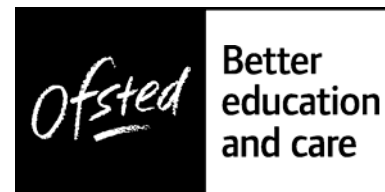


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Ms J Evans  
Headteacher  
Cobourg Primary School  
Cobourg Road  
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London  
SE5 0JD

Dear Ms Evans

### **Implementation of Cobourg Primary School's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Julie Ward HMI, Louise Soden HMI and Kekshan Salaria HMI to your school on 29 and 30 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school's revised action plan is satisfactory overall.

The school has made reasonable progress since the previous monitoring inspection and reasonable progress since being subject to special measures.

The LEA's target date of summer 2006 for the removal of special measures is now realistic.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for Southwark. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF COBOURG PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN**

### Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 24 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and two assemblies were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors, the subject managers for English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and Early Years and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher and representatives from the governors and the LEA.

The pupils' levels of attainment in the end-of Key Stage 1 tests for 2005 were below those attained nationally but there has been improvement in all subjects. Seventy eight per cent of the pupils attained Level 2 or above in reading compared with 60 per cent in 2004, 73 per cent in writing and 95 per cent in mathematics compared to 58 per cent and 80 per cent respectively in 2004. At the end of Key Stage 2, the results have dipped, particularly in English and the gap between the pupils' skills in reading and writing has widened. Fifty one per cent of the pupils attained Level 4 or above in English compared with 68 per cent in 2004. Pupils' reading levels, at 80 per cent, were considerably higher than the 68 per cent in 2004, but attainment in writing at 22 per cent was much lower than the 43 per cent attained in 2004. Fifty one per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or above in mathematics and 70 per cent in science; these are similar to the 53 per cent and 70 per cent attained in the subjects in 2004.

Standards in half of the lessons seen were generally at average or just below average levels when compared to the national figures. These lessons were all in mathematics, science and ICT. The pupils' knowledge and understanding in science is generally sound; for example, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 had a secure grasp of fair testing and could discuss changing variables with confidence and understanding. Some good examples of pupils investigating methods of recording findings systematically in mathematics was observed. The higher attaining Key Stage 2 pupils could make a creditable attempt at explaining the methods they used and the conclusions they came to. However, standards in literacy lessons continue to be low or very low, and despite much input to improve pupils' written skills, writing, spelling and recording skills throughout the school remain below average.

Pupils' workbooks continue to improve in the quality of the work and in the amount of work completed satisfactorily; there are far fewer classes where this is not the norm. The quality and quantity of the pupils' work is clearly linked to the teachers' expectations, and there remain some poorly maintained workbooks by a small number of pupils in a few classes.

In 21 of the 24 lessons observed, the teaching was satisfactory or better; it was good in seven lessons and very good in one. This represents a significant improvement since the last monitoring visit. Overall, the majority of teachers are demonstrating a marked degree of confidence in organising and structuring their lessons and there continues to be consistent coverage in the taught curriculum across year groups and throughout the school. Almost all classrooms are organised well to support the pupils' independent learning. In the good and better lessons the teachers are using well-focused questioning to challenge the pupils' thinking, encouraging them to articulate their answers, explain the strategies they used to solve problems and contribute confidently in whole-class and group sessions.

Some exciting teaching was observed when pupils in a Year 4 class built river beds, and investigated what happened when water ran through the channels gently and then more forcefully. The pupils' levels of understanding and accurate use of key words to describe their results was good. In good ICT, science and literacy lessons in Years 4, 5 and 6 the teachers made effective use of ongoing assessment to track the progress the pupils made during the lessons, and the older pupils were being taught how to assess their own learning. Most teachers use 'talking partners' well as a strategy for encouraging pupils to discuss their work in pairs. They also made good links between subjects and included speaking and listening tasks as part of all lessons. The teachers' planning is generally consistent across year groups, and most of it identifies specific technical vocabulary the pupils should be learning and using. However, in two lessons where the strengths and weaknesses were finely balanced, and in the unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers failed to use the plans fully, especially in the concluding plenary sessions, to assess pupils' learning and move them on further. There are some teachers who have difficulty in maintaining an acceptable learning environment during the whole lesson; in these lessons the group work was not managed effectively. In two lessons, the pace was slowed due to over-long carpet sessions, which meant the pupils lost interest and concentration before moving on to their tasks.

The team planning ensures the content of the curriculum is consistently covered for all pupils. The quality of the delivery by the teachers varies. In some lessons, where the teaching was satisfactory overall, there were some weaknesses in general organisation which slowed the pace of the lessons, whereas a parallel class working to the same plan was taught well. For example, in one Year 5 and 6 science lesson there was much that was sound about the teaching, including good expectations and the consistent use of an expanded and technical vocabulary. However, the organisation of the lesson was not crisp, causing the pace of learning to slow. Resources were not readily available and the pupils were briefed table by table. There was no indication of how they should record what they had observed. In the other Year 5 and 6 class, the same experiment was carefully contextualised into a pertinent situation, which made links with other areas of the curriculum.

The effective deployment of the teaching assistants varies considerably; in the majority of classes teaching assistants are used well. In the best examples, the teaching assistants had a key role to play in the pupils' learning, were well briefed

and responded to the pupils' input positively; praise and affirmation were used well to encourage the pupils to participate. Effective modelling by the teaching assistant in two lessons helped the pupils to build on previous skills learnt. In a minority of classes, the teaching assistants are not well deployed, for example, they had no role in during introductory or plenary sessions.

The quality of the pupils' learning and the rate of progress they made was directly related to the quality of the teaching. Pupils are making sound to good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. For example, in the reception class the pupils made sound progress with using ICT. Most were able to change the font and size of text with a minimum of adult intervention. Pupils in the nursery made good progress recognising letters and sounds and linking them to a number of animals selected from a basket. The pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is more patchy; good progress was made in an ICT lesson when pupils used their science work and observational drawings of plants to reproduce them using a 'colour magic' program. Pupils in one Key Stage 1 class are making unsatisfactory progress overall; this is due to the slow pace and lack of challenge of the tasks set, especially for the higher attaining pupils. Sound to good progress was being made by pupils throughout Key Stage 2. Good progress was made by pupils in a number of lessons; for example, in literacy when they tested a number of fruits and collated a range of words to describe their smell, taste and texture; they then had to present a persuasive argument to sell their fruit as the 'best buy.' When pupils make insufficient progress it is due to the low expectations the teachers have of them, and a lack of urgency to complete tasks well, or at all. Some pupils, spend too much time completing low-level tasks rather than learning.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall; they was sound in ten lessons, good in eight and very good in four. The pupils in the nursery and reception classes are clear about routines and expectations. The relationships between the youngest pupils are positive and warm. The pupils' approach in the older Key Stage 2 classes was particularly good; they were welcoming and courteous to visitors, listened attentively and asked thoughtful questions. During the group work, the pupils worked together co-operatively and maintained their concentration and interest. When the teacher called the class together their response was instant. In some lessons, the content of the lesson and the quality of the teaching made a good contribution to the pupil's social development. For example, in a well-taught Year 4 English lesson the teacher approached the text sensitively, asking the pupils to empathise with the boy's situation. When appropriate, the teacher asked the pupils to make connections with their own experience. Despite a small number of lessons being very dull, the pupils made every effort to concentrate and follow their teacher's instructions. When working in groups and pairs, the pupils co-operated well and shared equipment sensibly. The teachers generally managed the pupils well and followed the school's code of conduct consistently.

The school environment is welcoming, clean and bright. There are good quality displays of pupils' work in corridors, hall and classrooms. For example, during

science week, a visit to Lavender pond by a Year 4 class had inspired the pupils to record their findings in Venn and Carroll diagrams. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 also recorded their visit to Creekside Education Centre through digital photography. Cultures and languages at Cobourg School are highlighted and celebrated through displays which outline language facts and focus on greetings for the week. Authors and visiting speakers to the school have collaborated with pupils on projects which emphasise cross-curricular work and themes such as the 'Boing Boing the Bionic Cat'. High quality art work and three-dimensional models have contributed to considerable improvements in the ethos of the school over the last year.

The headteacher is providing clear educational direction for the school. The guidance and support for all the staff is good and some teachers have been given intensive coaching to help them improve the quality of their teaching. The headteacher is leading and managing the school effectively and has gained the confidence of the staff, parents, governors and pupils. The headteacher's reports and evaluations of the school's progress are well organised and accurate. The senior managers have made sound or good progress in developing their roles, and some are demonstrating confidence in supporting colleagues, leading in-service training and gaining a clear overview of their subjects throughout the school. Good opportunities have been provided for them to monitor their subjects through teachers' planning and sometimes observing the quality of the teaching.

The governors are working effectively as full and active members of a team. They have successfully recruited to all the vacancies on the governing body. The recently appointed chair has a secure understanding of the role of the governors in monitoring the progress the school is making, and meetings are chaired and minuted efficiently. The headteacher keeps the governors well informed.

The LEA has continued to provide a high level of support and guidance for the subject leaders for literacy and mathematics, and some coaching for those teachers struggling to teach satisfactory lessons. The LEA link adviser works closely with the school to adjust and amend the support needed as the school makes progress. The senior adviser has provided very good guidance to the headteacher in how to establish strong monitoring and evaluation systems.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: raise standards for all pupils, giving priority to the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics**

Standards are improving, albeit slowly. In the lessons observed and the pupils' work the greatest improvements have been in mathematics and science, and in ICT. There remains much to do to ensure the improvements are incremental and sustainable, especially throughout Key Stage 2.

Progress is reasonable in raising standards in lessons; it is limited in the overall improvement in raising attainment by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress in raising

standards in English and mathematics and throughout the Foundation Stage is reasonable overall.

## **2: improve the leadership and management, ensuring clear direction, effective monitoring and rigorous self-evaluation, and increase the pace of change**

The pace of improvement has speeded up and the recently appointed headteacher provides clarity of educational direction. The subject managers are developing their roles well and the governors are working effectively and actively as a team. The governors are ably led by the recently appointed chair. The headteacher's self-evaluation of the progress made and the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of the teaching and learning is accurate; monitoring is rigorous

Progress has been reasonable.

## **3: improve the quality of teaching and learning, and establish effective assessment procedures**

The quality of the teaching and learning has significantly improved and the school is very close to achieving the targets set for end of this term of 90 per cent satisfactory and better and 40 per cent good. One third of the teaching seen was good or very good; there were no well-taught lessons observed on the first visit.

The assessment tracking is in place and informing the teachers of the progress individual and groups of pupils are making. The teachers are able to level the pupils' work with greater accuracy. The pupils have been set targets for improvement but the target-setting process is at a very early stage of development.

Progress has been reasonable.

## **4: improve pupils' attendance and punctuality**

Good progress has been made in this area.

The school has worked hard to raise the profile of attendance. Realistic targets have been set, displays promote class attendance and weekly assemblies celebrate and recognise individual pupil and classes achieving full weekly attendance. This has helped to emphasise its importance to the pupils. The school produces monthly reports, which highlight levels of attendance in each class. Effective systems for managing attendance and punctuality are in place and the school is swift to follow up absence. At the time of the inspection, the figure for attendance was 91.2 per cent. This is below the national figure of 94.5 per cent.