

John F Kennedy Special School

Pitchford Street, Stratford, London E15 4RZ

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The executive headteacher is determined to make sure that all pupils have the required skills to become active citizens in society. She is supported exceptionally well by other leaders and staff who share her commitment to equality of opportunity for all.
- Innovative and highly collaborative teamwork, between educationalists and therapists within school and across the multi-academy trust, secures high levels of staff expertise and talent. As a result, the school has moved rapidly over the last two years to outstanding.
- Tailored and memorable learning experiences for all pupils, irrespective of the complexity of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, result in outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
- Trustees and governors keep a careful watch over the school. They make sure that outstanding senior leaders are recruited and potential leaders are nurtured within the school. There is strong capacity to sustain excellence and to continue to improve.
- Post 16 students learn with other pupils, and attend the site which is best suited to meet their needs. They receive the same outstanding teaching and, as a result, continue to make rapid progress from their various starting points.
- Safeguarding pupils is of absolute paramount importance. Leaders describe the school's safeguarding role as 'a hub of care'. Staff are exceptionally well trained and supported to make sure every pupil is kept safe and secure.
- Leaders are highly systematic in their approach to monitoring every aspect of the school's performance. They know precisely what they need to work on next, planning effectively for further improvements. However, these plans do not yet have information in an accessible format to enable governors to accurately measure the impact of the school's work.
- Staff have excellent professional development opportunities to sharpen their practice, including how they best manage some very challenging behaviours. This, together with the calm and harmonious ethos, ensures happy pupils who are ready to learn with minimum disruption.
- The school has gained an outstanding reputation within the local community. It is a first choice for parents, hence the increase of pupils on roll. Many parents describe the school as a family. Parents trust and respect staff. They appreciate all that the school provides for their children.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Include pupil progress information in an accessible format when available in improvement planning so that governors and trustees are better able to judge the impact of leaders' work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The commitment and dedication of the executive headteacher is at the heart of the school's outstanding success. Her quest for excellence for all pupils ensures rapid progress in all key areas of pupils' development. The executive headteacher constantly champions the rights, interests and needs of pupils. This standpoint is shared by all staff. Staff morale is exceptionally high and teamwork is a significant strength.
- A new assessment system and curriculum planning have been implemented as a result of the Rochford Review. This has revolutionised how pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are addressed. Leaders, including the specialist lead practitioner, have revised the design of the curriculum and assessment procedures, culminating in personalised learning journeys for pupils who follow a learning pathway specifically designed for their stage of development.
- Each stage is tailored to take into account the wide range of ages, learning needs and aptitudes of pupils. There is significant focus on developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy, physical and independent skills in all key stages. Older students complete accredited courses in literacy, communication and numeracy, with some vocational opportunities to challenge their learning well. Learning is enhanced through a multitude of enrichment activities.
- This innovative work is also having a major impact on other schools' provision, as the executive headteacher and colleagues share their expertise within the multi-academy trust, and in schools in the local authority and nationally. Indeed, the school works collaboratively with the local authority and plays a significant part in their overall special educational needs strategy.
- Senior leaders, including trustees and governors, foster a culture of sequential planning, appointing strong leaders, making sure that the school's capacity to continually move forward is never compromised. The recent appointments of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as a restructuring of senior and middle leader roles, has boosted leaders' ability to sustain rapid improvements.
- The chief executive officer of the trust provides the right balance of support and challenge to the executive headteacher. New leaders are supported by experienced leaders within school and across the multi-academy trust.
- Together, senior and middle leaders play a pivotal role in coaching and mentoring colleagues. They use regular monitoring information, including an audit of the staff's skills, to target their support and resources to excellent effect. Staff take time to reflect and analyse what has worked well. This drives up the quality of teaching, learning and assessment still further.
- Teachers and teaching assistants alike are highly motivated and confident to seek specific training from the vast pool of expertise within the school in order to continually refine their practice. Cross-fertilisation of effective teaching practice at all levels of the trust is a major driver for school improvement, securing rapid rates of improvement in all areas of the school's performance.
- Colleagues with specialist expertise are highly effective in accelerating teachers'

performance, particularly the lead practitioner. Teaching assistants are also very well trained and supported by the senior teaching assistant, who takes a lead role in their professional development. As a result, staff take on new initiatives with relish, determined to make sure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment constantly improves.

- Planning for improvement is based on a cycle of regular monitoring from a wide range of sources. As a result, leaders have an incisive understanding of the school's performance. They use all available information to judge accurately what needs to be worked on next. Nonetheless, plans lack precise information about pupil progress, because the school has yet to complete a full assessment cycle. This makes it difficult to measure accurately the impact of their actions, and for governors to hold leaders fully to account.
- All funding is used to enrich the learning experiences of pupils. This includes special educational needs and the pupil premium allocation for disadvantaged pupils. Adult support, specialist equipment and training, together with the work of the multi-disciplinary team, secure participation and personalised learning for all pupils. Pupils' performance is meticulously monitored on a daily, weekly and termly basis, including in pupil progress meetings. As a result, no pupil underachieves and all make outstanding progress.
- The physical education and sport funding is also used judiciously and is targeted precisely to promote pupils' physical development, enjoyment and well-being. This includes developing pupils' spatial and body awareness, and cooperation skills through group and team games, as well as specific training for staff.
- Equality of opportunity, through personalisation of the curriculum, is at the very heart of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged to be tolerant and respectful, through active participation in their learning and within the community. Pupils are prompted to be increasingly independent. They are encouraged to appreciate they have choices, and to respect differences. As a consequence, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully.

Governance of the school

- Governors are accountable to the board of trustees. Regular governor meetings across the trust provide them with valuable and much appreciated peer support from experienced governors. As a result, the impact of their work has strengthened significantly. A recent audit of skills has also sharpened the roles and responsibilities of governors, so that they are better focused on monitoring specific areas of the school's work. Their evaluations are becoming more robust, providing them with a clear overview of the school's effectiveness. Minutes of governors' meetings confirm they are now challenging leaders more, through probing questions specifically about their remits.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding leads ensure continuity of excellent practice across both sites. Procedures and practice details are of high quality. Safeguarding is given a top priority

by all staff and governors.

- Child protection training is up to date and frequent. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well and make sure all procedures are implemented thoroughly to keep pupils safe and secure.
- Senior leaders and members of the multi-disciplinary team meet weekly to review safeguarding issues. Potentially vulnerable pupils and families are identified, with appropriate strategies put in place to support them. Concerns are recorded meticulously, with issues referred to the specific agencies. These are pursued with tenacity and rigour to secure the right outcomes. The school works closely with a wide range of agencies to prevent child protection issues, and provides support and training for parents through workshops and home visits.
- All the relevant checks on staff, governors and other adults are completed in full and recorded diligently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Highly effective assessments of pupils' learning and progress is the cornerstone for outstanding teaching and learning. Baseline assessments and continuous measures and checks on learning enable teachers to plan with precision pupils' next steps, securing a fast pace of learning.
- Daily meetings between all staff, including therapists, ensure that pupils' learning is systematically measured, adapted and planned for, sustaining maximum engagement and progress. As a result, pupils stay on track to achieve their challenging and highly personalised targets.
- Evidence of pupils' learning journey's, collated from a wide range of sources, is used to record progress termly. Rigorous checks on the accuracy of assessments are frequent. Those pupils who are exceeding their targets, or at risk of not achieving them, are swiftly identified. Subsequently, their targets are then adapted to inform planning for bespoke activities to speed up their progress further.
- Each classroom is organised to maximise pupils' learning and enjoyment. Careful consideration is given to pupils' specific needs.
- Pupils with autism learn where there are limited distractions. They have individual daily timetables, with some opportunities for them to make decisions about what they would like to learn next. The most able pupils write and read labels for their individual timetables. Inspection observations confirm that pupils usually maintain positive attitudes to their learning, because staff are skilled in guiding their learning, which extends pupils' ability to concentrate.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore and develop through intensive interaction with adults. Activities, in class, in the hydro-pools, and in specially adapted sensory rooms, are designed to find the best way to engage pupils in their learning through physical and sensory stimulation.
- Adults are skilled in making sure that pupils access their learning with confidence and accuracy. They model learning and communicate clearly and constantly through signs, symbols and concrete objects. Technology is also used well to promote communication, understanding and independence. Just occasionally, adults intervene too early in an

activity, which prevents pupils from having a go for themselves.

- Positive and consistent management of pupils' behaviour is a salient feature in every learning experience. Adults continually explain to pupils what they are learning, and how well they are doing. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in many ways, including instant positive feedback for good work and effort, colourful displays and records of achievement. As a result, pupils' concentration improves, as does their ability to interact with staff in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school is a safe and nurturing environment where pupils grow and flourish in their confidence and self-esteem. All staff have a total belief and determination that each pupil has the capacity to succeed if they have the right level of challenge, support and expertise to help them.
- The multi-disciplinary team provides a holistic approach to supporting and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. The recent appointments of the family liaison officer and the part-time social worker have strengthened the work of the therapists. They provide significant support for potentially vulnerable children and families, in school and at home.
- Those pupils with significant and complex medical conditions are monitored to ensure their well-being. The on-site school nurse is available to advise and/or intervene when necessary.
- Adults constantly check on pupils' mental health, and quickly identify those pupils causing concern. They are supported by a specialist, who is experienced in working with children and young people who have difficulties with their emotional and/or behavioural well-being.
- There are myriad experiences to promote pupils' personal development, in school and in partnership with other schools and organisations. Each experience focuses on promoting pupils' emotional resilience, raising their self-esteem and engendering an awareness of equality and fairness. Pupils join in joint singalong and drama sessions with other schools. They help out in a café at the Newham City Farm, and take on the role of ambassadors for Mencap, campaigning for rights of disabled people.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is monitored rigorously. Behaviours which are not typical of a pupil and/or inappropriate incidents are meticulously recorded electronically and analysed forensically by leaders. Staff develop a comprehensive overview of the context for specific behaviours. These include medical issues and potential triggers for inappropriate behaviour which inform staff of what can be changed in the environment to reduce pupils' anxiety. Effective liaison work with members of the multi-disciplinary team and parents finds solutions, to reduce and ultimately prevent some inappropriate behaviour.

- Parents greatly value the support and training they have, with many saying the school is a lifeline for them. Case studies provide compelling evidence of the success the school has in modifying some extreme behaviours.
- Adults continually model expected behaviour and have high expectations of pupils. They have excellent training and support to manage pupils' often challenging behaviours from the behaviour team. As a result, they are adept at quickly defusing or diverting pupils' negative behaviour.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. Activities, visits and visitors provide pupils with experiences to build up their understanding of what is and is not appropriate, including intimate. They are taught how to travel safely outside, including crossing the road. The school is now working to make sure that pupils develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using electronic devices, including when using the internet.
- Pupils learn how to manage potential risks. Older pupils, for example, abseiled down a rock face on a residential visit in Devon, in their wheelchairs. Photographic evidence shows that pupils found this an exhilarating and immensely enjoyable experience, as well as appreciating the importance of checking all the safety procedures to minimise risks.
- Overall attendance is now average. There are effective procedures for reporting, monitoring and dealing with pupil absence. Attendance is now discussed as part of the weekly safeguarding meetings with senior leaders, the multi-disciplinary team and local authority officers. Any concerns are quickly identified and further action is initiated if required.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress across four learning pathways. Subjects, including literacy, numeracy, science, art, physical education, vocational/functional life skills and life choices skills, provide the framework for continuity and progression of skills, learning attitudes and responses.
- There is a significant focus on developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy, physical and independent skills in all key stages.
- Each pathway takes into account the wide range of ages, learning needs, aptitudes and ages of all pupils. Almost all pupils currently in school are functioning well below the national curriculum expectations in all areas.
- The highly personalised approach integrates pupils' statements of special educational needs and/or education, health and care plans, culminating in tailored programmes of learning based on an in-depth knowledge and understanding of each pupil.
- The school's progress information and inspection observations, including scrutiny of pupils' progress records, confirm outstanding progress in all areas of learning for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- An additional curriculum pathway is being piloted for the most able pupils, who are able to learn to read, write and understand basic mathematical concepts. Inspection observations established that pupils are effectively challenged, through well designed activities where adults ask probing questions to make these pupils think hard about

their learning. As a result, these pupils make equally rapid progress as their classmates.

- Pupils learn exceptionally well across the curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom. They experience a wide range of activities and learn new skills, especially through the topic-based approach which runs alongside the curriculum pathways.
- Teachers skilfully maximise pupils' learning, making sure that they begin to transfer their learning in as many different contexts as possible, to secure a solid grasp of skills. A circus project enables pupils to develop their communication and personal skills for when they visited a circus. Pupils then practise and apply their skills, presenting their circus show to other pupils.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to engage and develop skills across the curriculum. Pupils learn how to cook, to strengthen their physical skills in the outdoor gymnasium, or at the local park, and to be creative, working with artists within the local community. The horticultural area enabled some post-16 students to achieve accredited qualifications in this subject.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Older students follow a curriculum pathway which starts in Year 9, in conjunction with their annual reviews, to ensure that parents and students are at the centre of these important decisions for the future. There remains a close focus on developing students' independence and confidence in preparation for their next stage.
- Parents and students alike attend transitional events, where colleges and social care provision offer information to inform and guide students and parents towards the most appropriate choices for when students leave school. This is also linked effectively to personal, social and health education (PSHE) and to activities which promote learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Early intervention ensures that there are no gaps in students' progression throughout post-16 study and beyond. In 2015/16, five of the 14 students went on to a college; the remaining students moved on to alternative care.
- The curriculum is delivered across the two settings and is dependent on the student's special needs and/or disabilities. The profile of abilities is extremely wide, with many students having exceptionally low starting points. The whole-school approach to assessment continues for these students, resulting in personalised teaching and learning for each student, where rapid progress continues.
- Leadership of this key stage is outstanding. The specialist lead practitioner has extended the range of pathways for students. She has linked vocational courses to accredited qualifications, including work experience which spans all abilities.
- The specialist lead practitioner has also developed new accredited modules to ensure inclusion and participation for specific students, aligned to the world of work. For example, a sound cradle provides intense sound and vibration which supports students' communication and exploration skills while simultaneously providing a calm and therapeutic input. Students successfully achieved a life skills module towards an independence qualification. Some students undertake functional studies, including in communication, English and mathematics if they are able to do so.

- Work experience, externally and within school, is an integral part of students' education. Mini-enterprise skills are developed through community and charity events. At all times there is a continual drive to develop students' skills for learning, for life and employability.

School details

Unique reference number	141255
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10031736

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	All-through special primary and secondary school
School category	Academy special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	53
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Devina Laskar
Executive Headteacher	Diane Rochford
Headteacher	Julie Newman
Telephone number	020 8534 8544
Website	www.johnfkennedy.newham.sch.uk/
Email address	info@johnfkennedy.newham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The John F Kennedy School is a larger-than-average special school. The majority of pupils have a statement of special educational needs and/or an education, health and care plan. All pupils have severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, with many having complex social and communication difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorders. In addition, some pupils have complex medical needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupils premium funding is above average, as is the

proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- Numbers on roll have increased significantly since the last inspection, particularly for younger pupils. The school currently has three primary-aged classrooms.
- The school operates on two sites. The Stratford site is equipped to provide specialist provision for up to 60 pupils ages from four to 19 with specific, profound and multiple learning difficulties. This includes sensory and soft play rooms and hydrotherapy, as well as large classrooms equipped with tracking hoists and outdoor equipment for pupils who are more independently mobile. The Beckton site is equipped and developed to offer specialist teaching and learning for up to 50 pupils from aged seven to 19 who have social and communication needs, including autism. This site has developed its outdoor space to include a horticultural area, outside gymnasium and a primary-aged play area.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In September 2014, the school converted to an academy and formed a multi-academy trust (MAT) with Sheringham Primary School, the Learning in Harmony Trust. Since then, the trust has grown and includes several other Newham and Southend-on-Sea schools. The school provides special educational needs support to mainstream schools and is a lead school for Team Teach in Newham.
- The executive headteacher has led the work with other special educational needs experts to find an alternative solution to the current statutory assessment of special educational needs pupils, commissioned by the Department for Education, culminating in the Rochford Review. Both the executive headteacher and other leaders provide support for other schools within the MAT.
- A headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2016.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in most year groups and observed a variety of activities. Leaders accompanied inspectors on all the visits to lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes and around the school was observed. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's records of behavioural incidents, including bullying logs.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils about their learning in lessons. Inspectors observed the most able pupils reading in class, and others reading symbols and signs.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders to evaluate the impact of their work to improve pupils' outcomes and strengthen the quality of teaching. This included meetings with curriculum and subject leaders, including the post-16 lead.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the trust, members of the governing body, including the chair, and the local authority deputy director of education.
- Inspectors reviewed work in pupils' progress portfolios to evaluate the quality of learning in different areas of learning over time. They also scrutinised the school's current assessment information on how well pupils achieve.
- A range of documentation relating to safeguarding was scrutinised. This included the single central record of pre-employment checks and records relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils at risk of harm.
- Inspectors spoke to parents informally before school. They also took account of the school's parent and staff questionnaires. There were no parental responses to Ofsted's online survey, or staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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