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2 December 2016

Julie Pierzchniak  
Acting Headteacher  
Ian Mikardo School  
60 William Guy Gardens  
Talwin Street  
London  
E3 3LF

Dear Ms Pierzchniak

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Ian Mikardo School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and leadership and management in the school.

### **Evidence**

Meetings took place with you, other school leaders and the chair of the governing body. The school's parent surveys were taken into account and a group of parents were spoken to. Discussions were held with representatives of the local authority, including the school's educational welfare officer (EWO), the lead officer for safeguarding and the previous head of service for learning and achievement who still supports the school. Pupils were spoken to informally throughout the inspection. The school's recruitment procedures and a sample of staff employment files were checked. The single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements were scrutinised. Admission, attendance and exclusion records were checked. The school's website, statutory policies, and reviews and investigations commissioned by the local authority in response to complaints made by parents were evaluated.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

Ian Mikardo School is a small community special school for pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. There are currently 38 boys enrolled at the school and nearly all are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding. About a quarter of pupils are from White British backgrounds and the rest come from a range of minority ethnic groups. A higher than average proportion speak English as an additional language. Pupils arrive and leave the school at different points throughout the year.

A number of complaints and allegations from parents about the school's recruitment practices led to a period of significant disruption at the end of the summer term. The headteacher is currently on sickness absence and the school is being led by the deputy headteacher. The school benefits from a stable and committed staff team and there are no current vacancies. The school is seeking to become a multi-academy trust from 1 January 2017.

## **Safeguarding arrangements**

The school places safeguarding at the heart of all that it does. Safeguarding systems and procedures are fully embedded and understood by all staff. Detailed risk assessments are carried out when pupils first join the school. Individual safety plans are developed in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and other professionals, to determine what each pupil can do safely. Leaders and staff do whatever it takes to support each pupil and ensure that they are not discriminated against unfairly. However, this is not a mandate for pupils to behave poorly. Expectations are consistently high and although the school does not use formal sanctions, there are clear consequences and actions taken to ensure that staff and other pupils are kept safe. For example, leaders will not hesitate to refer serious incidents to the police for further investigation. Pupils who have been excluded or are assessed as being too dangerous to teach on site are taught at home or at an alternative place of safety. They receive full-time educational provision and one-to-one support from staff whom they know and trust. Their transition back into group sessions at the school is managed carefully and actioned as quickly as possible.

Relationships are positive between staff and pupils. Pupils like being at the school, feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns. The school's expressed aim for pupils to 'come with a past and leave with a future' is actively supported by all staff. Adults model the behaviours and communication that they wish pupils to emulate, in a consistent and effective manner. Consequently, the school is a happy and well-ordered place to learn.

The school building, grounds and resources are of the highest quality and have been specifically designed to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils appreciate this and incidents of vandalism or damage are relatively rare. The attractive diner serves

healthy food throughout the day and the school's flat provides a homely setting for pupils and parents to cook and socialise together. There are showers and laundry facilities available for those who need them. Staff at the school's hairdressing and beauty salon encourage boys to take pride in their appearance and personal hygiene. For some it is a haven in which to relax and chat calmly to someone while receiving a hand massage, a haircut or manicure. It has proved highly effective in addressing sexual stereotyping and aggressive behaviours.

Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the day both on- and off site. They usually move around the building in a controlled manner and corridors are calm and empty during lessons. Arrangements for entering and leaving the school are safely managed. The curriculum is carefully planned to allow pupils to accept increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour as a result of the effective support they receive. There are regular opportunities to participate in activities, trips and visits outside school to allow pupils to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. As a result, many successfully take their next steps as young adults and move on to college placements when they leave.

Although overall attendance rates are below those of other schools, nearly all pupils attend more frequently than they did before they joined the school. When pupils do not attend, this is immediately followed up and a home visit arranged the same day if necessary. All professionals, including teachers, social workers, school nurses and the EWO, meet every week to address attendance concerns and agree the next actions to be taken. Leaders are very aware that the behaviours and lifestyle choices of many pupils place them at potential risk of harm. They share information and work very closely with all key workers to minimise these risks. Staff receive regular child protection training and updates to help them recognise when pupils may need additional support, and leaders make further referrals as necessary. They are knowledgeable about the lives of their pupils outside school and work with families to ensure that pupils stay safe. Systems for recording and following up on attendance, exclusions and behavioural incidents are robust and well managed. They comply with all statutory guidance issued.

The school's recruitment systems are well managed. All of the required checks are made before any appointments are confirmed. There are effective systems for gathering references and checking on previous employment histories. Volunteers are appropriately supervised and all new staff receive a thorough induction to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are understood. Pupils and staff are required to use telephones, laptops and tablets in line with the agreed policy and sign to accept these conditions. The school has worked closely with officers from the local authority to confirm that their recruitment procedures are appropriate. Any concerns are discussed with local authority personnel staff to ensure that pupils are not placed at risk.

Leaders take pains to ensure the well-being of adults who work at the school. Staff attend regular individual and group supervision sessions with an experienced

psychotherapist employed by the school. Consequently, sickness rates are low and many staff have remained at the school for a number of years.

### **The quality of leadership and management**

Governors are determined that the innovative leadership and management that the school has benefited from over many years will be continued. They have planned carefully for the future leadership of the school and these plans have helped to cover the unplanned absence of the headteacher this term. New senior leaders have been well supported and developed to allow them to take the next steps in their careers. Roles and responsibilities are clear and all leaders constantly check that their actions are making a difference. They are united in believing that their pupils deserve only the very best. This is reflected in the high quality of provision that is offered and the excellent care and support pupils receive.

Governors are knowledgeable and use their expertise to provide school leaders with highly effective support. They attend regular safeguarding training and hold leaders strongly to account for maintaining high standards and implementing the school's improvement plan. They are driving forward plans to allow the school to become a multi-academy trust, but continue to fulfil their other responsibilities in the meantime. For example, they have recognised that the website is missing some important information for parents and have prioritised the review of the safeguarding policy and special educational needs (SEN) information report in order to correct this. Governors took very decisive action last term when threats and some acts of violence required them to seek legal advice and review the safety of pupils and staff. They quickly assessed any potential risks and helped leaders to design and implement an alternative, off-site timetable for the last few weeks of the summer term. This meant that pupils continued to attend regularly. High standards of teaching, learning and assessment and the promotion of excellent personal development, behaviour and welfare were maintained and continue as normal this term.

### **External support**

Leaders and staff work very closely with professionals from the police service, youth offending teams, and health and social care agencies to promote the safety of pupils within school and the wider community. Children missing from education and those who are in danger of child sexual exploitation or involvement in gangs are monitored particularly well. The school's work with the local authority's education welfare service has been effective in ensuring that all attendance concerns are picked up immediately and appropriate actions agreed promptly. An external review of the school's recruitment practices identified no concerns. The local authority continues to support leaders and governors while the school seeks to become a multi-academy trust.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Seek further opportunities to work with parents and representatives of the local community to share the innovative and highly effective practice that exists within the school.
- Ensure that parents can access all the required policies and information on the school's website and that these reflect the latest guidance issued.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox

**Her Majesty's Inspector**