

Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100000
Local Authority	City of London
Inspection number	323208
Inspection date	26 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Kath Beck

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	237
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alderham Robert Hall
Headteacher	Mr Gerard Loughran
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St James's Passage Duke's Place London EC3A 5DE
Telephone number	020 7283 1147

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	26 September 2008
Inspection number	323208

Fax number

020 7626 5071

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The inspectors investigated the following issues, the Early Years Foundation Stage; achievement and standards, teaching and learning as well as leadership and management. The inspectors met with staff, governors and pupils. Parts of some lessons were observed. Parents' questionnaires, a selection of the school's documentation and a sample of pupils' work were scrutinised. The school's processes for self-evaluation were looked at in depth. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This school is the only maintained school in the local authority in the City of London. It serves a diverse community with the majority of pupils coming from minority ethnic groups, one-third from Bangladeshi backgrounds. The proportion of children who are eligible for free school meals is above that normally found, while the proportion identified as having difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) or who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is very high. A Child and Family Sure Start Centre provide early education and integrated childcare from 08.00 to 18.00 daily for 50 weeks of the year. The care inspection of this provision took place earlier in 2008. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision covers children from 3 months to August 31st following their fifth birthday. An after school club for children aged six and upwards, managed by the local authority, operates on the site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Every child, their future as adults and their family really matters in this outstanding school. It gives children a 'flying start' in their personal, social and emotional development, as well as spoken English skills in the EYFS. Consistently high quality teaching in Years 1 to 6 builds on this strong foundation so that pupils throughout the school, including those with LDD leave having made exceptional progress from their starting points. Attainment in Year 2 is good and in Year 6 it is outstanding. The vast majority of pupils reach nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science, with many exceeding them.

The key to the school's success is the outstanding, highly respected leadership team and staff that focus on each individual child's needs and puts the school at the heart of its community. One parent wrote, 'I am impressed with the way they treat children as individuals, with their own talents and enthusiasms. The school manages and capitalises on the opportunities presented by the wide range of faiths and cultures very well.' Wholehearted support from parents who value all that the school offers means that it is oversubscribed. Another parent wrote 'Absolutely brilliant school' and the children agree. They love coming to school, unwilling to miss any of the exciting opportunities, including sport and the performing arts that allow them to achieve high academic standards and social skills. Teachers make sure that the content of their lessons make learning real and purposeful. For example, in Year 5 pupils worked very well together to write instructions on how to use a mobile phone in a rap style. On another occasion, mathematical problems attracted the interest of older boys as they were about skateboarding. These factors together with the school's religious ethos and excellent levels of care, guidance, and support mean pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils thrive in the school's secure, safe and supportive environment. Almost all pupils eat the healthy cooked lunches provided because they say they are, 'delicious'. Pupils eat in their restaurant and display exemplary models of politeness and good manners. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and use their initiative. Pupils know that their views are important. They respect their teachers, behave very well and take pride in making sure their classrooms are attractive, clean and tidy places to work.

Exceptional teamwork between staff, governors, parents, pupils, and community workers is also central to each pupil's success. There is a true partnership with parents, established at an early stage so they can support their children in learning as well as they can. Staff speak a range of European and community languages. This is invaluable in enhancing pupils' progress and supporting effective partnerships. An outstanding, rich curriculum allows teachers to use imaginative strategies to make learning stimulating. The strong emphasis on singing, music, the performing arts and sport allows pupils to develop their talents, confidence and take personal responsibility. Pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations in all that they do. Governors fund additional staff in the classrooms. These 'teaching' teams are very skilled at making sure every lesson is successful for all abilities. They work together very effectively to ensure pupils meet their targets at the end of the year. Staff know each child's needs really well and match work accordingly.

The school's self-evaluation is rigorous as its success is under constant review. It rises successfully to challenges posed by independent advisers to enhance achievement. Once a year, the senior leaders ask all users of the school site, staff, targeted pupils and parents, including those who are hard to reach to attend for a day to give their views on the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve. Parents appreciate the manner in which their views contribute to the

school's development. Staff and governors monitor the quality of teaching and learn from each other. Identified training needs are supported strongly to enhance the skills and talents of all staff, benefiting pupils' learning significantly. Recent analysis of pupils' progress has rightly shown the need to help more pupils acquire the skills needed to discuss and understand complex ideas in more difficult books and use them in their writing. The school is implementing an initiative to develop these skills to help pupils do even better in English.

Extensive links with the wider community, including businesses and City of London traditions, such as Founders day, dinners and functions add much to children's achievements and experiences of life in the City. The school has made many significant improvements since the last inspection. Tracking of pupils' progress is meticulous so there is no underachievement. Challenge for the higher ability groups is strong. Governors successfully challenge and support the school. Along with the senior leadership team, they play a crucial role in the school's strategic development. Leaders at all levels have a clear view of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. The drive to enhance all aspects of its provision and sustain the successes from the time of the last inspection mean the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the EYFS with very varied levels of skills and knowledge, although overall their capabilities are below those usually found. This is because so many come with little or no English. Outstanding care and support gives impetus to their learning and development. As a result, they move into Key Stage 1 confident, capable learners, with overall standards above the national expectation. Good spoken English permeates classroom life since teachers recognise that fluency is the key to effective learning, social confidence and future economic well-being. For example, in learning how to describe the differences between a mosque and a church for instance, children rose successfully to the challenge to use unfamiliar, complex English vocabulary, as well as their home languages. Standards of early reading and writing move ahead briskly with the use of a sounds and letters programme. Levels of personal and social development are particularly high because children are encouraged to take simple decisions, to act and behave responsibly, and to become increasingly independent.

Staff give high priority to children's welfare and safety, and every child is seen as an individual, with particular learning and personal needs. This means that difficulties are recognised early and effective actions taken to address them. Unhappy or unsettled children are sensitively and inconspicuously comforted. Children learning English as an additional language benefit greatly from a full-time specialist teacher. Excellent leadership and teamwork, with drive and vision, has resulted in outstanding provision. There is no complacency, and ambitious but realistic plans for even further improvement are in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor carefully the effectiveness and impact of the initiative to develop pupils' skills in understanding and using more complex skills in reading and writing.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

07 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School, London, EC3A 5DE

Thank you for making us truly welcome to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, especially our conversations over the superb healthy lunch in the restaurant.

We know that you attend an outstanding school. The headteacher, leadership teams and governors are excellent. Together with everyone who works in the different parts of the school and community around it, they take account of your interests and enthusiasms and ease your worries. They make sure that children, from the youngest to the oldest do as well as they can because all the staff are very good at teaching. They know you very well and help you to do your very best. Everyone takes very great care to keep you safe and secure.

You told us you:

- love coming to school, even if you have a cough
- really enjoy your lessons and respect your teachers
- delight in acting, singing, learning to play the violin or cello so that you can perform for your parents and other important visitors in venues in London
- like to take part in all the sporting and creative activities after school.

We know whatever age group you are in you do well in English, mathematics and science. To help you to do even better in English your teachers are introducing new ways to help you to read and discuss the ideas you find in books that are more difficult and use them in some of your writing. We have asked them to check that the new ideas are successful. You can help by continuing to concentrate hard and doing your very best.

Yours sincerely,

Kath Beck

Lead Inspector