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23 June 2014

Jacqui Louis
Headteacher
Cobourg Primary School
Cobourg Road
London
SE5 0JD

Dear Ms Louis

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Cobourg Primary School

Following the visit which involved John Kennedy (day one), myself (Joanna Beckford-Hall: day two) and Russell Bennett, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Jeremy Loukes, seconded inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the leadership and management, at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff, a representative from the local authority and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. On the second day of the inspection, the lead inspector also made a further telephone call to the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors reviewed documents including the governing body minutes, behaviour and accident logs, and the school's self-evaluation. Inspectors reviewed 47 responses from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire, spoke informally to parents and carers at the school gate and reviewed the 16 responses to the online survey Parent View. Inspectors talked to pupils formally in meetings and informally at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors made short visits to lessons and the lead inspector conducted her visits jointly with the headteacher.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements.

The quality of leadership and management requires improvement.

Context

Cobourg Primary School is a larger-than-average-sized primary with high pupil mobility. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above that found nationally, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided in this school for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is higher than found nationally. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and the proportion of pupils who receive extra support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are below the national average.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have a good understanding of the potential dangers of the internet and they know how to report any concerns. They know the difference between communicating safely with people they know from real life and the dangers in meeting new people online. Pupils confirm that assemblies about topical issues, such as cyber-bullying, help them understand why this causes harm to pupils' self-esteem and can be frightening for pupils. Pupils say the school has a strict policy for handing in their mobile phones and this prevents any issues during the school day. Pupils understand that the school does not tolerate discriminatory racist or homophobic language.

Pupils feel well looked after. They really value the provision called 'A Place to Be', where they can go and talk to a trained member of staff who offers support for any issues troubling them.

In the playground, there is a good range of practical equipment to engage pupils, and there is space for pupils to sit and talk. Inspectors watched pupils in Key Stage 1 playing skipping, playing handball and chatting in friendship groups. Key Stage 2 pupils playing volleyball were demanding of their teammates with good competitive spirit. High staff presence at break and lunchtimes ensures good supervision of behaviour and the rota system helps pupil to take turns with the play equipment. Pupils say they feel safe in the outdoor play area because the gates are secure with a buzzer entry system and all visitors wear badges.

Pupils from the School Council told inspectors that poor behaviour interrupts some lessons. Inspectors visited classes to see for themselves what behaviour is like in classes. They found that most pupils behave well and remain focused on their learning. Inspectors observed a few instances when pupils were not concentrating because the work was either difficult or too easy. Teachers and classroom assistants intervene quickly to make sure all pupils work well on the task in hand. There is no wilful disruption to lessons.

Around the classrooms and corridors, the behaviour policy reminds pupils of high expectations and the warning system is clear, escalating as a last resort to detentions. Pupils work with leaders to improve behaviour and there is a culture of pupils working hard to ensure their name does not appear in the 'red book', the log book recording incidents of poor behaviour. A few pupils expressed concern that, while rare, a small minority of pupils run up and down the stairs and between classrooms. Pupils say they are bumped into or pushed, which makes them annoyed because most pupils uphold the expected standard of behaviour for their school. Leaders have successfully reduced the previously high rate of persistent absence at the school and attendance is much improved this year.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management require improvement for two key reasons. Risk assessments to keep children safe from the misuse of video-recorded footage from CCTV cameras, notably cameras in pupils' toilets, are not in place. Leaders did not consult with governors or parents and carers before cameras were installed in places that pose a risk to pupils' safety. Governance requires improvement because governors are not working tightly enough with leaders to make certain that all decisions about safeguarding children are firmly linked to risk assessments, policies and rigorous evaluation. Governors are not robust enough in asking pertinent questions about the impact of teaching over time on pupils' achievement and assessing how well different groups of pupils are performing. Governors receive information from the headteacher about the school's self-assessment and school development plan. Governors' role in setting strategic priorities and assessing the quality of education provided by the school using the Ofsted framework is under-developed.

The 'red book' records any incident of behaviour that falls below the standards expected at the school. While leaders monitor this book, any patterns or trends are not discussed well enough with governors. Not all leaders and governors are strategic in using data to analyse patterns in behaviour incidents, attendance, exclusions and pupils' progress. There is a lack of detailed reporting and debate between governors and leaders. Recent governing body minutes show that governors have begun to ask more questions about pupils' progress. They are starting to compare pupils' performance with expectations nationally, but this is not divided well enough by pupil groups. The logbook that records accidents and subsequent communication with parents and carers is not rigorous enough. There is

inconsistent practice in recording follow-up calls and action when voicemails are left for parents and carers who are unavailable.

The school's checks to ensure suitability of adults to work with children meet statutory requirements. Staff receive annual safeguarding training. New staff who join during the school year receive safeguarding advice and guidance as part of their induction. The designated child protection officers attend appropriate refresher training, and designated governors and leaders attend safer recruitment training. The school sustains links with the local authority safeguarding team. Leaders ensure that they know how to refer any concerns. The child protection policy does not include sufficient detail about the safe usage of CCTV cameras, nor policy and advice to parents and carers concerning data protection and freedom of information practice.

The headteacher and her senior team lead teaching well at the school. Staff told inspectors they are pleased with the professional training and the good level of support to develop their planning and teaching. Most staff feel their voice is heard and ideas respected. The headteacher has guided the staff through a very demanding period for the school. Her steely determination to raise staff morale and protect her staff is to be commended.

The views of parents and carers confirm that there is good communication from the headteacher and her senior leaders. The views in 47 completed questionnaires, and the views of almost all parents and carers who spoke with inspectors, agree that their children are making good progress. Most agree that the headteacher leads the school well. The views on Parent View present a more mixed picture. However, what is clear, is that the headteacher offers an open-door policy for parents and carers, and for staff, to meet with her and share their views.

External support

The local authority has supported the school well during a very difficult period for staff and leaders. Senior leaders and improvement advisers from the local authority have ensured that the headteacher, her staff and governors have had support for their welfare and good legal advice. The school's designated officers for child protection have suitable links with external agencies to ensure that concerns are referred appropriately.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - risk assessments, policies and procedures surrounding the use of CCTV cameras are put in place immediately and demonstrate that leaders and governors check and record regularly that a system for

secure storage and deletion of footage is routinely used and is secure from misuse

- governors develop robust practice for evaluating the impact of all policies and practices relating to safeguarding of children and ensure greater discussion of this between leaders and governors
- governors are more robust in monitoring and asking more pertinent questions about the impact of teaching over time on the performance of pupil groups, attendance, fixed-term and permanent exclusions and behavioural incidents by pupil groups.

I am copying this letter to Gurjeet Marway, the Chair of the Governing Body; the Director of Children's Services for Southwark; and the Secretary of State for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector