

John F Kennedy Special School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	102791
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	376768
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Stuart Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Collier
Headteacher	Diane Rochford
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 October 2008
School address	Pitchford Street London E15 4RZ
Telephone number	020 8534 8544
Fax number	020 8555 3530
Email address	stratford@johnfkennedy.newham.sch.uk

Age group	4–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Stuart Charlton

Additional inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Sixteen lessons were visited and all 15 teachers seen, amounting to over nine hours of classroom observation. The majority of these lessons were joint observations undertaken with senior staff. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the work of the school and looked at documentation such as the school improvement plan, assessment information, students' records and work, statements and annual reviews, as well as school policies. Sixteen questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and also those from 54 of the staff. Five students completed their questionnaires.

Information about the school

The John F Kennedy School is a larger-than-average special school, providing for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs mainly related to severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders. In addition, many learners have complex medical needs and the complexity of these needs is increasing. The majority of pupils come from a range of ethnic groups, the largest being from Asian and Black African family backgrounds. There are a large number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. At the time of the inspection, there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, nor have there been any since the previous inspection. The school operates on two sites, Stratford, for pupils aged 4–16, and Beckton, which provides exclusively for sixth form students, nearly two thirds of whom come directly from other schools in the borough. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and has made significant changes to the senior management team and to staffing.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- John F Kennedy is a good school. There has been systematic and very rapid improvement, particularly in the main school (Stratford site), since the appointment of the new headteacher. It is not yet outstanding because not all teaching is of the very highest quality, especially in the sixth form (Beckton site), and because data are not always used to best effect to check how well pupils are performing in comparison with those in similar schools.
- Overall, pupils achieve well. The significant improvements in teaching in the main school in particular ensure that an increasing proportion of pupils make outstanding progress from their very low starting points. The sixth form is good and students progress well, although the proportion of students making outstanding progress is lower.
- Teaching is good because in the large majority of lessons, teachers provide pupils with activities that engage their interest and develop pupils' communication skills extremely well. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately, and pupils know what they need to do to improve. In a small minority of lessons, more often in the sixth form, teachers do not always match tasks and teaching approaches closely enough to the wide range of pupils' needs.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils make exceptional improvements in developing their personal skills and behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are confident that staff will listen to them whatever their concerns and they feel extremely safe and secure in school. They develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy school and they support each other well.
- The school is very well led and teachers' performance is managed effectively. The strong leadership team ensures there is a sustained focus on improving classroom practice and outcomes for pupils. The highly effective way in which the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in its success.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2012, ensure that data are used to best effect to check how well pupils are performing compared with pupils in similar schools nationally.
- Ensure that by September 2013, all teachers, particularly in the sixth form, match tasks and teaching approaches more closely to the needs of individual pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The significant improvements in teaching and learning since the appointment of the new headteacher have ensured that the proportion of pupils in the main school who make excellent progress has increased rapidly. Developments in the sixth form have been slower and here, although students' progress is good overall, fewer make outstanding progress. Almost all pupils develop their understanding, knowledge and skills well, although, because of their extremely low starting points, attainment remains low. Pupils respond well to the challenging targets set for them and overall, they achieve well irrespective of their disabilities, special educational needs, gender or ethnic origin.

The overwhelming majority of pupils use pictorial strategies and signing to communicate, and all are at the early stages of learning English. In the main school, they apply these skills and their numeracy and personal skills very well across different areas of learning. From Year 3, pupils begin to learn how to use pictures to communicate. They learn to recognise numbers and begin to develop some basic number concepts. Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their skills in communication and they learn to express their views effectively. By the end of Key Stage 4, many have the confidence to attempt to communicate for a range of purposes using different support systems and prompts. Their developing skills in numeracy, including applying basic rules of number, are used to advantage in different contexts in lessons.

When students enter the sixth form, they make good progress in developing their basic skills in communication and numeracy in more vocational and work-related activities. By the time they leave the school, all students gain a good range of national accreditation including ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and Skills for Life, and, as a result, nearly all move on successfully to the next stage of their education.

Parents and carers report that they are very pleased with the progress their children make across the school and their view is consistent with the inspection findings that all pupils make at least good progress.

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Quality of teaching

Teachers carefully assess pupils when they join the school. Linked to good curriculum plans for different levels of learning this ensures that activities are mostly effectively matched to pupils' needs. All staff have good subject knowledge, relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and pupils receive appropriately high levels of effective support. The work of support staff is integral to the success pupils achieve. Staff use praise and rewards very effectively to build pupils' self-esteem and to give them the confidence to try new things, contributing extremely well to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers make effective use of signing and pictorial strategies to improve pupils' communication skills. Records of pupils' progress, including observations and photographs of pupils' achievements, demonstrate generally good teaching and learning over time. The school is very effective in helping parents and carers to understand and meet the needs of pupils with the most complex learning difficulties.

Across the school, there are examples of outstanding teaching where staff set the highest expectation for every pupil and use very imaginative teaching activities to ensure excellent outcomes for all. For example, in a Key Stage 2 and 3 music lesson, the teacher seized every opportunity to develop pupils' skills and deepen their understanding by moving very adeptly from one activity to another and keeping a clear focus on practical activities. Pupils' learning was exceptionally well supported by the use of pictures, signs and symbols.

Recent improvements have significantly raised the proportion of outstanding teaching in the main school. The impact has been slower in the sixth form. Across the school, where teaching is not of the very highest quality, the range of tasks and teaching approaches does not always cater fully for the wide range of pupils' needs. As a result, a small minority of pupils do not reach their full potential.

Parents and carers feel their children are well taught, in line with inspection findings. Their views are typified by comments such as, 'JFK is an excellent school and the staff are very caring and dedicated.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers, staff and pupils all confirm the substantial improvements that the school makes to the lives of pupils both at school and at home through developing positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are friendly and respectful to adults and each other, and they get on extremely well together so that there is a very calm and harmonious working atmosphere throughout the school. Staff are very adept in enabling pupils to quickly address any difficulties they have with their own behaviour. The extremely close liaison between the school staff and the multi-disciplinary team is a crucial factor in the school's success in this area. All staff have received extensive training in behaviour management techniques and use the behaviour management system very effectively. They respect pupils as individuals, and use praise and rewards to best effect to reinforce improvements in behaviour. As a result, there

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have been no recent exclusions. In the dining room and during breaks, where pupils make use of the improved playground facilities, their standard of behaviour is exemplary. Records confirm the high quality of behaviour over time.

Staff ensure that pupils settle in quickly and adapt to the very clear expectations that are set. Parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are safe and secure in school and that any type of bullying is extremely rare. Pupils are very keen to support each other, and are proud of their school and their work. Staff devote a great deal of time to helping pupils to listen carefully to instructions and to respond to the feelings of others.

Leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher has an extremely clear view about how the provision should develop. She is very well supported by a strong leadership team and between them they make a significant impact on the work of the school. The policies and strategies that they have introduced are having a very positive and immediate effect on improving pupils' performance on the Stratford site. However, these are not as well embedded at the Beckton site. They ensure that staff work as a cohesive and effective team and communicate high expectations and ambition. The emphasis the new headteacher has placed on developing staff expertise ensures a cycle of improvement in classroom practice and an enthusiasm from staff about improving the way they meet pupils' needs. Lessons are observed by the senior team and strengths and areas for improvement are accurately identified. The recent changes to personnel and to the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have considerably improved the outcomes for pupils, and the outstanding behaviour of pupils is impressive.

The present good curriculum ensures systematic development of pupils' basic skills. As a result of a thorough review, a new curriculum is gradually being introduced before full implementation in September 2012. On the Stratford site, increasing use of therapies and sensory experiences is ensuring that it is already more effective in meeting the increasing range and complexity of pupils' needs. In the sixth form, the focus on communication, literacy and numeracy, linked to the range of vocational and work-related opportunities available, is helping pupils to gain a good foundation for life when they leave school, but it has not yet reached its full potential. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, for example through the very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided. The principles of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of everything the school does as it successfully works to meet the changing individual needs of its intake. It provides exceptionally well for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Leaders at all levels are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and show clear commitment to future improvement. The governing body challenges the school effectively and ensures that policies, including safeguarding, are of the highest quality and have a positive impact on school life. For example, risk

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assessments are exemplary and ensure that pupils, particularly those with severe medical conditions, are given the protection they need so that they can play a full part in the everyday school life. Strong partnerships with other schools, those with other agencies and also with parents and carers provide extremely high levels of support, particularly to pupils' personal development.

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.

The school will translate this into Widgit format to make it accessible to pupils.



2 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of J F Kennedy Special School, Newham E15 4RZ

Thank you for all the help and support you gave us when we came to inspect John F Kennedy School. We were particularly pleased to be able to meet so many of you in your lessons. Thank you especially for the cakes you cooked for us.

We judge JFK to be a good school where all staff go out of their way to help you. Your behaviour is outstanding and we could see how everyone helps you. You achieve well and make good progress. Staff are extremely effective in helping you to develop communication and numeracy skills which you can use in your learning. The school provides a very safe and secure environment, and you help and support each other extremely well.

To make John F Kennedy even better, we have asked teachers, especially in the sixth form, to ensure that they match tasks and teaching approaches more closely to your individual learning needs so that each of you achieves as well as you can. We also want them to use information about the progress you make, and the progress of pupils in similar schools, to show everyone how well John F Kennedy is performing.

You showed us how much you enjoy coming to school and so we know you will continue to do your best at all times.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton
Lead inspector

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