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Mr Edward Richings
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Richings

Short inspection of Robertswood School

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2017, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide focused and ambitious leadership and give the school a clear direction. You are helpfully reflective and have created a climate of high expectations both for staff and for pupils. You and your senior leadership team works in close cooperation with governors to secure consistently good teaching across the school. You work closely with local schools to learn from colleagues and make effective use of advice from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust consultants. This allows you to continually improve the skills of leaders at all levels and to strengthen leadership capacity across the school. You continue to strengthen teaching by sharing and embedding the good practice that exists in the school. You and the senior leadership team have a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be developed further.

You and your staff have created a warm and welcoming environment in which pupils feel safe and secure. Parents value the positive culture that permeates the school. One parent reflected the views of many with the comment: 'My children are all very happy at Robertswood and the staff are brilliant. It has a real community spirit and we love it.' There is a strong sense of teamwork between all staff. They share the same aim, which is to do their very best for all pupils. Consequently, pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour in class and around the school. They are polite, friendly, and very well mannered. However, despite considerable efforts

made by leaders, a minority of pupils do not attend school regularly and they do not therefore reach the expected learning for their ages.

Governors know the school well. They are experienced and knowledgeable and they provide the right level of support and challenge to school leaders. They monitor the work of leaders closely and visit school frequently, both formally and informally. This provides them with a first-hand view of how well the school is led and managed. Governors' meetings are well organised and governors carry out all their statutory responsibilities conscientiously.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and to raise achievement, especially in mathematics and reading. During my visits to classrooms with you, there was plenty of evidence to show that this has been successfully achieved. Teaching is strong across the school, owing to the training and development that teachers have received. Pupils are thoroughly engaged with their work and appreciate the variety of the challenging activities that teachers provide for them. Pupils enjoy responding to teachers' questions that probe their understanding and deepen their thinking. This helps pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are strong links between reading, writing and mathematics, giving pupils plenty of opportunities to apply their literacy skills, for example when solving written mathematical problems. However, teachers do not yet apply the school's policy for teaching, learning and assessment with absolute consistency.

Leaders have introduced a wide range of reading material to stimulate pupils' appetite for reading. Developments in the teaching of reading, and the range of texts that pupils experience, have resulted in pupils enjoying reading more, supporting their good progress. Pupils also benefit from increased opportunities to read in other subjects such as mathematics, where they have to read and understand written mathematical problems. Just occasionally, phonics teaching does not make clear to pupils the direct link between reading and writing and this prevents some pupils from making even faster progress.

Since the last inspection, school leaders have also reviewed and revised the way in which mathematics is taught. A stronger emphasis on number, reasoning and problem-solving has led to pupils increasing their rates of progress. Helpfully, teachers insist on pupils using the correct mathematical vocabulary and on accuracy in calculations. This improvement has been instrumental in boosting pupils' confidence and enjoyment of mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. School leaders and governors have created a culture in which pupils' safety is given high priority. All staff undergo regular training and, as a result, they know exactly what to do should a pupil be at risk from harm. The designated safeguarding leader works in close cooperation with

external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the right support in a timely way. She assiduously follows up referrals made by staff and rigorously pursues local authority social care staff when the need arises.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from physical dangers associated with roads, railways and water. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. Pupils know about different forms of bullying. They say that bullying is not tolerated and rarely happens. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of potential dangers posed by modern technology. Pupils know that establishing contact with strangers on the internet is dangerous, and they know not to share personal information when using electronic devices.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, I also explored the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' writing, and how well pupils are taught at key stage 1. I considered the extent to which leaders have improved attendance, and reduced persistent absence, for some groups of pupils. I also looked at how well the school has addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.
- Pupils across the school make good progress in writing. This is because staff have received relevant training and have developed a deeper understanding about how to help pupils improve their writing. The recently introduced policy for teachers' marking of pupils' work ensures a largely consistent approach so that pupils understand what they are expected to do to improve their work further. There are very few occasions when the policy is not followed as thoroughly as leaders expect. This slows progress for some pupils.
- Work in pupils' books shows continuing improvements in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils write clearly and fluently to reach expectations that are at least in line with those expected for their age. There are some good examples of pupils writing at length in subjects other than English. For example, writing linked to the lives of famous people in history.
- Teaching at key stage 1 is effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge so they plan work for pupils that builds upon and extends what they already know and understand. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding and encourage them to engage in learning. Consequently, pupils have good attitudes to learning and they want to do well.
- Although the teaching of phonics is precise, this aspect of pupils' learning is not consistently extended by making clear the links between reading and writing, slowing the progress that some pupils make.
- Learning support assistants are very well trained and provide high-quality support to disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities. They support pupils very well in class as well as working effectively with individuals or small groups of pupils.

- School leaders encourage good attendance by working with individual families and securing support from the local authority attendance team. Current information shows that while that a small number of pupils still have attendance below 85%, their rates of attendance are improving.
- There have been some significant improvements in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, many of whom also have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. The attendance of some pupils from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community is improving as school leaders work persistently with their families to reinforce the need for good attendance. However, school leaders are not complacent and know that more needs to be done to secure consistently good attendance for all groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's policy for teaching, learning and assessment is applied effectively throughout the school
- the teaching of phonics consistently reinforces the links between reading and writing
- where necessary, pupils' attendance improves further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and I accompanied you to see teaching and learning across the school. I met with an adviser from the Buckingham Learning Trust and, later in the day, with two governors. I spoke to pupils around the school and met with a group of pupils more formally. I evaluated the 96 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or pupil online surveys. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to recruitment.