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Sir Paul Grant
Headteacher
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Dear Sir Paul

Short inspection of Robert Clack School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2016 with Christopher Doel, Ofsted Inspector, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, your senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the young people in your care and passionate about the quality of education that you provide. Your priority is to ensure that all pupils make excellent progress from their academic starting points and are socially and emotionally prepared for the next stage in their education and training. You and your staff are proud of the school's achievements to date and know that it is well respected and highly popular with the local community.

Your determination and drive has resulted in significant improvements since the previous inspection and you have successfully addressed the areas for development. You have created a reflective culture, where all staff are aware of the strengths of the school and the areas that require further development. You have particularly focused on improving the progress made by some groups, including the most able, the disadvantaged and identified pupils within the White British cohort. Strategies are having a positive impact on the academic progress of these pupils, including a focus on improving pupils' leadership qualities and self-esteem through an extensive sports programme. All staff are fully committed to raising the progress of all pupils still further.

Pupils across the school demonstrate respect and tolerance towards each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school, their sporting and cultural

accolades and their achievements. In class, they are enthusiastic learners who want to do well, and many have high aspirations for their futures. Pupils move around the large school site in an orderly way and wear their uniform with pride.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Record-keeping in relation to staff recruitment is up to date and detailed. School leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that support and referrals for individual pupils are appropriate and timely. All staff, including governors, are trained in safeguarding procedures. They know the potential risks faced by young people in the community and are clear about procedures following any concerns. These include issues relating to gangs, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and extremism, particularly right-wing extremism. School leaders carefully monitor the quality of off-site provisions used by a small number of pupils at the school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, particularly when online, and about the dangers of radicalisation. Staff and pupils are clear about who they can talk to should they have any concerns and they are confident that issues will be dealt with quickly. The parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View endorsed this view. School leaders are rightfully proud of the strong personal, social and health education programme and the 'above and beyond' work that they do with families in the local community. A school counselling service is provided on both school sites and currently there is a focus on identifying and supporting those young people at risk of suffering from mental health conditions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carried out effectively through a range of extra-curricular opportunities, visits and trips. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders know which groups of pupils are at risk of not making the progress of which they are capable. Leaders work collaboratively to address and overcome identified barriers to pupils' learning. For instance, a focus on the most able pupils since the previous inspection has resulted in better outcomes for this group across a range of subjects. School leaders are not complacent. They know more needs to be done to ensure that some groups of pupils, particularly White British boys, make more substantial progress. Strategies to address this are ongoing. Systems to track individual pupils' progress are meticulous and leadership of this area is particularly strong.
- The governing body are a dedicated and experienced team who share the headteacher's passion for the school. They understand the strengths of the school and are clear about what improvements still need to be made. They fully grasp their statutory responsibilities, particularly in relation to keeping children safe and holding the school to account.
- The majority of pupils arrive at school with levels of attainment that are at least in line with the national average, with many above. Overall, pupils achieve well

across a range of subjects at key stage 4, particularly in science. A larger than average percentage of pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate and many go on to study in the sixth form.

- In 2016, from different starting points, almost three quarters of pupils made progress in line with, or just above, the national average in English and mathematics.
- A whole-school focus on challenging the most able pupils has resulted in improved progress for this group. In 2016, information provided by the school indicates that those pupils with high attainment on entry made more progress than this group nationally in both English and mathematics.
- In 2016, an increase in the number of allocated lessons resulted in improved outcomes for pupils at GCSE in English and literature. Improving literacy is seen as a high priority and a well-stocked library on each school site encourages reading for pleasure. Pupils heard reading during the inspection did so competently and fluently.
- School leaders closely monitor the progress of the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or are on an education, health and care plan. Many make progress in line with the national average.
- Teachers new to the profession are supported effectively. A range of professional development opportunities, including training and one-to-one mentoring, encourage a collaborative and reflective approach to developing new teachers' skills.
- School leaders have rigorously challenged and supported pupils who are persistently absent. Strategies to encourage good attendance have proved very successful. Individual pupils' attendance is monitored carefully and there are celebration events for those who attend regularly. Consequently, attendance overall is now in line with the national average.
- The large and inclusive sixth form is well managed by a team of leaders. They are rightly proud of students' individual achievements to gain competitive university places in the United Kingdom and abroad. Effective information, advice and guidance ensures that students are clear about the courses they have chosen to study. More is being done to ensure that they also have the academic ability to complete these courses successfully. The curriculum offer is wide and students have a range of vocational and academic courses to choose from.
- Progress on 16–19 study programmes, however, is too variable. While improvements have been secured across subjects, students on some academic courses still do not make enough progress.
- Improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils, in particular those who are White British boys, has been a focus for school leaders over a number of years. They are aware of the complex needs of some within this group and strive to provide a learning environment to support and engage these pupils. Pupil premium funding is used to provide additional support and address identified barriers. As a result, disadvantaged pupils overall are now making progress closer to the national average. However, school leaders know that more needs to be done to ensure that this group make more substantial progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- identified groups of pupils, particularly White British boys, make more substantial progress from their starting points
- variation in the progress made across subjects and courses in the sixth form is further minimised.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other senior leaders, and teachers. They met with the chair and vice-chairs of the governing body. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including: information on the progress of current pupils, outcomes from the 2016 examinations, and the single central record. Inspectors discussed the school's evaluation of its own performance and looked at information presented about the context of the school and its community. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the inspection. They visited lessons on the upper school site to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment and heard some pupils read.