

Sir John Cass Foundation and Redcoat Church of England Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100977
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307549
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1366
6th form	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Doreen Perry
Headteacher	Mr Haydn Evans
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Stepney Way Stepney London E1 0RH
Telephone number	020 7790 6712
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in English and the sixth form, the quality of teaching in core subjects, the effectiveness of leadership and management and of the sixth form. Evidence was gathered from lessons, students' work, and discussions with headteacher and staff. In addition, two groups of students discussed their views of the school and all parent questionnaires returned were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found little evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school is a specialist Languages and Business Enterprise College. It admits students from 75 local primary schools but with a significant intake from neighbouring inner London boroughs. The school is located amongst areas of high deprivation. About 93% of students are from minority ethnic groups; with two thirds from Bangladeshi backgrounds. About 80% of students are classified bilingual with Sylheti as one of the main languages spoken. The school supports 40 students in the early stages of learning English and there are 49 students with refugee status, with Somali as the dominant ethnic group. The school has identified 120 students as Gifted and Talented. One third of students have learning difficulties or disabilities, but a very low number have statements. High numbers of students are eligible for free school meals. The school has low levels of authorised absence, but above average levels of unauthorised attendance.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sir John Cass Foundation and Redcoat School is an outstanding school. The headteacher together with his senior leadership team and governing body have very successfully created an inclusive community where students of diverse cultures and backgrounds are equally valued and reach high levels of achievement. Parents and carers are supportive of the school, especially appreciating the quality of education and care provided for their children. One parent said, '...there should be more schools with the teaching capability of SJC where many of the teachers are dedicated and heroic!' Indeed, the school provides excellent opportunities for students to 'achieve their personal best'; they reach high levels of personal development and good academic attainment through a stimulating and well-ordered learning environment. They are taught well through a curriculum that meets students' needs and receive excellent care and support.

Good results are achieved through careful tracking of students' progress, consistently good teaching, mentoring, as well as additional revision classes and strong parental support. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment. They leave in Year 11 with the majority making outstanding progress, thus gaining good foundations for their future education or employment.

Between Years 7-9 students make good progress across all subjects, but progress in English has declined from the previous year, whereas progress in mathematics has improved and is good. At the end of Year 9 students' standards in national assessment tests have been improving year on year and are now at national averages. Between Years 10 and 11 students make excellent progress and attain above average standards in GCSE examinations in 5 A*-C excluding mathematics and English. This year the school has successfully tackled the low attainment of students in English through targeting students in a variety of extension lessons and mentoring activities and through setting classes by ability. This has consequently improved achievement and attainment for the majority, for results in 5 GCSEs A*-C, including mathematics and English, based on course assessments, are predicted to rise this year and to be above national averages. Standards in vocational BTEC courses for business and information and communication technology are good.

The school closely monitors the achievement of Bangladeshi girls, as these do not always achieve their potential. Moreover, there are sound actions in place for challenging and extending students of higher ability in Years 10 and 11, for supporting those who are at risk of dropping out of education at 16 and the small minority of White British students who are at risk of underachieving. The whole school approach to monitoring and tracking is very rigorous. After thorough and careful analyses of data by managers and teachers, students benefit from additional teaching and support strategies that address their underachievement successfully. Students with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English are supported extremely well and make excellent progress.

Students' personal development is outstanding. Leaders and teachers set very high expectations of students and encourage them to have high aspirations; this is in fact, a key strength of the school. Attendance is well above the national average and in addition, many students enthusiastically take advantage of the extra help available in the many well-equipped Learning Centres and increasingly develop independent learning and good computing skills. Students clearly enjoy their time at school. The school is very clear on promoting the 'Cass courtesies'; consequently, students from diverse cultures work so well together, having developed excellent

codes of behaviour and respect for one another in and out of lessons. This is reflected in the very low level of racial incidents and exclusions for a school of this size. Students praise the school, saying that, and;quot;It is a really friendly schooland;quot;, and report that the very little bullying that exists is dealt with quickly. The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Assemblies involve presentations from students and Muslim students have access to a prayer room. Students have a good awareness of how to stay healthy and keep safe. Good opportunities exist for students to support the wider community, for example through fund-raising or as reading partners in primary schools. The school council plays a very positive role and is responsible for developing students' contributions in the running of the school. The school in recognising the need to increase the numbers of students actively involved in such activities, has delegated a budget to support this. Increasing numbers of students take on responsibilities as school ambassadors and involvement in recruitment processes for new teachers. Students are well prepared for adult life through work related learning, very good access to information and communication technology (ICT), and the balanced mix of vocational and academic courses. The school has prioritised raising the proportion of students leaving school with sound literacy and numeracy skills and a level two qualification in mathematics and English.

Care guidance and support are outstanding. The staff, who are responsible for the care of vulnerable students and those with challenging behaviour, including two qualified counsellors, work effectively across departments and with external agencies to guarantee their well-being and achieve successful educational outcomes. Learning mentors and learning assistants play an important role in supporting students who have been targeted as needing additional support, including those at early stages of learning English. They work directly with students and through sound working partnerships with teachers. Academic guidance is contributing significantly to raising achievement through the setting of minimum and aspiration target grades in all subjects, with managers and teachers carefully monitoring students' progress towards these. Students know their target grades, and receive sound information about their current working levels and what they need to do to improve.

Teaching is good and teachers plan lessons that engage students and help most achieve their potential. The school is aware that more needs to be done to spread across all subjects the good teaching and assessment practice found, for instance, in mathematics and science. Students are motivated and keen to do well. In those lessons where their learning and comprehension is checked thoroughly, they enjoy the tasks set, and make good progress. In one English lesson, students had prepared lively and persuasive oral presentations on the dangers of smoking, and demonstrated good standards in public speaking skills. Good use is made of peer and self assessment during lessons to help students reflect on their learning and develop independent learning skills. The quality of marking of students' work is generally good and in most subjects, they receive constructive feedback and have a clear idea of how well they are doing.

The school's well structured curriculum enables students to fulfil their potential in vocational and academic subjects. For example, in science students can follow three single sciences, a double GCSE award, or a vocational course. From September this year, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is organised into three different pathways. Specific courses for the most vulnerable students, including a partnership with an outside provider, have been successful in helping this group to stay in education and experience work related learning. The school's Languages Specialist status has enhanced the curriculum through extended school activities such as after school language clubs in European and heritage languages. These opportunities are available to the local community. The school's strong partnerships with employers such as national

finance companies provide good opportunities for Career Academy Placements and build successfully on the business enterprise specialist status, giving students an invaluable insight into the world of work. Opportunities for students to learn outside the normal school day are extensive and they speak highly of the variety of activities available, for instance a collaborative science project on a local conservation site.

The headteacher's exemplary leadership and strong teamwork, have led to the school achieving highly year on year. This provides further evidence of the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. The headteacher has maintained a strong focus on attaining challenging targets. He is most ably supported by a skilled team of managers who relentlessly drive up students' achievements and standards throughout the school. Heads of departments undertake systematic learning trails across the subjects, scrutinising the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for students. These inform the intervention strategies for underperforming students and teachers and managers work together to provide extensive academic support through additional after school activities. The school has established a strong ethos of accountability through careful monitoring and evaluation of classroom observations and learning outcomes. It regularly produces an excellent account of these, which are shared with governors. Governance is excellent and governors are fully involved in the school's development through a link governor scheme. These play an active and supportive role with all school managers through meetings and other activities. The school's self-evaluation process provides a constructively critical account of the school's strengths, and the areas where the school needs to improve. The school completes a race audit in line with its race equality policy, but has yet to establish systematic monitoring procedures. The school provides excellent value for money and is currently extending its accommodation.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The large sixth form is highly inclusive and provides a good quality of education. Three quarters of the Year 11 students stay on in the sixth form and this is a good indicator of the esteem in which students view the work of the sixth form. The strength of the sixth form lies precisely in its ability to welcome students from all backgrounds, but especially those from families with no experience of higher education. The sixth form successfully raises the aspirations of these students helping them achieve their ambitions. Students choose the school sixth form precisely because it provides an effective vocational and academic curriculum that caters well for their needs. The sixth form retains 96% of Year 12 students to Year 13 and has excellent progression outcomes with 92% of students leaving to go to university and 8% to employment or further training. Students progressing to higher education receive exemplary support when making their application. Academic guidance is good and valued enormously by all students, but especially those who find the transition from GCSE to GCE AS level difficult. A good range of GCE A-level subjects is offered with good and expanding provision at levels two and three in vocational subjects including a 14-19 Diploma in partnership with local schools and college in ICT and one in science and land-based provision. Whilst students' standards across most subjects have been broadly average in the last year, standards in sociology and the BTEC qualifications have been above average. Well above one third of the students arrive in the sixth form with low literacy and numeracy skills. They are supported extremely well and make good progress in relation to what is expected of them based on their prior performance. The changes in the curriculum include changes in syllabus that are responsive to students' needs, such as in health and social care. This is helping to improve students' results yet further and provides more

appropriate progression routes. There is strong parental involvement through parents' evenings and academic review days. Sixth formers develop sound leadership skills through the many opportunities offered by the school and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school, acting as very creditable role models to younger students. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The school recognises that it needs to develop more rigorous monitoring systems of students' progress against their starting points, for managers to have a more accurate view of students' progress and to better inform curriculum planning and student progression routes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve monitoring and evaluation systems in the sixth form of students' progress against their prior attainment.
- Establish monitoring procedures for the race equality policy.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

05 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir John Cass Foundation and Redcoat Church of England Secondary School, London, E1 0RH

Your school is an outstanding school.

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us, and to the students who showed us around the school. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, talking with you and looking at the good standards of your work and observed that you are motivated during lessons, and where teachers give you structured opportunities, you make excellent contributions.

You told us that you enjoy working together as a school community and that you feel safe. Your attendance in school and in additional school activities is excellent. The headteacher and staff have worked successfully with you to create a very supportive learning environment and the progress most of you make between Years 7-11, is outstanding and the standards you reach in course work and examinations by Year 11 are good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are learning English make excellent progress. We spoke with many of you and were especially impressed by those students who knew their targets and knew what they needed to do to improve their work. The school works hard to support all students through the mentors and learning support assistants. You all benefit from developing your independent learning and computing skills in the Learning Centres.

We admired the standards of art work displayed around the school. Your behaviour is excellent in and out of lessons and we were particularly impressed by the level of responsibilities that many of you have. You informed us that you feel safe and enjoy your learning at the school, especially the extra curricular activities, where you have many opportunities to develop additional skills and gain confidence in your talents. In order to improve even further, the school agrees with us that they need to:

- monitor the progress made by students in the sixth form against their starting points, as rigorously as they monitor the progress of students in the main school
- monitor the race equality policy.

We hope that you will all do well in the future, and with the help of the school realise your ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector