also impressed with the close partnership that the school has developed with parents and carers.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Robert Peel Lower School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 128 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 301 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	78	26	20	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	104	81	23	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	84	66	42	33	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	85	66	42	33	0	0	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	71	37	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	84	66	41	32	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	68	40	31	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	91	71	33	26	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	62	47	37	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	52	56	44	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	77	60	47	37	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	95	74	33	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	81	23	18	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Robert Peel Lower School, Sandy, SG19 1QJ**

Thank you for welcoming us when we came to visit your school. Many of you told us how proud you are of Robert Peel Lower, and your parents and carers also said that they were very happy with the school. We can see why. Yours is a good school where you make good progress from the start of the Nursery to the end of Year 4. You are looked after well and you benefit from good teaching. You told us how much you enjoy all the interesting things you get to learn and do. We were very pleased to see such good behaviour and how well you all get on with each other. That all helps to make Robert Peel Lower such a happy place to be.

Even in a good school, there are things that could be even better. You are involved quite a lot within the Sandy community, such as when you take part in the Sandy Carnival and Harvest Festival at the church, but you do not learn so much about life farther afield. We have, therefore, asked the school to make sure it puts into effect the plans it already has to give you more opportunities to learn about other people and other ways of life in this country and around the world. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you all always have work that stretches you. The activities you are asked to complete in topic work are sometimes too easy for some of you.

You too can help make your school even better by always being careful to check your work, and by being sure to read carefully and act upon the comments teachers make when they mark your work.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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