



# Ian Mikardo School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 131598  
**LEA** Tower Hamlets LEA  
**Inspection number** 282232  
**Inspection dates** 20 June 2006 to 20 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Glenys Fox HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	60 William Guy Gardens
<b>School category</b>	Community special		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		E3 3LF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	02089812413
<b>Number on roll</b>	37	<b>Fax number</b>	02089812418
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Ms Jo Williams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 October 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Claire Lillis

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI. In the course of the day visit, she met with a range of staff and students, the chair and vice chair of governors, a group of parents and grandparents and the school's psychotherapist. Paired observations of several lessons were conducted with the headteacher and the school council was observed. The school's excellent preparatory papers, including its clear self-evaluation document, provided critical evidence in shaping the judgements. The receipt of 19 parents' questionnaires further assisted the writing of this report.

## Description of the school

Ian Mikardo high school is a day special school for secondary age boys with severe and complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It is located in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets which is rated as having the fourth highest level of deprivation in the country. All the boys have statements of special educational need and all had significant difficulties settling to learn in their previous schools. Many were excluded. A high proportion experience extremely challenging circumstances outside school and remain vulnerable.

There are 35 boys on roll and two Key Stage 4 girls. Four of the boys are looked after children. Three quarters of the boys are of white UK heritage and the rest are from a range of black heritages. All receive free school meals, 80 per cent have current or previous social services involvement and nearly 70 per cent are known to the Youth Offending Team. Sixty five per cent have involvement of mental health services.

Many boys are of average ability overall but have achieved poorly in their previous schools and a relatively high proportion experience literacy difficulties. Also, when they start at the school, many have fallen behind in their basic skills because of poor attendance and concentration. There is high mobility in the pupil population and many join the school after Year 7. The school has seven boys who previously attended residential special schools.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The school motto is, 'Come with a past, leave with a future'. The school works very effectively to address the negative experiences many pupils have had in their previous schools and sets them on the road to much brighter futures. It improves the life chances of many vulnerable pupils by restoring their self-esteem and helping them to see themselves as learners with potential for achievement both in school and beyond. One parent said with pride, 'What's happened in the past is forgotten. It is a fresh start. Before he came, he never mentioned the future. Now he talks about going to college. It gives them skills for the future'.

Since the last inspection of 2004, when it was removed from special measures, the school has gone from strength to strength, in spite of some staffing difficulties. Problems with the budget, a legacy from special measures, have been resolved, thanks to excellent support from governors, and the school now provides very good value for money. It is a fine and rare example of excellent practice in a school of this type.

Why is the school so successful? There are a number of factors which are key.

The main indicator of its success is that the boys all want to be there, and, once at the school, the majority make tremendous progress. Many are completely transformed by their school experience. The school has a much higher attendance rate than similar schools and this is a testimony to its success. Despite having taken exams and completed courses, all the Year 11 boys were present in school and enjoying work experiences provided by the school. Although they are all moving on to gainful post-16 courses, they are sorry to leave. One said with feeling, 'This school feels like a home. I am safe the way everything is. I don't want to leave'.

The headteacher demonstrates outstanding leadership and creative strategic thinking. The staff, parents, governors and students speak very highly of her.

One parent said, 'I would back Claire 100 per cent for what she has done here. She teaches the boys how to respect themselves'. Another said 'Claire is very caring. She has a lot of compassion and looks for other staff with the same compassion'. A Year 10 boy said 'Since Claire came, everything changed. I like the school a lot'. The head herself says, 'We are constantly learning and revising our practice. We don't sit still and we are not complacent. We know our outcomes are fantastic but there is a whole load of development still to be done'. There are exciting community links developing with Bromley-by-Bow Community Centre. The school has ambitious plans for the future and has applied for specialist school status to support these plans.

The headteacher is well supported by a committed senior team and a team of staff with a wide range of relevant skills. The deputy head explained 'This school is needs led. We look at what the boys need, we look at the sort of staff we need and then ask, 'What do staff need to support them?'' One Year 11 boy said with appreciation, 'They are amazing teachers. You learn a lot from them'. A parent wrote 'I am truly grateful to all the staff. My son was a confused and depressed little boy, who had no confidence

in himself or others. He is now growing into a confident young man which I believe is due to the help and support he has received'.

The personal development of the pupils is outstanding. Once they join the school they quickly become attuned to its culture and many start to enjoy their school life for the first time. One parent reported, 'My child was out of school for two years. It was really hard for him to go into school. Here he has been able to go into class and start work. He never had that chance before'. Another said, 'It was a fresh start here. The difference is phenomenal'. A third parent said about his son 'The staff build up personal relationships, along with that comes trust and then he will take on what they say. He has learned not just to respect but to trust others'. The students say how much they value their school experience.... 'the best thing is, the teachers are always there to support you'.... 'You have got to grow up otherwise you never get anywhere. We get a good education here'. The happy faces around the school demonstrate the fact that students feel very much a part of the school. In observing the school council at work it is clear that students are fully included in all decisions about their school. There is a good range of additional activities and experiences provided for the students. There have been many educational, social and cultural outings which students talk about enthusiastically, pointing out the displays of photographs around the school. These have included trips to Butlins at Bognor, and to France and Spain.

Another major key to the school's success is the high quality of care, guidance and support which is provided to each pupil. Every boy is valued and is offered a level of care which is exemplary. From providing transport to school to support for medical appointments, from advice about life outside school to conflict resolution, the staff work tirelessly to improve the coping skills of the boys. The boys can see what the staff do for them in 'going the extra mile' and this engenders a spirit of mutual respect. Any problems are swiftly addressed and resolved to the benefit of the pupils. Each student has an individual education plan which is framed under the five outcome areas from the 'Every Child Matters' guidance: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being. The school makes good use of these plans to personalise the learning of each student, and each student writes their own plan. In the last section of the plan, students have to complete the sentence, 'One thing I would really love to do in the next six months is...' On one plan, picked at random, the student had written...'learn more'.

The school works effectively with a wide range of external services in order to make provision for the full range of needs. The psychotherapist works with staff in regular seminars to provide support to them and this is valued highly. One member of staff said, 'We acknowledge that working with such raw emotion all day can be very wearing. The psychotherapist reframes stuff and gives us reassurance'. There is a robust programme of staff development led by the School Improvement and Development Teacher.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The boys, who start at the school with levels of attainment significantly below national levels, make tremendous progress as they move on in the school although overall standards for most pupils remain below national levels. The school sets demanding and realistic targets and the boys rise to the challenge. There has been a year on year increase in the academic and vocational attainment and the school recognises the need to further improve these levels and provide a greater range of courses and accreditation. It is well on the way to doing this and predicted outcomes for the current Year 9 pupils and Year 11 pupils are very good.

There is a very effective focus on improving the basic skills of the students. Many make rapid progress in improving their levels of literacy and become confident readers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The boys learn how to behave in a classroom setting. The curriculum is carefully planned to make sure there are many opportunities for pupils to learn to take turns, share and work with others, and manage their feelings more appropriately. They are encouraged to resolve disagreements and take responsibility for what they have done. A senior teacher told me, 'We are a talking school'. There were many examples of calm and productive conversations with pupils.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The students are well taught. This was clear in the lessons observed and in discussion with the boys about what they had learned. Staff make every effort to ensure that lessons are lively and engaging. There is a good range of information and communication technology in the school but it is not yet being used to its full potential to support the lessons. There is good support for pupils with specific difficulties. The school uses a range of helpful assessment tools and tracks the progress of the students effectively. The looked after children are carefully monitored.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum presented to the boys is innovative, appealing and engaging. It has been reframed to make it look different from their previous school's so does not represent failure. It is organised into five areas, My Body, My Future, My Self, My Passport and My World. A recent addition has been 'My Voice and My School'. The work produced by students in several of these curriculum areas was outstanding,

notably art and design, technology and physical education and there were some good examples of pupils' work in other areas. The school has a hairdressing salon and a sound studio on site and students are supported well in developing their skills in these areas. Accreditation to recognise the students' achievements is being developed.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support to pupils and to their families are of a very high quality. The 'Every Child Matters' agenda is evident in all aspects of the school's work. All are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, to have regard to safety, to enjoy and achieve well, to make a positive contribution to school and community and to achieve economic well being.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher provides exceptional leadership and the overall management of the school is good. Parents value highly the headteacher's leadership and staff describe her as inspirational. The pupils are full of praise for her. The senior management team works effectively together. There is a clear sense of teamwork and a shared vision of helping every boy to achieve well in all aspects of school life. The deputy head said, 'The kids feel very cared for, very wanted and we want them in.' Staff support and development is good, the teaching assistants feel well supported through training opportunities and are valued as equal partners in the school.

The governing body is very effective and provides valued support.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

I am writing to tell you about what I found when I came to visit you. I really enjoyed my day and thank you very much for making me so welcome. I really appreciated the tour of the school by four of the boys and it was clear to me that you are very proud of your school and of the staff who teach you. You are right to feel proud. Yours is an outstanding school and a special place to learn. There are many very good things about it. It was great to see you all so happy, working hard and learning so much. Ms Lillis and all the staff are fantastic. They do an excellent job to support your learning and your care and, as a result, you are all doing well at school. Several of you told me that you like the fact that staff treat you with respect and that you respect the staff. Some of you said that school is like a home in some ways because the staff look after you very well.

I was impressed by the way you are learning to respect each other and to see the effort you make to sort out problems. I enjoyed seeing some of your lessons. You were really enjoying learning how to bowl in cricket and your art work was really good. I loved the lamps you produced in design and technology. Many of you are taking exams and getting qualifications. Well done! The school is going to improve the range of courses you can do and the qualifications some of you can get. What was really impressive is the progress most of you have made in reading. It was lovely to hear one of you reading so well from a letter. Your teachers plan exciting things for you to do and the lessons I saw were so interesting that I wanted to stay longer. I loved seeing the photos of the trips and you really enjoyed those experiences. You have some good new equipment, including computers.

Many of your parents wrote to tell me how pleased they were with the school and some, including grandparents, came to see me at school. They all, quite rightly, were very proud of what the school does for you and pleased with your achievements. I hope you will take this letter home so they can read what I found. All the best to you all for the future, and especially to you Year 11s who are leaving to follow college courses or for jobs. I think you will always remember what Ian Mikardo School has done for you.

I will certainly remember my visit.

Glenys Fox

Her Majesty's Inspector