

Cobourg Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100782
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	376456
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Dunn

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sylvia Morris DBE
Headteacher	Jacqui Louis
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
School address	Cobourg Road London SE5 0JD
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Dunn

Additional inspector

Patricia Underwood

Additional inspector

David Storrie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed parts of 27 lessons taught by 16 teachers. They held discussions with pupils, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of the school's records and documents, teachers' planning, pupils' work, and 79 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, although few are at the earliest stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school operates its own breakfast and after-school club. The Early Years Foundation Stage is organised into a Nursery and two Reception Year classes. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable staffing changes at all levels. The headteacher took up post in September 2009.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because, despite a few pockets of exceptional pupil progress, the quality of teaching is not high enough to lift pupils' overall achievement above good. Following the previous inspection, the school's performance dipped. A small proportion of satisfactory teaching remains. However, the effective action taken by current leaders means the school is improving well.
- Pupils' progress across all key stages is good in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils typically learn at a brisk pace because teaching is generally good. Teachers' effective questioning helps pupils to make links in their learning. Careful matching of activities to pupils' differing needs ensures all groups achieve well over time, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Some opportunities exist for pupils to apply their basic skills in different subjects, although leaders have correctly identified that this is not consistent enough across the school. They recognise that, beyond literacy and numeracy, development of other subject-specific skills is not always fully systematic.
- There is no consistent pattern to the remaining variability in the quality of teaching and progress. At times, the pace of lessons slows. Teachers' marking is not consistently effective in helping pupils improve their work. Pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) is not always sufficient to tackle unfamiliar words successfully.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Welcoming and courteous, their conduct and mostly positive attitudes make an important contribution to the purposeful atmosphere. Pupils mostly engage well in lessons and this supports their good achievement.
- Under the determined and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, leaders at different levels have a clear sense of direction. Rigorous systems for the leadership of teaching and management of performance are effectively securing improvements, but have not fully eradicated satisfactory teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate remaining satisfactory teaching and progress, and increase the proportion that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring all lessons are conducted at a pace that supports the most effective learning, including shortening the time spent in whole-class teacher-led activities
 - consistently using marking to help advance pupils' learning
 - increasing the rigour of the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics).
- Maximise opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills across the curriculum and subject-specific skills more systematically.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

A large proportion of children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. All sizeable groups of pupils make good progress across the school, as recognised by most parents and carers. Although some minor variability in rates of progress remains, there is no consistently slower progress for any particular group, subject or key stage. Consequently, when comparing pupils' attainment with national averages, the gap is reducing by the end of Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve well. Not only do they engage and learn well in daily lessons, but also timely additional support successfully accelerates their learning where any gaps emerge.

Children learn and develop well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They respond positively to the good balance of opportunities to explore activities they choose for themselves, as well as engaging attentively in adult-led sessions. As a key focus through all activities, children's early language skills develop well, including those of the children who speak English as an additional language. In the rest of the school, boys and girls mostly engage enthusiastically in lessons. They have a good understanding of the next steps they need to take in their learning. Keen to answer the teachers' questions and contribute to discussions, pupils gain a deeper understanding of particular concepts, such as how to solve problems in mathematics. They are particularly enthusiastic when working collaboratively and their effective social skills support this style of learning well. More-able pupils rise to the challenge of reasoning, and explaining their answers. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 3 this led to one pupil suggesting a hypothesis she had made when carrying out an investigation into patterns. The proportion of pupils working above nationally expected levels is rising across the school.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading. They relish the regular opportunities to read, remaining equally focused whether reading independently or with an adult. Over recent years, although the gap with national expectations has narrowed compared to pupils' starting points, attainment in reading has remained just below

average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils develop a range of reading skills to help them tackle unfamiliar words. This includes secure knowledge of the relationship between individual letters and sounds. However, pupils do not always readily look for appropriate ways to blend sounds together to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is mainly good; a view shared by most parents and carers. The strengths outweigh the small amount of teaching that remains satisfactory. Teachers' effective questioning deepens pupils' thinking and helps them make important links in their learning. Meaningful sequences of teaching and learning support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their academic progress well. In a literacy lesson in Year 2, pupils readily recalled the knowledge they had acquired about sloths, and listed extensive technical features they needed to apply when writing a non-chronological report. Pupils are often confident about the next steps they need to take to improve. However, the contribution that teachers' marking makes to this remains variable. Much is helpful in identifying potential improvements. However, in some instances this is not frequent enough. At other times, pupils have not had enough opportunity to follow the teacher's advice in the next piece of work, or by revisiting previous work, so the impact is lost.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the wide-ranging activities support children's development well, particularly in the exciting outdoor area. Positive interactions with adults and each other ensure children are purposeful and productive. Across the school, teaching assistants' proactive support has a good impact on pupils' learning. In a mathematics lesson in Year 5 the teaching assistant's knowledgeable guidance for pupils working on independent tasks enabled the teacher to work with a small focus group who needed additional support. Teachers match tasks well to the needs of different groups in the class. Therefore, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not always reliant on additional support from adults to succeed. At times, the pace of lessons is not brisk enough for pupils to achieve as well as they can. This is especially the case when teachers' input for the whole class lasts too long. Even in good lessons where pupils achieve well, prolonged time on particular activities sometimes prevents groups of pupils learning even more rapidly.

The teaching of reading is effective overall. As well as promoting pupils' enjoyment very well, teaching is matched carefully to pupils' different abilities. Reading sessions explore a range of strategies for tackling unfamiliar words, including use of phonics. However, phonics teaching is not rigorous enough to ensure pupils have a sufficient understanding of how to blend the different sounds in a word together, rather than tackling unfamiliar words letter by letter.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' mostly positive and enthusiastic attitudes to learning make an important contribution to the school's purposeful atmosphere. Polite, welcoming and courteous, pupils respond well to adults' expectations. Children's personal, social and emotional skills develop well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Across the school, positive

relationships in lessons at all levels between pupils and adults support learning well. At times, pupils' behaviour and engagement are exceptional, particularly where teaching is strongest, but this is not a consistent picture. For example, where the pace of teaching slows, lack of engagement by a few pupils slows their learning. That said, disruptions to the whole class are rare. The mostly positive views about behaviour from parents and carers indicate that behaviour is typically good over time.

Pupils feel safe at school. They value 'The Place to Be' that the school has established in partnership with a counsellor, where they can talk through any social or emotional difficulties they may be experiencing. Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying including physical, verbal and cyber bullying. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with well when they do occur. Effective action by leaders has ensured that historically low attendance is rising strongly and is now broadly average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has successfully established a clear and shared vision that focuses strongly on raising standards. Leaders at different levels contribute well to the good and improving quality of teaching and learning. Effective and rigorous systems for the management of performance focus strongly on identifying and securing essential improvements. A broad approach to teachers' professional development includes opportunities for teachers to observe leaders modelling best practice, or planning and teaching lessons together. This has a direct impact, sometimes rapidly improving the quality of teaching, although some variability in the quality of teaching remains. The school has an accurate view of its own performance. Considering this, and the convincing evidence of improving trends in the quality of teaching and achievement, the school is demonstrating the capacity for further improvement.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable and experienced, share the ambition of school leaders, and support the work of the school well. They have a clear sense of purpose and direction and effectively challenge leaders to improve the school's performance. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and actively promotes equality of opportunity. Where gaps in performance between groups emerge, effective action is taken to reduce these. Leaders' increasingly sophisticated analysis of the performance of different groups is supporting the school's drive to eradicate remaining inconsistencies. Safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and pupils' welfare is a high priority.

The proportion of parents and carers that returned the inspection questionnaire was lower than typically seen, but views expressed were mostly positive. The school is exceptionally proactive in building links with parents and carers, including providing numerous workshops and information-sharing events. Leaders at all levels are acutely aware of the benefits strong partnerships can bring. As one parent/carer simply put it, 'Keep it up Cobourg Primary.' This was typical of mainly positive comments.

The broad, balanced curriculum and other opportunities promote pupils' spiritual,

moral, social and cultural development well, including the impressive range of extra-curricular clubs. Pupils' high-quality singing is another significant strength. Often, links between subjects are well established so that pupils can apply their basic literacy and numeracy skills in varying contexts. However, this is not consistent in all classes, and leaders have correctly identified that teachers sometimes miss these opportunities. Furthermore, skills are not always taught systematically enough in all subjects, for example, investigation skills in science.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cobourg Primary School, London SE5 0JD

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and finding out all about how well you are doing. Thank you especially to those who chatted with us, met with us, read to us or answered our questionnaire. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe when you are at school. Your improving attendance also shows this. We could see why. Cobourg Primary is a good school.

You do well at school and make good progress because the quality of teaching is good. Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. You behave well and mostly have good attitudes to your learning. We were particularly impressed by how well you remember things you have learned and use this in other lessons, so that your understanding of different topics really builds over time.

Your headteacher and others responsible for running your school are doing a good job at making things even better for you. To help them with this, we have asked them to do some important things.

- Make teaching even better by always teaching lessons at a brisk pace, not keeping you together as a whole class for too long, using marking to help you move on in your learning more regularly, and making sure phonics teaching gives you all the strategies you need to read.
- Giving you every opportunity to develop your skills in different subjects.

You can all help by making the most of every opportunity you have to use your teachers' marking to improve. Also, keep trying to come to school as often as you can.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Lead inspector

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