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Miss Liesl Ganney  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Ganney

### **Short inspection of Robert Peel Lower School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education at the school since the previous inspection. You have worked effectively with teachers, teaching assistants and governors to create a vibrant school community, where pupils are happy, attend regularly, enjoy learning and make good progress.

You have managed many changes recently, including the appointment of new teachers to all Key Stage 2 classes. The new staff team works together well, planning lessons and sharing best practice. Positive relationships underpin all aspects of the school's work. Staff are fully supportive of you, and the school's values are modelled by staff and respected by pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified some weaknesses in the provision for the more-able pupils. They also asked you to reduce teachers' reliance on worksheets and ensure that pupils use and apply what they learn in English lessons in other subjects. Finally, they asked for pupils to be given more opportunities to learn about other cultures and different ways of life.

You have been successful in addressing these issues. In 2015 the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics was at or above the national average. Improvements to the curriculum mean that pupils are now taught about life in different parts of the world and at different times in history.

By ensuring that pupils have opportunities to study different faiths and values you are also helping them to understand about life in modern Britain. Pupils record their work in books and teachers are no longer over-reliant on worksheets.

As a result of your work:

- the quality of teaching and learning is effective and pupils make good progress as they move through the school
- pupils enjoy learning, behave well and attend regularly
- staff are fully supportive of you and your work to improve the school
- a large majority of parents are supportive of the school and rightly believe that it is well led and managed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is given high priority at Robert Peel Lower School. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with pupils and the records that are kept are detailed and accurate. You ensure that safeguarding policies are reviewed regularly, reflect the most up-to-date guidance and are understood by all adults who work at the school. You monitor pupils' welfare closely and make appropriate referrals to outside agencies whenever this is needed. Staff receive regular training so that they know what signs to watch for and they report any concerns to the designated leaders promptly. Parents are secure in their knowledge that the school is a safe place where their children are looked after well.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children make a good start to school life in the early years. They quickly learn school routines and enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities that are available to them in both the indoor and outdoor areas. Many children start at the school with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age. Good systems are in place to support these children and close gaps in their learning. Along with their peers they make good progress and, by the time they leave the early years, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The percentage of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been around the national average for the past two years. This represents good progress for most children.
- Teaching is effective across the school and good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Over the past two years attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of work seen in pupils' books, during this inspection, indicates that pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2.

- You have overseen improvements to standards in reading. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is well organised and effective. As a result children in the early years quickly gain an understanding of how to blend letters together to make words. The percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level in the phonics check in Year 1 was around the national average in 2015. The percentage of pupils attaining higher-than-expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading was above the national average. By the time pupils leave the school the vast majority are competent and confident readers.
- Pupils behave well at Robert Peel Lower School. They enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. They are polite and friendly towards each other and the adults who teach them. However, these attitudes are not always reflected in the quality of presentation in pupils' books. Teachers do not always challenge untidy work, and insufficient focus is placed on the quality of handwriting. As a result, pupils do not present their work as neatly as they should and the quality of handwriting requires improvement.
- The school is successful at meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. The school makes timely and accurate assessments of children's abilities on entry to the school and tracks progress carefully. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) ensures that pupils with additional needs, and those who are falling behind with their work, receive appropriate support from well-trained teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils develop confidence and make good progress in their learning.
- Although pupils' work is marked regularly, there is inconsistency in the way that teachers help to improve pupils' work. As a consequence, some teachers respond to errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling and some do not. This results in pupils continuing to make the same errors and not moving on quickly enough in these key aspects of their learning.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of subjects to study. Subjects such as geography and history are taught regularly, and some good examples were seen of pupils using their numeracy skills in science. However, too often there is a lack of challenge in the activities that are provided for pupils to complete in these subjects. This limits progress in their learning.
- Staff are fully supportive of your leadership. You have created a strong staff team who are committed to making further improvements. One member of staff responded to the staff survey by saying, 'The staff are caring and supportive of each other, and are fully committed to the fantastic pupils we teach. I am very proud to be a teacher at this school.'

- In recent years the absence rate has been above the national average. The school has worked effectively with parents to reduce absence this year. You have focused on stressing the importance of attendance and the impact of absence on pupils' progress. As a result of the actions that you have taken, absence has reduced and attendance is currently above the national average.
- The school works well with the local authority, which provides good support to school leaders. A school improvement adviser works regularly with you and other school leaders, providing both challenge and support. The local authority has also helped you to establish good links with other local schools, in order to encourage the sharing of best practice.
- Parents are supportive of the school. They rightly believe that the school is well led and managed, that pupils behave well and that teaching is good. A very large majority of the parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) would recommend the school to other parents.
- Governors know the school well and share your ambition for the school to improve further. They attend relevant training, are well informed about the school and provide good levels of challenge and support. They also help to ensure that the appraisal system is used effectively to link pay and teacher performance.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- there is a clear policy for improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling that is understood and followed by all members of staff
- greater challenge is provided for all pupils when studying subjects such as science, geography and history
- improvements are made to the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher, the SENCO and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. I also met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I looked at work in pupils' books from across the school and visited each class to observe teaching and learning. I scrutinised documents relating to the school's safeguarding and child protection policies and looked at the single central record. I looked at some of the reports that you have presented to governors, the school's current self-evaluation and your improvement plan. I also looked at information about pupils' attendance and behaviour. I spoke to parents in the playground before school and considered the views of the 32 parents who had responded to Parent View, and the school's own survey. I also analysed the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.