

John F Kennedy Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102791
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308122
Inspection dates	23–24 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	71
Sixth form	33
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Megan Harris Mitchell
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Goldsmith
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pitchford Street Stratford London E15 4RZ
Telephone number	020 8534 8544
Fax number	020 8555 3530

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides for learners who have statements of special educational need for their severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). In addition, many learners have complex medical needs. Levels of attainment on entry are generally well below national expectations. Learners come from diverse socio-economic and multi-cultural backgrounds. The great majority of learners come from a range of ethnic groups, the largest being from Asian and Black African family backgrounds. There are a large number of learners for whom English is not their first language, and who are at an early stage of learning English. There are a higher than average number of learners eligible for free school meals and there are almost twice as many boys as girls. There are currently no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there was only one last year and three the year before. The school operates on two sites, separating the post 16 students where around three quarters arrive directly from mainstream schools. The school provides an outreach support provision to mainstream schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school because leaders, managers and all staff put learners' well-being and achievement at the centre of all their work. The dedicated headteacher, supported by competent and committed deputy headteachers and well-informed governors, has driven improvement effectively since the previous inspection and her vision is shared by the whole school. Well established cycles of monitoring and self-evaluation, involving the whole school, ensure that staff have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how to achieve success. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve further. Teamwork is a strength of the school. There is very well planned care and seamless support, offered by the medical, therapy and support staff, both of which contribute significantly to learners' personal development and well-being. Pupils and students are treated with respect and dignity at all times. A parent reported, 'The school is very caring and considerate and they have worked wonders with my son.' The school is a strong community, nurturing learners' personal and academic development and celebrating their achievements. Very effective partnerships with external support agencies, schools, colleges and the community, ensure learners' personal needs are very well met. Community cohesion is promoted very effectively, both within and outside of the school, enabling learners to appreciate their place in the local and worldwide community. This includes the valuable support and training given to other schools and parents, which is very well received and appreciated by school managers spoken to and feedback from parents.

Due to the severity and complexity of learners' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards vary widely but, overall, they are well below average. Learners are increasingly entering the school with progressively more complex learning and medical difficulties. Consequently, the school is constantly engaged in training staff to ensure all medical and learning needs can be supported successfully. As learners move through the school, they begin to make a marked improvement in their self-confidence, communication and social skills. Before leaving school, students achieve a range of skills and accreditation supporting their transition into adulthood. A multi-media personal profile, including video clips, photographs and personal statements, illustrates their achievements very effectively. Given their starting points, and the nature of their learning and medical difficulties, the achievement and progress of the majority of all learner groups, including those learning English, is good. This success develops learners' confidence and supports them very effectively in their next stage of learning and in their social interactions.

Learners work towards challenging, individual targets, which most achieve successfully. Pupils' and students' good progress in their learning and their outstanding personal development are due to the excellent relationships, outstanding care and support they receive for their individual needs. Their excellent attitudes and the consistently good teaching across both sites support learners' progress very well. Teachers use information on learners' progress in their planning to help ensure activities are suitable and challenging for all pupils and students. Some teachers are better at using this information than others to ensure all learners achieve as well as they can. Learners' progress is monitored, recorded and analysed effectively, which ensures any underachievement is identified and appropriate support initiated. The curriculum supports learners' personal development very effectively. The school is engaged in reviewing the curriculum to ensure it meets the changing needs of all learners, particularly those with increasingly complex medical difficulties. Activities are generally interesting, practical and motivating. Visits into the community, inclusion placements in mainstream schools, attendance

at college and visiting specialists all enrich pupils' and students' learning experiences. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and they make an excellent contribution to the community being involved in work experience and fund raising activities such as Fair Trade coffee afternoons. Learners show consideration and support for each other and their behaviour is consistently good as a result. One parent wrote, 'I am very impressed with the school and I can see a definite improvement in my son's speech and language and his approach to everyday tasks.' Governors are fully involved in the monitoring, evaluation and strategic management of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students work towards accreditation in independent living skills that helps develop their social, community and life skills that will help them when they leave school or go on to college placements. They take part in work-related and enterprise activities and community projects that support their outstanding personal development where they gain confidence and self-esteem through their achievement. Dedicated staff support students' very complex and challenging learning and social needs effectively. The provision is led and managed well by a very committed and 'hands on' deputy headteacher. Areas for improvement are clearly identified. For example, the curriculum is being reviewed to ensure it will continue to meet and challenge the changing needs of incoming students.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Foundation Stage and there have been very few children of this age for a number of years. When children enter the school they are individually assessed and a personalised learning programme is put into place taking into account their very specific learning, physical and medical difficulties. These specific programmes very effectively support, promote and develop their personal, social and emotional well-being. The children develop confidence through play and are encouraged to explore their own learning through carefully planned and practical activities. The school is reviewing its curriculum to ensure it continues to meet the needs of those children who are presenting increasingly severe and complex learning and medical difficulties.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching to the level of the best by making better use of assessment information to provide more consistent challenge.
- Ensure the curriculum continues to develop and adapt to meet the ever changing and complex needs of all learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Learners' academic progress is good because of the range of learning activities that meet their individual needs and enables them to leave school with skills that will help them in their everyday living. Pupils and students make consistently good or better progress in communication, choice making and independence as they move through the school. This is due to the strong emphasis on these areas within the curriculum, pupils' enthusiastic learning, excellent support arrangements and good teaching. Pupils and students learn practical applications in mathematics,

science, and information and communication technology (ICT) to support everyday living. They learn essential personal and social skills that fully support their development as citizens. A small number of learners have the opportunity to work in mainstream schools and most achieve their full potential before leaving school with a range of relevant skills and accreditation to continue their education in local colleges.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Learners are strongly encouraged to appreciate all aspects of keeping safe and healthy and they eagerly engage in a wide range of physical activities, for example the weekly Yoga sessions in the post 16 provision. Their very positive attitudes are reflected in their good attendance, behaviour and in their enthusiasm for learning in all lessons. Learners' relationships with staff and each other are outstanding with mutual respect and support shown at all times. Pupils and students make an outstanding contribution to their community through a variety of fund-raising events, recycling projects, community performances and by helping and supporting each other. Post 16 students, in particular, use the community very effectively to learn how to use public facilities such as transport, leisure centres, cafes and libraries. One boy reflecting the smiles on many faces said, 'I like it here.' A parent supported this opinion by saying, 'My son wishes he could attend on Saturdays and Sundays.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The wide and varied learning needs of most pupils and students are met effectively which results in them making consistently good progress. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored closely and support is given for improvement, although the very best practice could be shared more effectively across the school. A very positive learning environment is created where learners gain confidence and are encouraged to do their best. A parent said, 'My son has made good progress in all areas of his learning.' Ongoing assessment, feedback and support in lessons by teachers and very effective support staff make it very clear to pupils and students how they might improve. Excellent teamwork and good use of resources ensure all learners get the best out of their learning opportunities. Interactive white boards and a range of sensory and ICT resources are effectively used to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum effectively supports learners' good academic and outstanding personal development. There are excellent opportunities to enrich pupils' and students' learning, through a wide range of school visits, after school activities and through attending mainstream schools where appropriate. These all very effectively promote learners' enjoyment and achievement. Curriculum planning considers all personal learning needs, which are reinforced in all subjects. For example, learners' confidence, communication and love of learning are promoted effectively in music and drama sessions. Curriculum leaders keep abreast of national developments to ensure the needs of all learners are fully considered. The curriculum is being reviewed across all age groups on both sites as evaluations have determined that learners with more complex

learning and medical difficulties require a different approach to ensure they make the best possible progress they are capable of.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Consistent and efficient school procedures and practice keep learners safe and secure, while promoting their independence. This results in increasingly confident learners with positive attitudes. Very effective planning and co-ordinated teamwork between all staff and therapists ensure learners' physical, personal and communication and language needs are very well met. Vulnerable learners are quickly identified and carefully monitored to ensure their well-being. A parent said, 'My daughter's special needs are very well met and the staff keep in regular contact with me.' It is made very clear to learners in all lessons how they can improve and they receive very effective guidance on future opportunities. The transition into the next stage of learning after school is planned and supported very carefully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good throughout the school. The headteacher has high expectations of all staff and senior staff lead by good example. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all staff who promote high quality care and learning. All work undertaken by staff is valued, and consequently their morale is high. The impact of everyone's work is clearly seen in the outstanding care and support for learners, which in turn leads to their outstanding personal development and good achievement. Areas for development clearly emanate from effective self-evaluation and the careful monitoring of provision. Although support is given to improve the quality of individual teaching and learning, the very best practice is not being shared most effectively across the school. Staff induction and support arrangements are effective and result in all staff being clear on how to best support individual needs. Training and professional development is clearly based upon the school's priorities for improvement and the changing needs of the learners. Support staff have a range of responsibilities and contribute very successfully to learners' achievement and well-being. Links with external providers, public services and other organisations successfully support the integration of care and education to enhance learning and promote well-being and community cohesion.

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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?	2	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	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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 learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

10 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John F Kennedy Special School, London, E15 4RZ

Thank you for making my visit to your school such a pleasurable one. I really enjoyed meeting you. You were all friendly, polite, and excellent representatives of your school. You obviously get on very well together and really enjoy coming to school. I agree with you and your parents that your school is good. It teaches you useful skills and helps you to improve your communication and confidence. I think you make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your personal development. All staff work really well together to make sure you get the extra help you may need. You too can help by listening very carefully to all instructions and working as hard as you can at all times. I particularly liked that:

- you learn to do things for yourself and make choices
- you really enjoy all your lessons
- you learn to be healthy and safe and your behaviour is good
- you very effectively support your community and think about other people
- you really like the school trips, clubs, and after school activities
- you learn useful skills that will help you when you leave school
- the school works very effectively with other people to ensure you receive the support you need
- the school is well led and managed and it has your very best interests at heart.

The school knows it can still improve, and agrees that it should:

- make sure that you receive the very best teaching in all lessons where activities are always challenging and supporting your different individual needs
- ensure that the curriculum always meets your different ways of learning so you can make the best possible progress.

It was a delight being in your school and I wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

M J Smith

Lead Inspector