

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ian Mikardo School

60 William Guy Gardens, Talwin Street, London E3 3LF

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Before attending Ian Mikardo School, pupils have often had negative experiences of school. Staff work hard to understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. They support pupils very well to help them manage their feelings and emotions. Consequently, pupils generally behave well. Nearly all are confident that bullying will be dealt with well.

Leaders make decisions based on what they believe is best for pupils, and have high expectations for all. This is at the centre of the school's ethos. Extra support is always on hand for pupils who have high levels of need. This helps pupils to be ready to deal with anxieties and to take pride in their achievements.

The parents and carers whom inspectors spoke to during the inspection agreed that their children enjoy coming to school. These parents said that the school is making a positive difference to their child's life.

Pupils appreciate the care and support that staff give them and feel safe and secure in school. They also appreciate the wider opportunities the school provides, such as trips to London Zoo, the forest school and local parks. The wider curriculum experiences enhance pupils' enjoyment of school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders aim to re-engage pupils in education and give them the academic and social skills needed for their next steps. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted leaders' work to develop a curriculum that does this well. While the curriculum rationale is clear, it is sometimes not sequenced in a logical order that enables pupils to develop knowledge over time. In addition, processes to check what pupils know and can do are informal, so teachers do not consistently have the information they need about what pupils have

learned. Leaders put a strong emphasis on English and mathematics, but there is insufficient time allocated to these subjects. Some teachers said there was not enough time to deliver the full GCSE syllabus.

Tolerance and respect for individual differences are routinely promoted through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Pupils spoke positively about how these lessons develop their confidence to speak out and express themselves.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour with respect and use the least intrusive intervention possible. This results in pupils experiencing success rather than failure. When things do go wrong, consistent systems are in place to put things right. Behaviour improves as pupils spend more time in the school.

A few pupils come to the school unable to read well. Leaders recognise that the teaching of early reading for these pupils is underdeveloped. While there is a phonics scheme in place, it is not taught systematically. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' achievement in reading, and on their ability to access learning in other subjects.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop employability skills in different settings. For example, pupils learn about shaving and looking smart in the school's hair and beauty salon. Activities like making lavender hand creams and hair washing help pupils to become more confident, and to regulate their emotions.

Students in the sixth form value the guidance they get from their teachers about their next steps. Leaders make sure that the careers guidance programme is embedded throughout the school. This means that nobody loses sight of the importance of preparing pupils for adulthood. Most gain places in education, employment and/or training when they leave.

The staff inspectors spoke to reported that leaders are very appreciative of them. They said that leaders care about their well-being and workload. All staff are offered clinical supervision every fortnight to support their mental health and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know and understand pupils' vulnerabilities in detail. This enables them to quickly spot any signs that pupils may be suffering harm. Leaders respond rapidly to find support and help pupils keep safe. Leaders challenge external agencies robustly when needed.

The school's family support workers provide high-quality support so that pupils and families get the help they need quickly. Staff who oversee recruitment checks take their roles seriously.

Carefully planned safeguarding training for all governors and staff happens regularly, and accurate records of this are kept.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Improvements to the curriculum have been delayed because of the pandemic. Currently, the curriculum is not well sequenced. Leaders should implement a broad curriculum, including in English and mathematics, that is logically sequenced so that pupils know and remember more over time. Leaders should make sure that assessment processes provide teachers with precise information about what pupils have learned.
- Some pupils do not acquire fluent reading skills before they arrive at the school. These pupils are not taught phonics in a systematic way. This means that those pupils who struggle to read do not catch up quickly. Leaders should make sure that these pupils get the help they need to learn to read well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ian Mikardo, to be outstanding in June 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143630
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10206482
Type of school	Secondary special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governors	Chris Weavers
Headteacher	Aaron Mulhern
Website	www.ianmikardo.com
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ian Mikardo School converted to become an academy school in February 2018. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school provides places for boys who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Typically, pupils enter the school in Year 7 and leave at the end of Year 13. Most have experienced periods of disruption to their formal education before they join.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders, designated safeguarding leads, parents, teachers and other school staff.
- The lead inspector also met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors, and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school at break and lunchtimes. They met with pupils to hear about their school experiences and their work. They also visited lessons.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including the teaching of reading), mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books.
- A range of documentation was checked, including the single central record of pre-employment checks on new staff, safeguarding records and associated school policies.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for parents, or for pupils. Inspectors spoke to some parents during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tom Canning

Ofsted Inspector

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