

Ian Mikardo School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131598
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	328619
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Adam Cooke
Headteacher	Ms Claire Lillis
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
School address	60 William Guy Gardens London E3 3LF
Telephone number	020 8981 2413
Fax number	020 8981 2418

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the achievement of students compared with their starting points and learning targets
- how effectively teachers assess and record the students' small steps in learning
- the quality of the students' behaviour and the school's behaviour management, both in and out of lessons.

Evidence was gathered from the school's assessments of students' achievement and standards, behaviour management documentation, curriculum documents, the school's improvement plan and governor minutes, discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteachers, subject leaders, staff and students. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school provides for boys with severe and complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All the boys have statements of special educational needs. Many students have previously had negative experiences of school. A very high proportion of the students are eligible for free school meals. Around half of the students are White British and the other students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ian Mikardo School provides its students with an outstanding education. There is exceptional leadership by the headteacher. There are excellent standards of teaching and an interesting curriculum which has challenging academic targets and very good learning opportunities about the world of work. This is accompanied by exemplary care and support for the students.

The greatest strength of the school lies in the very high-quality support and encouragement for students as they gradually learn to value themselves and their learning achievements, after previously negative experiences of education in other schools. Many students enter Ian Mikardo with very challenging behaviour and a belief that schools have nothing to offer them. Staff at all levels know the students' well because there is excellent communication throughout the school about each student's strengths and their behavioural and emotional needs. This results in very high levels of focused support for individual students, which may involve a wide range of agencies. The school's safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Students know what is expected from them within the school's calm and structured atmosphere and they make excellent progress over time in improving and controlling their behaviour. When students' behaviour becomes unacceptable, staff deal with incidents calmly and with understanding and support for the student involved. The quality of this support, accompanied by the impressive dedication of staff to 'go the extra mile' for each student, successfully underpins the students' improving achievement. The success of the school in 'turning students around', in engendering a spirit of mutual respect, and above all in showing the boys that they have the potential for a successful future is reflected in the outstanding rates of attendance. The boys gradually change their negative perceptions of school and education and really start to enjoy their learning. Parents confirm this enjoyment and have a high regard for the school. A parent wrote, 'Ian Mikardo has brought out the best in my son, often in difficult situations. It's about give and take and I really feel that my son has a chance in life now.'

The students' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong emphasis on moral and social values. The students are considerate to each other; they develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of keeping themselves safe. Students are happy that bullying 'is not really a problem here'. They make a very good contribution to the well-being of everyone at the school through the school council and because the staff regularly ask for their opinions on the quality of provision. The school takes positive and successful steps through the curriculum and pastoral support to promote community cohesion and the students' understanding of cultural diversity. The students make very good progress in basic skills and in well-organised work-related learning, and this means that they are very well prepared for when they leave in Year 11. For instance, almost all students go on to college courses, further training or employment.

As students gradually gain confidence in their own ability as learners and develop positive attitudes to school, so their rates of achievement soar. Younger students make generally satisfactory progress as the school devotes very considerable resources to supporting their behaviour and personal development. By Year 9 this work has usually proved very successful and the students' achievement becomes outstanding. While most boys enter the school with well below-average attainment, by the time they leave they have almost caught up with students in mainstream education. Almost every boy leaves with a range of GCSE qualifications in the basic subjects of English, mathematics and information and communication technology. In addition, many students gain further qualifications in GCSE art and design and in physical

education. All students have also been entered this year for Open College Network (OCN) qualifications in a range of subjects. Each student has the opportunity to follow vocational courses which lead to accreditation and most students leave school with extra Business and Technology Education Council OCN or National Vocational Qualifications. This equips them very well for college courses or training opportunities.

The curriculum is innovative in its groupings of subjects into areas of learning such as 'My Body', 'My Future' and 'My Self'. This has the immediate effect of making it look different from that in other schools and so students do not immediately anticipate that they will fail again. As students reach Year 10, they embark on challenging GCSE syllabuses accompanied by the very good range of vocational courses. The school makes excellent use of local training facilities to ensure students have a wide choice of work-related learning. For example, the school has a popular hairdressing salon and a small recording studio on site. The boys are very well supported in developing their skills in these areas.

Teaching is outstanding because the teachers know the students so well and successfully adapt learning activities to the needs of the learners. The teachers have a very good understanding of their subjects. As a result, they plan interesting work and they ensure lessons proceed at a good pace, so maintaining the interest of the learners. Lessons are invariably well managed, thus enabling students to maintain their concentration and improve their achievement. There are high staffing levels and this ensures that the students always have access to individual support where necessary. This greatly enhances their confidence to try new things and to tackle challenging activities. The assessment of students' work is a significant strength of teaching. Each teacher has developed very effective methods for recording progress and students are always fully involved in discussion about their achievement and how to improve their work. They have an excellent understanding of their learning targets and what to aim for next.

The headteacher has provided outstanding and inspirational leadership over a substantial period of time. Her senior team gives her strong and effective support. The school monitors its work exceptionally well and has a very clear knowledge of what is working well and what can still be improved. As a result, there is an excellent capacity to make further improvement. Leaders are aware, for example, that while records of students' progress are very thorough and helpful to the school, they are not always presented in a way which clearly shows visitors just how well the students are doing. The school is currently working on procedures to improve the presentation of this information. The governing body is effective in providing appropriate challenge and support to the school's leaders. The school is very well managed. For instance, the successful multi-agency support for the students is organised and managed to a very high standard. All staff feel that their contribution and opinions are valued, communication is excellent and so morale throughout the school is very high.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no major areas for improvement, although the school should refine the procedures for presenting the students' achievements so that senior staff are able to demonstrate more easily how well they are doing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

31 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ian Mikardo School, London, E3 3LF

When I came to the school recently, you made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for your friendliness and good manners and the way you helped me with my work. Ian Mikardo is an excellent school and it is obvious that you enjoy being there. These are some of the very good things I found.

- You work hard and make outstanding progress in your work and in being responsible for your own behaviour.
- Lessons are interesting and you are very well taught. This means that you enjoy learning and do your best.
- Older students have excellent opportunities to learn skills which will be useful when you leave school. This will help you to be more confident when you go into new situations.
- All the adults at the school look after you exceptionally well.
- The headteacher and senior staff manage the school very well indeed.

The school could improve even further if teachers were able to show your parents and visitors, such as myself, even more clearly just how well you are doing.

You can, help too, just by continuing to improve your behaviour and your work and by supporting each other.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector