



Cobourg Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100782
LEA Southwark LEA
Inspection number 284133
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Juliet Ward

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cobourg Road
School category	Community		London
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		SE5 0JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7703 2583
Number on roll	289	Fax number	020 7708 0756
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Fred Sharrock
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2004	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Evans

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

When Cobourg Primary School was inspected in June 2004, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2006.

Description of the school

Cobourg Primary School serves a community with significant social and economic disadvantage. There is a high mobility amongst pupils and their families. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low, particularly in language and communication skills. Forty-six per cent receive free school meals which is much higher than average. Just over half has English as an additional language and a quarter has learning difficulties; these proportions are well above national averages.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school accurately evaluates itself as satisfactory. Well-focused leadership has brought steady improvement. Teaching is much more consistent. As one boy said, 'The teaching used to be wobbly but now it's much better.' Standards remain below average in English and mathematics but are rising. There is a clear sense that senior staff and governors know the next steps needed to improve.

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features and compensates for the legacy of underachievement at the school. Teachers regularly assess pupils but do not use the information effectively enough to set challenging work for the more able. Target setting is clearly defined in some year groups but lacks a sharp edge in others. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and the children achieve well. Pupils make steady progress in Years 1 to 3. Progress accelerates in Year 4 because of high calibre teaching. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 build on this platform effectively.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are proud of their contribution to the school's recent success. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The able headteacher and deputy have successfully improved teaching and standards. Other leaders show good commitment to improvement but their impact on forging links between subjects is underdeveloped. Improvement since the previous inspection and capacity to improve are good. Effective monitoring of teaching and improving pupils' attitudes have provided the springboard for further success. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Raise standards in English and mathematics especially for the more able * Improve some important aspects of teaching by setting clearer targets and using assessment to pinpoint the next steps in learning* Improve the leadership of subjects by focusing on developing links between subjects

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although results in national tests in English and mathematics are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 there has been steady and sustained improvement in the last two years and achievement is satisfactory. The momentum of rising results is because of effective strategies to eradicate underachievement. As pupils buoyantly said, 'The teachers expect much more of us now and help us to do well.' The school is on course to meet its challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. There is little variation in the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Girls are more successful than boys in Years 1 and 2 but this variation in performance is ironed out by the end of Year 6.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start, grow in confidence and achieve well although few attain the expected goals by the end of reception. Solid groundwork in Years 1 to 3 reinforces pupils' basic skills and in Year 4 progress accelerates because of highly effective teaching. Boys and girls in Years 5 and 6 now make good progress although there remain some gaps in their knowledge and understanding due to the legacy of underachievement. Well-focused initiatives such as 'The Big Write' are paying dividends, although more remains to be done to lift the performance of the more able. Spelling, handwriting and presentation are improving but pupils do not yet use these skills effectively in subjects other than English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are effective ambassadors for their school. Their upbeat and friendly attitudes contribute much to making Cobourg a happy and purposeful school, where good behaviour is the norm. Bullying, racism and rough play are extremely rare and pupils say they feel safe. One girl said, 'We respect and learn from each other.' Constructive attitudes underpin pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show a genuine interest in others' traditions and languages. Their knowledgeable answers in an assembly about Jacob showed how well they listen and their enthusiasm bubbled over as they sang songs for 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.'

Pupils enjoy coming to school and comment favourably on the way that teachers make learning interesting. Although below average, attendance is rising and incidents of lateness have been substantially reduced because of the vigilance of senior staff. Pupils recognise that the teachers listen to them. School councillors represent their peers very well. Although they are pleased with some aspects of the school's move towards healthy eating they would like increased opportunities for sport and extra curricular activities to help them improve their physical well-being. Pupils are satisfactorily aware of the contribution they make to society and involve themselves in fund raising for charities. Their improved skills in English, mathematics and ICT equip them adequately for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good and occasionally outstanding features. In English and mathematics, teachers plan and prepare lessons thoroughly. Teaching assistants are briefed well and take a full part in supporting learning. Boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds are given good support. They set about tasks with relish and love to participate in discussions especially with their 'talking partners.' In Year 4, the teacher posed challenging questions, which provoked thoughtful responses and stimulated the pupils' ideas. In this outstanding lesson the teacher made exceptional use of the closing session to assess pupils' understanding.

Team teaching in Years 5 and 6 works well as the adults bounce ideas off each other and this encourages pupils to join in. Staff put a good emphasis on extending pupils' mathematical vocabulary to help them to analyse questions. Marking is satisfactory and in the best instances pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve. Although different work is planned for pupils it is not always challenging enough for the more able. This is because assessment in some year groups is not rigorous enough. Learning in history, geography and religious education is rather slow because there is an overuse of worksheets, which does not extend the pupils' thinking and writing skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. All subjects are taught but the school's strong focus on raising achievement in basic skills has hampered the development of a rich and vibrant curriculum. Links between subjects are underdeveloped and pupils have insufficient opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills to support their work in some subjects. Pupils say they enjoy practical work but would like more extra curricular activities especially for sport. Those with learning difficulties are supported effectively through well crafted individual education plans. Those at an early stage of learning English also receive good support; a Polish pupil said how much she had been helped by the teaching assistant working with her.

There is a good focus on pupils' personal, social and emotional development through lessons and circle times when pupils discuss their concerns. Adequate teaching about relationships is supported through the D-Side visit which teaches pupils about the dangers and benefits of drugs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of personal care is good. Procedures to improve attendance and punctuality are effective. There are robust procedures for child protection and the school ensures the safety of pupils through rigorous risk assessments and by following all statutory guidance when appointing staff. Parents are pleased with the way in which staff care for their children and acknowledge that measures to deal with unhappiness or difficult behaviour are extremely effective. One parent said, 'My daughter was very unhappy at another school but she loves coming here because the staff care about her.'

There have been good improvements in tracking pupils' personal and academic progress resulting in improved target setting. However, these measures are not used consistently throughout the school. The school has good links with other agencies and draws on advice when needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with several strengths. The good headteacher, ably supported by the deputy, skilfully assesses the staff's strengths and weaknesses and follows up on suggestions through a robust system of performance management. Staff morale is high because all are valued and given opportunities to use their initiative. One success has been the reorganisation of classes in Year 4 to make the best use of high calibre teaching.

Senior staff, supported by a strong governing body, have regularly updated and accurately evaluated the school's performance. They take good note of suggestions from parents and pupils. Parents say that the staff are approachable and comment very favourably about improvements made in the last year. Governors call the school to account and have robust systems to check on performance. Long-term plans clearly indicate the way ahead. Targets are carefully crafted and regularly reviewed.

There is no sense of complacency but an ambition to help all pupils succeed. There is good capacity to build on recent success. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively; standards are rising and the quality of teaching is much better. Senior staff reflect on challenges and respond quickly and effectively to suggestions. Their positive approach has empowered others to develop initiatives. Subject leaders are enthusiastic but they are at an early stage in developing links between subjects to enhance pupils' learning in English and mathematics.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed working with you very much, especially having lunch with you and looking at your work. It was delightful to see how your school has improved in the last two years and you have played a very important part in making it a better place to learn. Many of you said how much you enjoy school and like your teachers. Several of you commented that lessons were much more interesting than they used to be because your teachers make learning fun. We can see how true that is and were very pleased to see how much you now enjoy writing because of 'The Big Write'.

We think that your school gives you a sound education and that things are getting better. Here are some of the highlights.:) You are good at listening to your teachers and sharing your ideas.:) You work hard, are well behaved and try to do your best.:) Your teachers really care about you and want you to succeed.:) The headteacher has helped your teachers to become more effective.

There are some things which would help to make the school even better.andgt; Your work in English and mathematics could be improved.andgt; The teachers need to set more difficult work for some of you.andgt; You need to have more experiences in subjects like history and geography. Mr O'Toole and I wish you every success in the future.

Mrs J Ward

HM Inspector