



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Ian Mikardo High School

Tower Hamlets Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 22-23 March 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

© Crown copyright 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the school	iv
Introduction	1
Main findings	1
Key issues	3
Inspection findings	3
Standards achieved by the pupils	3
The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	4
The quality of education	5
Leadership and management	6
Implementation of the action plan	7
Appendix – Information about the inspection	8

Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Ian Mikardo High School
Type of school:	Special
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Headteacher:	Ms C Lillis
Address of school:	60 William Guy Gardens Talwin Street London E3 3LF
Telephone:	020 8981 2413
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr P Williams
Local education authority area:	Corporate Director of Education Education Department London Borough of Tower Hamlets Mulberry Place 5 Clove Crescent London E14 2BG
Unique reference number:	131598
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr A Littlewood, Additional Inspector
Dates of inspection:	22-23 March 2004

Introduction

1. Ian Mikardo High School is a day special school for boys aged between 11 and 16 who have severe and complex emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. It is situated in Bow, which is in the north east of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. There are currently 30 pupils on the school's roll although it has the capacity to admit 50. Many pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and their families are themselves experiencing difficulties. All the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and almost all are eligible for free school meals. They have abilities which are generally in line with the expectations for their age but, because of their difficulties, most have missed considerable periods of schooling through non-attendance and exclusion and their attainments are often well below their potential.

2. The school was inspected in October 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of October 2001. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on five occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In March 2004 one HMI and an Additional Inspector inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of October 2001.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- the pupils have made at least steady progress in most subjects, particularly over the past two terms. In English and mathematics their progress is generally good. Several have made marked advances in reading, speaking, listening and the application of numeracy skills to solve problems, and their progress in writing is satisfactory. Their progress in science is satisfactory and they are learning and applying a suitable range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT);
 - there have been marked improvements in the pupils' attitudes to learning, their self-esteem and their behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. Their responses were good in half the lessons, satisfactory in five and unsatisfactory in one. There are still occasions when the pupils are distressed or unsettled but this generally arises as a result of incidents or experiences which have occurred outside school;
 - the school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides excellent pastoral support. Links with
-

parents and the local community are good. The school runs a summer school and is open on Saturday mornings for a range of activities. This is very popular with local families;

- attendance has improved remarkably over the past two terms and is now at an average of over 88 per cent. This compares favourably with similar schools;
- there have been steady improvements in the quality of teaching; it was good or very good in ten of the 12 lessons observed and satisfactory in the other two. The planning and preparation are of a high standard and appropriate styles of presentation are adopted. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together, managing the pupils' behaviour and supporting their learning;
- the curriculum has many good features, includes the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, citizenship, careers education and personal, social and health education, and it meets the pupils' needs. The provision for design and technology in Key Stage 3 is, however, unsatisfactory. The courses at Key Stage 4 allow the pupils to achieve nationally recognised qualifications, and there are good opportunities for work-based learning and college links;
- the pupils' progress is satisfactorily assessed through questioning and marking work alongside the pupils. However, assessment lacks a common format, is insufficiently linked to the pupils' targets and the outcomes need to be shared more widely among the staff;
- the school provides a safe and secure environment in which the pupils can learn;
- the school is well led and managed, morale is high and the staff work effectively together as a strong team;
- in 2003, a significant budget deficit, which arose mainly during the period prior to the headteacher's appointment, led the local education authority (LEA) to take responsibility for managing the school's budget. Close liaison has been maintained between the governors and LEA and it is the LEA's intention to establish the school in a safe financial position and return responsibility to the governors in the course of the 2004-5 financial year;
- the governors provide very good support for the headteacher and have worked closely with the LEA to seek alternative sources of funding for the school;
- the LEA has reduced the number of pupils joining the school over the past two years. Now that the school has become more settled it needs to reconsider this action, as several of the classes are very small and the opportunities to build good social skills in reasonable-sized groups is limited.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers, staff and LEA need to:
- continue to provide additional support for those pupils with low standards of numeracy and literacy;
 - continue to monitor and track the pupils' progress and prepare them for work and further study at college by ensuring that they enjoy success in as many accredited courses as the can;
 - improve the provision for design and technology as soon as possible;
 - along with the LEA, increase the school roll over the next two terms;
 - continue to develop the assessment policy and create a system which ensures that all staff can have an overview of the progress each pupil makes in each subject and set the pupils more realistic targets for learning.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The pupils' progress overall has improved considerably in most subjects over the past two terms. In English, advances in speaking, listening and reading are good, with several pupils making marked gains in their reading skills. This is mainly due to the positive and purposeful attitudes the pupils have shown towards raising their reading standards. The pupils are studying plays and viewed a video recording of *Becket* with particular interest and good concentration. Progress in writing still lags behind the other three elements of English; the continued focus on the development of this skill when studying other subjects needs to be sustained as the pupils have limited confidence in their writing abilities. There have been good advances in the pupils' spelling skills with all teachers reinforcing this aspect through their focus on key words.

8. Most pupils are making good progress in mathematics, especially through their knowledge of the four rules and their understanding of fractions and percentages. The pupils' mental mathematics skills are much improved and most work with reasonable speed and accuracy, and they are able to apply their skills to solving problems.

9. The pupils' progress in science is satisfactory. In one lesson the pupils demonstrated good knowledge of angular measures and graphical representation while exploring the properties of mirrors and reflection. They made sensible predictions, accurate measurements and produced clear, well-labelled graphs of their results.

10. The pupils' progress in ICT is satisfactory. It has been affected in the recent past by the limited range and condition of resources and inadequate teaching but regular access to ICT is now programmed, computer studies are timetabled and the pupils are encouraged to

use ICT in most subjects. In addition, new equipment is on order which will be dedicated to extending the range of strategies available to improve the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. There has been a significant positive change in the pupils' attitudes to study over the past two terms. They generally enjoy coming to school. The average attendance is now over 88 per cent and several have been present every day so far this term. On arrival, some as early as 8.30 am, they are welcomed by the staff, enjoy a cup of tea and a piece of toast and rehearse the routines and expectations of the school with their classmates in a friendly social setting, which is effectively, yet informally, monitored by adults. The inclusion manager, who has a background in social work, takes a key role during these sessions that are focused on the pupils' personal education. She is ably supported by the teaching assistants and occasionally parents.

12. During the rest of the day the pupils move sensibly from lesson to lesson and take an interest in their studies. Their levels of concentration are increasing, they take an active part in discussions and their ability to work for sustained periods on their own is growing. They are beginning to take a pride in their work and pleasure in each other's successes. This was particularly noticeable in a physical education lesson where the boys offered encouragement and applauded each other as they succeeded in learning a new skill on the trampoline.

13. The relationships between the pupils and between the pupils and the staff are very good. The school is a happy, orderly community with a strong ethos. It provides a friendly, safe learning environment in which the pupils' work is attractively displayed alongside fresh flowers. The pupils show respect for the premises and have decorated several rooms themselves, selecting the themes and colours.

14. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils respect each other and appreciate each other's talents. The school make very good use of the local neighbourhood to raise the pupils' cultural awareness and understanding and there are regular visits to places of interest, which make the curriculum more relevant.

15. The pupils' behaviour has undergone a great change over the past year. There are very few occasions when the pupils become angry or distressed as staff are quick to spot signs of anxiety and are almost always able to resolve the problem speedily and enable the pupil to settle and return to work without loss of face. The staff are increasingly following the principles of restorative justice and conflict resolution when dealing with incidents. They encourage the pupils to take responsibility for their actions and put right the harm done, and the school community is successfully helping to support both the victim and the offender. There have been no incidents which have required physical restraint since September 2003 and no exclusions at all so far in the spring term.

16. The school has a communication room in which regular class discussions are arranged. Through this strategy most of the pupils have learned to accept other points of view and express their thoughts in a mature and acceptable manner. In addition, pupils can talk freely and in confidence to an experienced and qualified member of staff should they wish.

17. A local businessman has sponsored a monthly award of £200 to be presented to the pupil who has made the most effort to improve. The prize has to be spent on something for

the school as a whole. This has inspired most of the pupils to improve their attitudes to work and, as they have become more successful, so their self-esteem has risen and their poor behaviour diminished. There have been several proud winners and the school has been able to purchase items such as music equipment and a settee for the communications room.

The quality of education

18. The quality of teaching has continued to improve steadily. It was very good in one lesson, good in nine and satisfactory in the other two. Planning is consistently good throughout the school with the intended outcomes clearly stated during the introduction to each lesson. The activities set challenge and interest the pupils and build on previous work. The lessons proceed at a suitable pace. All the staff work well together and use encouragement, praise and good humour effectively to promote learning and raise the pupils' confidence in their abilities.

19. The pupils' understanding and progress are satisfactorily assessed through questioning and working alongside them while marking their work. Although parents are regularly kept informed of their child's progress, assessment needs to be more closely linked to the pupils' individual targets, shared more widely amongst the staff and have a common format.

20. The school's curriculum framework, which groups various subjects together under the titles My Future, My World, My Body, My Passport, My Self and My Work is now well established and clearly identifies the topics to be taught, the intended outcomes and when they should be introduced. Improvements in the teachers' medium and long-term plans ensure that there is a good match between the pupils' learning needs and the work which is set.

21. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has many good features including, drama, circus skills, music-making using electronic equipment, and art which includes the use of a range of media. However, while there are opportunities for food technology and some design and construction work is programmed into art lessons, provision for design and technology is unsatisfactory and the well-equipped workshop remains unused, due to the lack of a qualified teacher. The school is endeavouring to address this, in the short term by working in partnership with a local secondary school. Additional literacy and numeracy sessions are arranged for those pupils whose skills in these areas fall well below their potential. Several pupils have found it very difficult to face up to their weaknesses but over the past few months most are making good progress and some have made considerable advances in their reading and calculation skills.

22. The Key Stage 4 curriculum offers a broad range of GCSE and vocational options and provides good opportunities for work-based learning and college links. All the courses studied allow the pupils to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. A particular success has been the NVQ hairdressing course which the school runs. It has attracted several part-time students from the locality and the pupils, under supervision, are able to practise their skills on friends, relations and members of the local community at the school club which meets each Saturday morning. This very popular arrangement, which also offers music-making, food technology, art and sports activities arose following a successful summer school.

23. The transition sessions at the start and end of the school day are used effectively to prepare the pupils for learning and to resolve any issues that have arisen during the day. These periods provide good opportunities for the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development. There is also an expanding range of extracurricular activities available on most evenings, including gardening, music-making and food technology. Several of these are led by volunteers from the local community.

24. The school continues to receive weekly support from an independent curriculum consultant. She has recently been helping the teaching staff to co-ordinate their planning and build on cross-curricular links. In addition she has provided training to improve and broaden their range of teaching strategies to better match the pupils' learning styles.

25. The school has been selected by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to contribute to the working group studying "Personalised education within alternative provision at Key Stage 4." A case study of good practice is being produced to show how the pupils' needs are being met through the school's curriculum and assessment procedures, the approach to addressing the pupils' behaviour, good relationships and the application of the principles of restorative justice.

Leadership and management

26. The school is well led and managed, morale is good and all adults work closely together as a strong team. The leadership group, which comprises the headteacher and inclusion manager, have a clear strategic vision for the school and have effectively steered the development of a good range of policies and procedures. The school has a clear organisational structure and curriculum co-ordinators have been appointed for all but one of the areas, which is currently covered by a temporary appointment.

27. The governing body and LEA actively support the school. Recent appointments and re-organisation have enabled the governors to undertake their responsibilities more effectively and communication between the school, the parents, the governors and the LEA is good.

28. In 2003, a significant budget deficit, which arose mainly during the period prior to the headteacher's appointment, led the LEA to take responsibility for managing the school's budget. This enabled the governors and headteacher to focus on and maintain the good progress being made in teaching, learning and curriculum development. As part of the plan to address the budget deficit and provide a stable financial base on which to proceed, the governors have worked closely with the LEA to seek alternative sources of funding for the school. They have also been shadowing the LEA in its work and it is the LEA's intention to establish the school in a safe financial position and return responsibility to the governors in the course of the 2004-5 financial year.

29. In order to enable the school to re-establish itself during a period of considerable staffing turbulence, the LEA reduced the number of pupils joining the school over the past two years. Now that the school has become more settled it needs to reconsider this action as several of the classes are very small and the opportunities to build good social skills in reasonable-sized groups is limited. Numbers have steadily increased since the appointment of the headteacher from 17 to 30, although the school has the capacity to take 50 pupils.

Implementation of the action plan

30. The inspection report of 2001 required the school to address four key issues. These principally related to: securing effective leadership and management; improving the pupils' behaviour; raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and improving the structure and organisation of the curriculum. Good progress has been made to address all of these issues but there is still some work to be done to ensure that all the improvements can be sustained.

31. The leadership and management of the school are now effective. The roles and responsibilities of the curriculum co-ordinators are clearly defined and this area continues to receive additional attention from both the LEA's adviser and the curriculum consultant.

32. Teaching has much improved, lessons are well planned and the staff continue review their practice, develop whole-school assessment procedures and consolidate their teaching strategies.

33. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved considerably and they are now making at least satisfactory and often good progress in all their work.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in October 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in May and November 2002, and in March, July and November 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of October 2001.

In March 2004, an HMI and an Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twelve lessons or parts of lessons, two breakfast clubs and registration periods and one afternoon tea session were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors, the LEA's adviser, the curriculum consultant, the learning adviser and psychotherapist; informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of October 2001 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

