

Kevin's Story

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Old Ford Primary School Context



The vast majority of pupils come from low-income households which are subject to unemployment. Approximately 60% of our pupils receive free school meals. Many pupils come from single-parent households where positive male role models are not evident. There is little evidence of strong extended family networks. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a substantial majority being Bangladeshi. The majority speak English as an additional language. Most of these pupils begin school with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. These difficulties largely relate to literacy, including speech, language and communication, and emotional and behavioural needs.

The school is located in Bow, in the borough of Tower Hamlets, one of the most densely populated inner city areas in the country. Tower Hamlets covers an area of less than 8 square miles and yet it houses over 206,000 people. The employment rate in the area is 54.6% compared with 74.3% for the whole of England. The unemployment rate in the area is 13.2% compared with 5.5% for the whole of England. Many of the school's families live in deprivation.

The majority of pupils stay at home during out-of-school and weekend hours because parents and carers believe the area is unsafe. In a recent pupil survey, many year 6 pupils said they know someone personally who has taken drugs. Many families are afraid to use the local park and amenities for fear of crime and parents and carers discourage pupils from exploring the local environment because of fears for their safety. They rarely take advantage of free child travel or free entry to places of interest, for example museums, due to lack of knowledge and interest and lack of time. Therefore most pupils have a very limited or no knowledge of local history in their immediate environment, London and beyond.

What do business partners offer our school?

"Outstanding links to external agencies and partners ensure that pupils needs are fully met, especially those more vulnerable" Old Ford Primary School Ofsted report – June 2008

Old Ford Primary School works in partnership with a number of businesses, many local, some from Canary Wharf and several from the City of London. We see these partnerships as essential in supporting our pupils education and providing aspirational and inspirational role models.

As stated above, many of our pupils have no experience of a world outside their immediate local area. In a simple sense, when a pupil sits and spends time with a business partner, whether talking, reading or working on school work together, it shows our pupils that there is a different world out there, and that there are other employment and lifestyle opportunities available to them outside of their limited world of experience. Our business partners are all positive, aspirational role models for our pupils and living examples of how education can improve your life and secure you a good job.

Many of our pupils come from non-English speaking backgrounds and do not speak English at home. Many of the parents cannot read English. Just sitting with an adult who is fluent in English and having a conversation about what they have read is of huge benefit to our pupils, the importance of which cannot be overstated.

Because of their home situations, many pupils have no one at home who is able, or willing to sit and read with them. This is something that most of us take for granted; however some families do not even own a single book let alone take the time to read one with their children.

For these reasons, the half an hour a week in which our reading partners sit, talk and read with some of our most vulnerable pupils is of vital importance to our pupils education and development and something that all staff at Old Ford are hugely grateful for.

On behalf of all staff and pupils, thank you!