

**STATUTORY  
INSPECTION OF  
ANGLICAN SCHOOLS**



Name & address of school: **Sir John Cass Foundation and Redcoat C of E Secondary School**  
Stepney Way, Stepney, London, E1 0RH

Diocese of London

Date of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Type of School: Voluntary Aided Secondary

Name of Headteacher: Mr Haydn Evans

Local authority: Tower Hamlets

Date of last inspection: February 2005

School's unique reference number: 100977

SIAS Inspector: Catherine Large (N.S. 482)

### **School Context**

Sir John Cass and Redcoat Church of England Secondary School caters for students between the ages of 11 and 18. It is situated in an area of high deprivation, drawing its 1366 students from Tower Hamlets and neighbouring inner London boroughs. It admits students from 75 primary schools. About 93% of students are from minority ethnic groups, two thirds of whom are from Bangladeshi background. The predominant religion of the students is Islam. Admission arrangements have been amended recently to include 20% of Year 7 students being admitted on the basis of their being regular worshippers at a Christian church or faith community. The school is very heavily oversubscribed. The school is a specialist Language and Business and Enterprise college and has extensive links with business, industry and education establishments. One third of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but a very low number have statements. 75% of students are eligible for free school meals.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sir John Cass and Redcoat school as a Church of England school are good with outstanding features.**

Sir John Cass and Redcoat School is a highly regarded Church of England school. It serves its deprived, diverse and multi-faith community very well. It has created an ethos of respect, care and tolerance where the importance of faith is fundamental. Students of all faiths recognise this distinctiveness. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. Students' achievement across the school is high and the school is recognised nationally for the educational value it adds. The quality of collective worship and religious education are both good. The school acknowledges that there are some aspects of its church school identity that it could strengthen through closer links with its parish and the wider church community.

### **Established strengths**

- The strong and explicit commitment to the importance of faith in the life of the school, led by the headteacher, senior managers and governing body.
- The personal development of students, exemplified in their behaviour in and out of the classroom and in the high degree of racial and religious harmony in the school.
- The success in raising students' achievements and aspirations.
- The provision of full course GCSE religious education for all students.

### **Focus for development**

- Strengthen links with the local churches so that students have more opportunities to experience Christian worship including, where appropriate, the Eucharist
- Address the issue of time allocation in RE GCSE.
- Increase the number of visits to local places of worship.

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners**

Students express confidence in their teachers and in the faith-based ethos of the school. The school's mission statement, now on display in the entrances to the school and Sixth Form centre and in the Great Hall, expresses the hope that everyone will feel 'invited to take part in prayer and worship'. Students from the diverse primary schools and social and faith backgrounds settle well into the school and there is a strong sense of community cohesion. They recognise and value the respect, care and support that they experience and respond very positively in their learning and behaviour. There are very effective strategies in place to support the social and learning needs of all students. Their individual progress and needs are monitored carefully, effective mentoring and support programmes are in place and parents' involvement through termly feedback and consultation evenings is high. Over the years, this drive to raise achievement has led to the school being recognised nationally for the achievements and progress of its students. Students are adamant that issues of bullying are dealt with firmly and speedily and that racist incidents are rare. Pastoral care is very effective. Relationships at all levels are outstanding. The personal development of students as they move through the school is very noticeable and aspects of spiritual, moral social and cultural development are exceptional. The sixth form students interviewed on inspection displayed a high degree of maturity, in particular to inter-faith dialogue. They exercise leadership roles in the Christian Union and Muslim Students' Society, organise events and have also now established an Inter-Faith group for the sharing of beliefs and values. The school supports students who wish to meet together for prayer and study of their faith. There is a room for Muslim prayer and funding is being made available to create an inter-faith area in the school. Students respond very well to a wide range of local, national and global charitable fund raising activities, for example in their support for an orphanage in Botswana. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities offered to students. They have very good opportunities to contribute to school life and to their own achievement through the effective School Council and by responding to interviews and surveys about their subjects. Some students interviewed felt that there was a need for the school to provide more external counselling services as an additional support. The school has plans in place to create a dynamic new hi-tech area which will extend the opportunities for students to take even more responsibility for their own learning. It recognises the potential of its Language College status to extend students' awareness and experience of the world-wide importance of religion and to build links with dioceses overseas.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

The school has a good quality programme of worship prepared by members of a Worship Committee. This programme provides opportunities for daily prayer or reflection in a range of contexts, including the weekly whole school assembly, Year and Key Stage groupings and tutor groups. The Sixth Form has its own programme for which students often take responsibility. The programme of themes is appropriate for the school, focusing on a range of broadly Christian values, links with the church calendar and the key festivals of other faiths. Good support materials are provided for tutors and the themes are promoted in staff briefings each week. Students feel that the main focus for worship and prayer is in the weekly whole school act of worship. They feel that the time of quiet prayer and reflection that is always included helps them in their everyday life in school. This belief is held strongly by the headteacher and senior staff interviewed who attribute the ethos of care and respect in the school to the firm faith foundations established in worship. Inspection would support the view that worship has a good impact on students and strengthens the sense of community and the growth of spiritual awareness. Facilities in the hall have improved significantly since the last inspection, enabling leaders of worship to use focal points and images as an enhancement of their message. Governors have shared in whole school worship from time to time, as recommended in the last inspection, and there are regular feedbacks to the governing

body. Students have good opportunities to contribute and lead and the Christian choir contributes to worship regularly. Whilst there are some variations in the response from students about the impact of their tutor group worship, there is a general recognition that worship is a regular and important feature of their school day. It is valued. On inspection, students in a Year 7 tutor group, listened attentively to a musical rendering of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and students in the Lower School responded positively to the leadership of their peers and to the opportunity for prayer. There are no withdrawals from collective worship. In addition to the formal programme, the school offers good opportunities for students to meet for prayer at other times and this is appreciated, particularly by Muslims and Christian students. Spiritual development will benefit further from the planned and funded quiet area for inter-faith prayer to be created in a partitioned section of the stage. Some staff have attended training on worship but the school recognises that more staff could benefit from support in leading key stage and tutor group worship. Evaluation of these times of worship is less formal and the school would benefit from opportunities to share good practice. The school acknowledges that the School Council has expressed regrets about the limited opportunity for students from all year groups to experience Christian worship in the local churches. This is due to the restrictions of capacity. Attendance at Christmas and Founder's Day church services is limited in scope for this reason. It is also recognised that there are insufficient opportunities for students and staff to share in Eucharistic services.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is good**

Religious education is well established and supported. The curriculum is balanced, having been adapted to take account of the school's church status and the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. Since the last inspection, there have been distinct improvements in the quality of marking and feedback to students about the standards they have reached and what they need to do to improve. Standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. Students have strengths in their knowledge and understanding of religion, especially Christianity and Islam. They show good levels of confidence in expressing their own ideas and beliefs. They have positive attitudes to the subject and behave extremely well in lessons. As they move through the key stage, many show increasing skills of evaluation, seeing issues from the point of view of others as well as themselves. Gifted and talented students achieve very well. Weaker students struggle at times with the vocabulary and with their written work generally. All students follow the full course at GCSE. By the end of Year 11, standards at A\* - C are below national averages but above school averages when English and mathematics are included in the statistics. At A\*-G, results are in line with national averages. The department recognises that boys' standards are below that of girls and that a significant difference could be made in the percentage of higher grade passes if the number of students receiving a D grade could be improved. The subject does not receive its full expectation of teaching time for the full course. This is a problem of longstanding which the school intends to address by starting the course in Year 9. The impact of this on the balance of the programme in Years 7-9 is to be monitored by the school. Standards in the Sixth Form are above average, with impressive levels of passes in this increasingly popular Advanced level course. In lessons, Advanced Level students display maturity and skill in analysing issues such as slavery. The quality of teaching and learning observed was at least good and on occasions outstanding. The best teaching during the inspection was seen in the examination groups where the expertise of specialist staff had the greatest impact on learning. For example, when Year 10 students were giving PowerPoint presentations on human treatment of animals, the skilful questioning of the teacher enabled them to grasp fully the implications of religious teaching on the subject. The leadership and management of the department are good. There are solid strategies in place for the monitoring of teaching and learning. There is still a need for consistency across the teaching team because, in some exercise books in the Lower School, there is too much emphasis on simply learning the facts about religion and not enough on the opportunity to reflect and give personal response. One Year 9 class had an excellent opportunity to participate in local project, 'Religion and Place', in which the students worked with artists on two places of worship. Overall in the school, however, the students have insufficient direct experience of the wide variety of places of worship in the area. There is a positive impact on learning when classes are visited by local Christian youth workers but students would benefit from meeting a wider range of visitors.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The headteacher and senior managers, supported by the governing body, are strongly committed to the fundamental importance of faith, prayer and worship in the life of the school. The headteacher leads by example and is outstanding in his commitment to developing the spiritual foundation of the school and to finding new ways of serving its community. Staff support the school's vision and make a commitment to it on application. Some staff and sixth form students take an active role in supporting students in their religious commitments through groups such as the Christian Union and Muslim Students' Society. The school's status is evident in documentation, in the new display of the mission statement and in some signs and symbols around the school. There have been improvements recently in the quality of display as a result of the appointment of a co-ordinator to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. This visible evidence of the school's ethos would benefit from being strengthened further. Students are clear that the school is a church school and many gave this as the reason for parental choice. Muslim students feel strongly that the school values their religious background and they speak highly of the way all faiths are respected and the spirit of tolerance that exists. Since the last church school inspection, the school has addressed most of the issues raised, although it has not made progress on the appointment of a chaplain. There is good communication with parents and surveys show a very high level of satisfaction with the school and all it offers. Links with feeder schools and other external agencies are excellent. The school has built very good relationship with its community. For example, it offers twilight language classes to students and their parents and also runs the 'Magic Me' project, a communication project linking Health and Social Care students to elderly people in a local residential home. The school is not complacent in seeking to find further ways in which it can serve its community. It regularly reviews its position as a church school in a multi-faith community and takes into account the comments that students have made. This is a systematic process of review undertaken by members of the governing body. The development of an inter-faith centre for prayer and reflection is a consequence of this process. The school also recognises that the existing good links with its local churches could be strengthened so that there are more opportunities for students to become familiar with the practice of Anglican worship.

SIAS report July 2008 Sir John Cass and Redcoat VA Secondary School, Stepney. E10RH