

Hackney Free & Parochial
Church of England
Secondary School



This is an edited version of the Headteacher's Address at our Open Evening on the 16th September 2009.

I am delighted to welcome children in Year 5 and 6 and their families to Hackney Free and Parochial. This event is about helping you make a decision about the right school for your child - for some of you this will be the correct school, for others it may not but I still thank you for being here.

Hackney Free is a rapidly improving school. Last year, exam results in Year 11 improved by on average 10%. Almost half of our students gained a GCSE A* to C in Maths. This is a great improvement on the previous year - but it is not the limit of what we will achieve in the future.

Our Year 10s took some parts of their GCSEs early for the first time - 47% achieved a grade C or above in Maths on their first two GCSE modules. Our Year 9 end of Key Stage 3 results were the best ever. Our ambition is to continue to improve by 10% per year until we are locally and nationally recognised as an outstanding school. I believe this will have happened by the time your children take their exams.

I have been Headteacher of Hackney Free and Parochial since April 2008 and we have already made significant improvements not just in results but in student behaviour, staffing, and student attitudes to learning.

There are many different types of school leaders in Hackney at the moment. I want to make it clear that I am not an Interim Head (that is just another word for temporary) neither am I an Executive Head which means having two or three jobs and spending about a day a week in each school. I am the permanent, seven day a week Head of Hackney Free. I arrive at 7 am and leave around 6 pm on a good day. I have no other ambitions beyond working with the excellent staff here to help achieve the very best for our students and this community.

Our students know what is expected of them: arrive on time, dressed in full school uniform and equipped to learn; treat staff and students with respect; work to the best of their ability in lessons and complete any homework they are set. These simple messages, regularly reinforced, have led to massively improved student behaviour. This is now a calm, hard working school. You can see for yourself by attending one of our Open Mornings or telephoning our school office to arrange a tour.

We reward our young people for doing the right thing. We have a system of credits and postcards of praise that are sent home by post; this ensures parents get the good news and not just the bad. We have regular Rewards Assemblies where everyone is presented with certificates for aspects they are doing well in, and our termly prize draws where students with excellent attendance and punctuality are placed in a prize draw to win a bike, MP3 player or mobile phone.

The school has a stable, experienced staff. We have been fully staffed for over a year; your child will only be taught by a supply teacher or cover supervisor if the regular teacher is ill. Other schools are not as fortunate as us. A look at their websites will usually find plenty of adverts to fill staff vacancies. Teachers are happy to work with a very positive atmosphere.

Our school mission statement is: Believe and Achieve. We believe that our young people can achieve and ensure they have ambitions and aspirations. Each year we take many of our students on University taster days, for example.

We are an 11-16 school. Our relatively small site means we lack room for a Sixth Form. Last year Hackney Free and Parochial created a partnership with Hackney Community College called the South Hackney Sixth. This guarantees our students a place at the college if they want it. Our teaching staff also teach some 'A' level subjects at the College and we hope in the future to have Sixth Form courses running on our site.

We are also in partnership with Gordonstoun School, a boarding school in Scotland who have educated members of the Royal Family. Over the last seven years, having gained outstanding GCSE results at Hackney Free and Parochial, a number of students have taken 'A' levels at Gordonstoun on full scholarships. A member of last year's Year 11, Clayton Jeremiah, has just started at Gordonstoun studying 'A' level sciences. It's good enough for the Royal Family it's good enough for students at Hackney Free.

Our school has a proud history and unique tradition. Hackney Free and Parochial was founded in 1520 by Christopher Urswick. At that time education was only for children of parents who could afford it. Local children could attend our school without paying - this explains the 'Free' in 'Hackney Free'. We are a Church of England school of the parish - hence Parochial. We remain true to Urswick's vision of the school. To provide high quality, free education for the community of Hackney. For this reason we are not a school of expensive, striped blazers which are difficult for hard pressed families to afford. Our uniform is smart, good value and practical.

As we celebrate our 490th anniversary in 2010 we will move into phase one of our new building. In total £17 million is being spent on a complete rebuild of Hackney Free on our current site. Phase One will be completed by the time your children arrive; the entire project should be finished by the time your child is in Year 8. We will have state of the art facilities, including a Sports Centre and Astroturf, new Library and a school with ICT facilities in every room.

However new buildings don't make a successful school - people do. Our school is relatively small with 150 in each year group and no plans to add to our numbers. We have a fixed Head of Year 7, Ms Twell, who is an expert at managing the Transition between primary and secondary school and spends the Summer Term visiting primary schools. Your child's personal tutor meets them every day in registration and is the first point of contact for parents / carers. We offer a high level of care which can begin as early as 7.30 am with Breakfast Club. We also have extensive lunchtime, after school and Saturday provision as we are designated as an Extended School.

We are a Christian school in terms of our values and ethos. However we are also an inclusive school - we are a Christian school not just a school for Christians. We welcome families of faith and no faith. Under our admissions criteria 50% of places are offered to families with siblings here or who live locally. If you are a regular worshiper please complete the faith form and return it to me at the school. This is as well as completing the rest of the process through the Learning Trust or local authority where you live.

Hackney Free and Parochial is a rapidly improving school with many students already gaining excellent exam results. We are the only school with Hackney in our name and have been central to this community for nearly 500 years. I very much hope that after what you have seen and heard this evening you will want to join us.

Richard Brown

Richard Brown
Headteacher