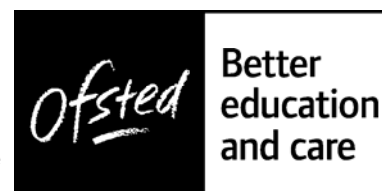


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15 December 2005

Mrs Julie Evans  
The Headteacher  
Cobourg Primary School  
Cobourg Road  
London  
SE5 0JD

Dear Mrs Evans

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF COBOURG PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Sean O'Toole to your school on 7 and 8 December 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the managers of the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics, the co-ordinator for special educational needs, pupils from the school council, parents, the chair of governors, and representatives from the LEA. All class teachers and the teacher supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language were observed teaching.

### **Context**

Since the second monitoring visit in June 2005, the school has appointed a substantive deputy headteacher, a co-ordinator for Creative Arts and a Key Stage 1 teacher to fill a vacancy.

## **Achievement and standards**

Achievement is satisfactory and test results indicate steady improvement since 2003. Standards remain below average and are especially low in writing. However, pupils in Year 4 achieve well and standards are close to average because of effective teaching. Senior staff have worked with some success to establish consistency between classes by introducing useful systems to track pupils' progress and improve teaching. As a result, pupils now generally make satisfactory progress. The school's focus on improving reading has worked well and a positive start has been made on raising standards in writing. Nevertheless, pupils' books often show untidy and poorly presented work which does little to promote high standards.

Children in the Foundation Stage make a solid start. Their progress is satisfactory overall and good in personal, social and emotional development. More able children in the reception class achieve well in their early reading and writing skills. However, few children attain the expected goals for their learning by the end of the reception year. In Year 1, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in using sounds to build words. At the end of Year 2, almost two thirds of pupils attain average standards in reading and mathematics and just less than half do so in writing. These proportions have almost doubled in the last two years. At this age, girls are much more successful than boys.

Through consistent teaching of basic skills, progress is accelerating and is now satisfactory for boys and girls in Years 4 to 6, but unsatisfactory in Year 3. Overall attainment in tests in Year 6 in 2005 was similar to 2004 in mathematics and science but dipped in English. Given these pupils' low level of performance when they were in Year 2 their progress was satisfactory. Throughout the school, there is little variation in the performance of pupils from different backgrounds although more able pupils should do better, especially in English and mathematics. Older pupils consider that they have improved in the last two years commenting that, 'We work much harder than before and the teachers are really helping us to improve.'

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the previous inspection:

- Raise standards for all pupils, giving priority to the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics – satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

Pupils are polite and friendly and their personal development is good. They are eager and vociferous ambassadors for the school and comment very favourably on the improvements made in the last two years. They feel that they have a part to play and are proud to act as school councillors and playground friends. Pupils recognise that the staff are interested in them as individuals and that their views are listened to. Parents keenly supported these views and spoke highly of the impact of senior staff on promoting upbeat attitudes and good behaviour.

Pupils say they like school. Attendance continues to improve and is now close to the national average. However, too many pupils arrive late for school. They enjoy receiving certificates for good attendance, behaviour and their achievements. The pupils get on well together and show respect for their teachers. They know about the different languages, cultures and beliefs found in the school and there is a sense of racial harmony and tolerance. Boys and girls feel safe and secure and say that incidents of rough play and bullying are now rare. One girl said, 'The headteacher makes sure that bad things don't happen.'

Improvements in literacy and numeracy and opportunities in some classes to assess their own work are adequately preparing pupils for adult life. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and have petitioned the school meals provider to improve choice. They appreciate the breakfast and after-school clubs but would like a wider choice of other activities.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the previous inspection:

- Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality – good progress on attendance but inadequate progress on punctuality

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of education is satisfactory overall with several good features. The proportion of satisfactory and better teaching has remained similar to the previous visit. However, several of the satisfactory lessons had good features. For example, teachers use effective ways to engage the pupils in their learning; much more active learning was seen on this visit where pupils worked in pairs and groups to complete tasks and report their findings back to the class. The teachers plan together in appropriate detail, use resources effectively and organise their classrooms well. They are beginning to make day-to-day assessments of pupils' progress in lessons and adjust their plans accordingly. The learning environment in the classrooms and around the school is developing well and teachers are using displays of pupils' work to enhance the corridors and classroom walls. In the best lessons, the teachers use pupils' work to model objectives and to set high expectations. These lessons are lively and the pupils are provided with challenging and interesting tasks. For example, in two very well taught Year 4 literacy lessons, the teachers used the switches made in a science lesson to develop the pupils' use and understanding of how to compare and contrast them. The pupils found this a very meaningful way of learning a new concept.

In the majority of lessons some of the above strengths were seen, but not all of the tasks were well matched to the individual pupil's needs. This was very evident in the two inadequate lessons where the pace was too slow, resulting in a lack of urgency by pupils to complete work to an acceptable standard.

In the Foundation Stage, careful records are kept of pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals, with good use made of incidental opportunities to assess pupils' skills as they play. The transition to Key Stage 1 is being managed within the Foundation Stage Unit, with assessments made against the Early Learning Goals or

National Curriculum levels as appropriate. The school has introduced 'P' levels which is an appropriate initiative to enable teachers to track small steps of progress. In the rest of the school there are assessment systems in place to track progress in the core subjects. Information from these assessments is used to identify gaps in coverage, and the programme of work is revised to make sure that these gaps are addressed. There are some good individual programmes set for the pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities which are proving particularly effective in raising the pupils' fluency in reading. Assessment data is not used well enough to pinpoint work for different abilities. Samples of writing are being assessed against detailed criteria related to National Curriculum levels and in most classes pupils have clear targets to improve their writing.

In most cases the teachers deploy the teaching assistants well, but this is not yet consistent practice. In the best lessons, the teaching assistants make notes of pupils' responses during introductions and concluding plenary sessions, and have a clear brief about their role when working with a group.

Useful work has gone into planning and writing the curriculum, determining school policies, providing in-service training for teachers and establishing a number of effective monitoring procedures. There are appropriate plans to develop the curriculum further, particularly through monitoring the teachers' plans and scrutinising pupils' work.

The quality of personal care and support is satisfactory. Procedures to improve attendance and provide a healthy and safe environment are effective. Parents express much confidence in the staff. They are confident that their children are well cared for and that the school takes decisive and speedy action when problems such as bullying arise. One parent with several children, who had been unhappy in their previous schools said, 'it's done my children a power of good to come to a school where teachers listen to them.' Staff encourage good behaviour and relationships but miss opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development, self esteem, sense of community and pleasure through assemblies, for example, by using music more widely.

Pupils say that their teachers help them if they are worried or struggling with their work. In most lessons they feel confident to ask if they do not understand anything. Not all pupils have specific and constructive targets to help them improve. Marking is highly effective in Year 4 and accurate elsewhere but it is especially weak in one Year 3 class. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from good opportunities to be involved in analysing their own work.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2004:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, and establish effective assessment procedures – satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

The collective leadership and management of the school is satisfactory with several strengths. The headteacher has effectively led the staff in implementing the action plan at a steady rate. She is successfully developing a team of teaching and support staff who are committed to the school's further improvement, including a sharper focus on pupils' learning and achievement. Her self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for development, and sets the correct priorities for further improvement. The deputy headteacher is an able teacher and a good role model for training all the staff in how to help pupils to learn. There are clear indications that some teachers have improved the quality of their lessons following a programme of support and guidance from senior and subject managers. However, there is room for setting tighter, more focused targets for improvement for those teachers who are not making the necessary improvements in their teaching. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has an accurate overview of individual and specific needs and is providing helpful guidance to the teachers in how best to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in the classroom.

The governors are effectively led by an able and well informed chair who works closely with the headteacher to assess the improvement being made. Governors are increasingly involved in the school and are looking for further ways to involve the parents.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2004:

- improve the leadership and management, ensuring clear direction, effective monitoring and rigorous self-evaluation, and increase the pace of change – satisfactory progress

### **External support**

The LEA's link adviser and senior adviser have continued to provide a good level of guidance on a number of aspects, particularly in ensuring how to assess accurately the progress being made and establishing the next steps for further improvement. However, the school's position in sustaining the improvements is still fragile, and the senior adviser's role in monitoring and evaluating the ongoing improvement remains essential.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- focus on using the information from assessments to ensure the progress the pupils make is tracked and underachievement eliminated

- continue to improve the quality of the teaching to that of the best, and eliminate unsatisfactory teaching

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Ward  
**H M Inspector**