

Welcome to

Ian Mikardo High School

Come with a past,
leave with a future



Welcome to Ian Mikardo High School

Aaron Mulhern, Executive Headteacher, says...

Ian Mikardo High School is a specialist education setting, pioneering the way in which our society approaches the education of our most vulnerable young people. We put the individual at the centre of what we do, adapting our curriculum according to their social, emotional and educational needs. We are widely respected as leaders in SEMH and trauma-informed practice and are passionate about continually evolving to empower each and every one of our students.

Get in touch

I hope this Prospectus will give you an insight into the excellent work we do at Ian Mikardo High School, but if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us.



'Come with a past, leave with a future'

Our school motto 'Come with a past, leave with a future', embodies our absolute commitment to doing everything possible to ensure every one of our students leaves Ian Mikardo with the tools they need to live a fulfilled, happy and productive life as adults.

Making a difference

Where we differ from some other special schools is our provision of not only tailored academic education, but our focus on the practical life, vocational and social skills which are the key to ensuring that our students leave here with the tools they need to be fulfilled and productive in all aspects of their lives.

A centre of excellence

Ian Mikardo High School is a centre of excellence for educating students whose range of complex needs can lead them to be vulnerable and experience difficulties navigating the challenges of life. Many of our students have experienced difficulties accessing traditional mainstream education and face challenges in positively participating within their communities and wider society in general.

Holistic approach

At Ian Mikardo we put the needs of the individual at the heart of what we do, recognising that each young person faces a blend of challenges that are unique to them. As a team, we ensure bespoke approaches are put in place to support the individual members of our learning community, with practices focused on the education of the whole person, recognising the unique aspirations, goals and starting points of each student.

The world beyond the classroom

Education should open up the world beyond the classroom and our rich curriculum includes non-traditional components that enable students to engage with experiences and opportunities beyond the classroom. This approach encourages students to acquire insight into the world around them, gaining appreciation and essential knowledge from a wide range of universal reference points, relevant to our rich and diverse community.

Looking towards a bright future

This creative and flexible curriculum allows us to engage each student according to their particular history and circumstance and to build the confidence they need to learn to trust. We support our students to develop as emotionally resilient and confident young people, equipped with the practical, emotional and academic skills for leading happy and fulfilled lives. We help our students overcome the challenges of their past and teach them that they are the future.



Alfie is happy and finally engaging with learning thanks to the understanding staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Vicki and Adam live in North Weald with their son, Alfie, aged 13 and their other two sons and daughter. Alfie, who has ADHD and autism, joined Ian Mikardo High School in Year 8.

Enjoying school

Vicki and Adam have seen a huge difference in Alfie since he moved to Ian Mikardo High School and are delighted that he is enjoying learning now. Vicki says: "We can see that Ian Mikardo is much better for Alfie than his previous mainstream school and we are glad that the staff have encouraged his talent for boxing."

Keen pupil

Vicki says Alfie had difficulties at his mainstream primary school and left to attend a specialist provision before trying home schooling. "We thought he would be all right at the secondary school his older brother attended, but he struggled there as well, so we took the decision to move him to Ian Mikardo. The school has been wonderful and we can't fault it. Alfie never wanted to go to school when he was in mainstream but he can't wait to get to Ian Mikardo every day. Whereas he struggled with learning before, he is engaging with it now."

Skilled teachers

Vicki and Adam think the secret of the school's success is that the staff understand the children. "They realise they are all different and treat them accordingly. Alfie used to become frustrated at his mainstream school, but now he is being taught by staff who understand him. The way they teach him is ideal for him."

Flexible curriculum

"Alfie has a short attention span so they give him small segments of work. If they see he is not engaging with Maths they will give him a break, or do something else with him. When they let him do another activity, Alfie will still be learning Maths, but won't realise it. He is not so angry all the time now and he is finally making educational progress. We love the way they have adapted his curriculum to accommodate his boxing. The gym come to the school and he also goes out of school to the gym. He also goes to boxing when he is not at school and has

regular training sessions, which helps him," Vicki says.

Song writing

"Alfie's behaviour at home has improved a lot and now his outbursts have become less frequent. He is happy to go to school and enjoys his routine. He likes learning music at school and writing lyrics for his rap music. He will also spend time writing songs at home, which helps his English and his writing skills. We have recordings of his songs that we listen to at home with him and we know he is proud of himself for writing them," she says.

Help with transport

The family live a 40-minute drive from the school and Alfie has transport there and back. Vicki says: "The transport has been a real help to us and we have been very happy with the people who pick him up and drop him off. Alfie is so relaxed he takes a blanket and a pillow with him on the transport so he can have a sleep if they get stuck in traffic."

Kind staff

"We are delighted with the improvement we have seen in Alfie since he joined Ian Mikardo. They have the right people working there, who are all very good at what they do. We are particularly grateful to one teacher, who helps Alfie with his mental health and Alfie knows he can talk to him at any time."

Children say

Alfie says: "The school has nice teachers who have a lot of time for kids and I now enjoy learning when I'm there."

School day: settling in

Our school times

The school day runs from 9.00am to 3.00pm and begins with a warm welcome and a cooked or continental breakfast that is free for all our students.

Social Curriculum

After breakfast is our 'Social Curriculum', which is a schedule of self-select activities which encourage students to engage with a variety of experiences including music production, chess and other board games, digital media, salon skills, reading club, art and computing amongst a range of sports and other options. This is also a time for us to build relationships with each other and get ourselves set up to meet the challenges of the school day.

Lessons and Social Curriculum times are broken up into 12 sessions. Subjects such as English, maths and science are taught for 45 minutes, with Tutorials and Social Curriculum activities making up the rest of the day.

Reviewing the day

The staff team meets each morning at 8.30am and again at 3.15pm to plan and review the events of the day. Staff will always be available for you from 8.30am to 4.30pm. Your child's tutor is your main point of contact and the key person for information about your child's progress, participation and engagement at school.

Welfare

Our team also includes designated Welfare Team members, who go the extra mile to support you and your child with issues that may impact on family and home life. This helps to bring together the students' home and school worlds, ensuring that they know they have a united team around them, focused on their needs and moulding their best future.



Transport

Most students receive funded travel to and from school through the Local Authorities. If you need support with any issues relating to this, please let us know and we will help.

Food in school

Students are welcomed as they arrive and are encouraged to share a healthy breakfast while talking to staff and going through the morning papers. Ian Mikardo provides a range of options including a traditional cooked breakfast, but also cereals, fruits and continental style alternatives, all prepared freshly by our in house school chef.

Free lunch

Social curriculum activities are scheduled following breakfast so that students can start their day feeling engaged and full of energy. Food is an essential part of any home and is the heart of the Ian Mikardo community. We also provide free lunch for all students and staff, allowing us to come together as a community in our stylish café dining area to converse, laugh and debate the issues of the day.

Staff are engaged fully at breakfast and lunch to provide support for our students and to provide good role models for this essential social and social experience.

School clothing

There is no uniform for students at Ian Mikardo as we want them to feel comfortable and at ease in their school environment. We encourage students to develop positive and meaningful relationships with staff, and uniforms can create a barrier to positive engagement with education.

Encouraging creativity and individuality

We believe in encouraging creativity and individuality and are focused on breaking down barriers between students and their educators, and how we dress is another way in which we achieve this goal. To that end, staff members are encouraged to dress appropriately but in a more casual manner than that of mainstream teachers. This helps to shift the focus to relationships and commonality rather than drawing attention to differences and avoids highlighting power imbalances between students and staff.



Businessman Benjy will never forget the help he was given by the caring and patient staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Painter and decorator Benjy, who is 33, lives in Poplar, close to Ian Mikardo High School, where he was a pupil from Year 7 to Year 11.

Giving back

Now the owner of a successful painting and decorating business, Benjy is so grateful to Ian Mikardo for the good start he was given by the school that he was willing to climb a mountain for them. Benjy says: "Along with four other former pupils, I did a sponsored climb of Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and raised £50,000 for the school. The teachers had done it the year before and so we decided to give it a go in aid of the school. We all got to the top and got down safely again and although I found it hard, it was very worthwhile."

Good support

Benjy says he was severely dyslexic and had an anger problem when he started at Ian Mikardo in Year 7. "I went up with other kids from my primary school and settled in well. It was good to have children around me I already knew. I remember the staff spending a lot of time with me trying to help me and that they were all very patient and caring people."

Encouraging staff

The staff helped Benjy to discover he was good with his hands and enjoyed painting. "The school encouraged me to use my skills and do a painting and decorating course and to develop the attitude that if I was going to do something, I would do it properly. I made a success of it and now have Kelly's, my own painting and decorating business," Benjy says. "A lot of people in my family were builders and I always wanted to go in for something like that because I enjoyed doing manual work. When I left school, I went straight to work and got casual jobs as a labourer, as well as painting and decorating for people I knew."

Great opportunity

Benjy has now been painting full time for about 14 years and has a lot of clients. "I sometimes employ other people to help me with big jobs and now regularly go into Ian Mikardo to do painting at the school. They helped me get started after I gave them a quote for painting the school, by having the faith in me to give me the job. It was good experience for me to give a quote and do invoices and gave me the confidence to go on and get other jobs," Benjy says.

Fun activities

When Benjy looks back at his time at Ian Mikardo, he remembers enjoying canoeing on Wednesdays and going rock climbing. He says: "I also loved trampolining and doing Art and DT and Woodwork lessons. I used to try my best at English and Maths, but I remember getting very frustrated when I was struggling with reading. We were taught in small groups, which was a big help to me, but I remember having trouble concentrating at times. My Maths teacher was Aaron Mulhern, who is now Head Teacher of the school. He was always a brilliant teacher and I remember that he was very firm and that he had a voice you felt compelled to listen to," Benjy says.

Thriving pupils

"My parents were always very happy with the school and they had a good relationship with the teachers. My mum still asks about the teachers and they often ask me how she is when I am painting sections of the school. When I go into the school, I love to see the kids and I am always pleased to see how well they are progressing. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend Ian Mikardo High School to other families."

Curriculum: 'Needs Based, Skills Focused and Learner Centred'

Development of skills and personal attributes

The curriculum at Ian Mikardo is a 'Needs Based, Skills Focused and Learner Centred' model, concentrating on the development of skills and personal attributes that combine to 'equip learners with the social, emotional and educational skills to live fulfilled lives at home, in the workplace and within the community'.

As well as the key subjects of English, Science and Maths, we provide opportunities for our students to gain qualifications in ICT, Hair and Beauty, Food and Nutrition, Sports Leadership, Art and Music.

Enrichment

Our curriculum provides enriching learning experiences that go beyond what a traditional school curriculum offers. Ian Mikardo has developed relationships with a number of specialist providers such as Caramel Rock, offering courses in fashion and enterprise and also the Green Wood Guild, who teach the art of wood crafting with specialist artisan guidance. Furthermore, we provide opportunities for students to explore their creativity through sessions in professional photography and design projects lead by working artists through our relationship with the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Extended learning opportunities

At Ian Mikardo, our Sixth Form and Post 16 curriculum provides opportunities for extended learning and work placements bespoke to the talents, aspirations and interests of each individual. Our students have the chance to work with a range of partners including the Tower Project, The Social Interaction Project, Sirlute, Wrisk, Spotlight and the Shoreditch Trust, to ensure that they are equipped with the experiences and skills necessary to enter into the world of work and further education with confidence.

A world of adventure outside the classroom

We believe in adventuring beyond the conventions of the classroom, opening up the wider world along the way, and our curriculum strikes an important balance between formal class-based learning and real-life experiences. We actively promote opportunities to be creative, innovative and imaginative. Preparing our students to live independently as healthy, happy, fulfilled adults is the driving force behind all that we do.

Thematic approach

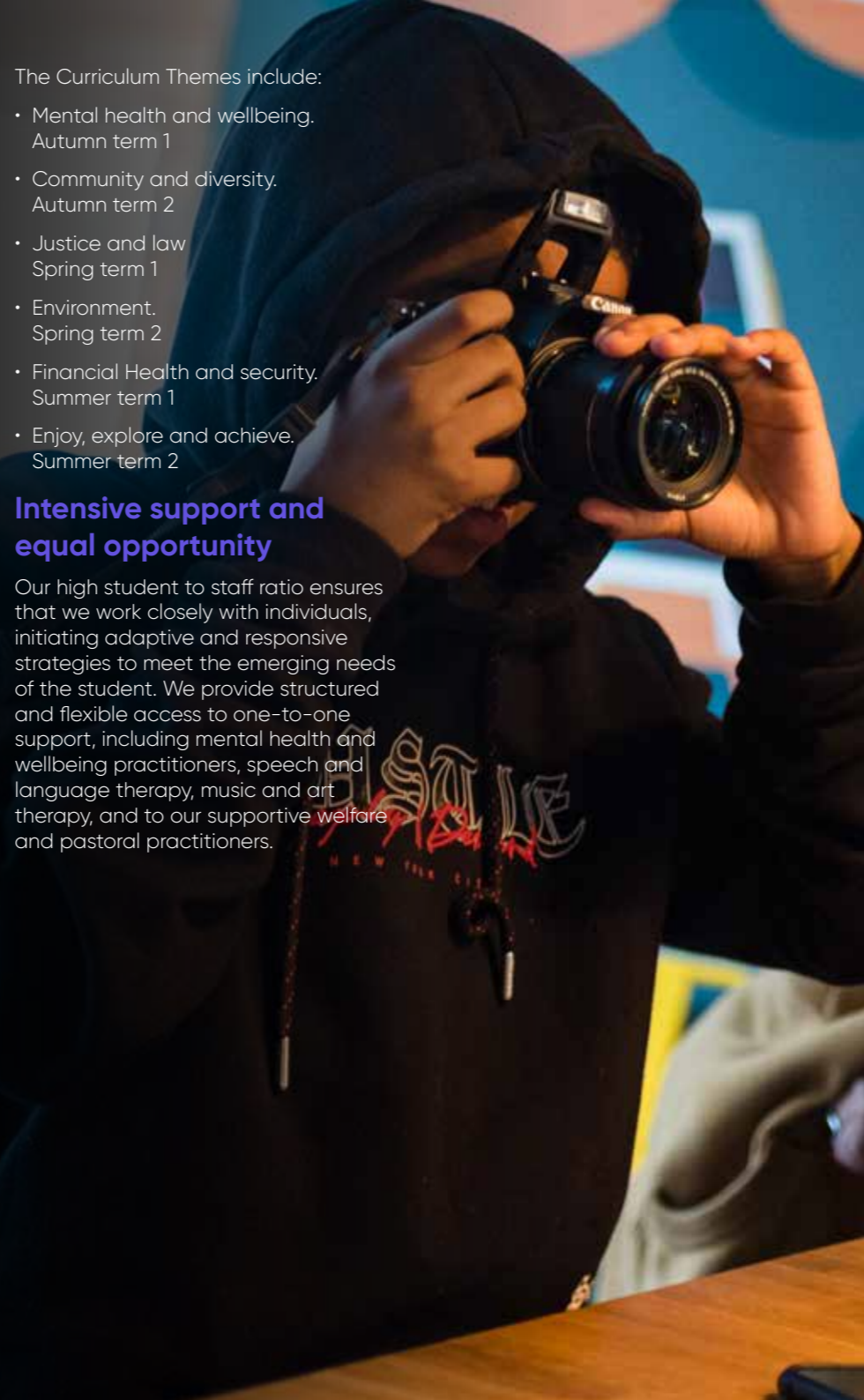
At Ian Mikardo we believe that students work best when they find their learning relevant and meaningful. In order to contextualise subject specific skills and content for students, learning takes place through overarching, cross-curricular termly themes. These themes provide opportunities for Scenario Based Assessment and the practical application of skills and knowledge.

The Curriculum Themes include:

- Mental health and wellbeing. Autumn term 1
- Community and diversity. Autumn term 2
- Justice and law. Spring term 1
- Environment. Spring term 2
- Financial Health and security. Summer term 1
- Enjoy, explore and achieve. Summer term 2

Intensive support and equal opportunity

Our high student to staff ratio ensures that we work closely with individuals, initiating adaptive and responsive strategies to meet the emerging needs of the student. We provide structured and flexible access to one-to-one support, including mental health and wellbeing practitioners, speech and language therapy, music and art therapy, and to our supportive welfare and pastoral practitioners.



Emmanuel is looking forward to the future with optimism thanks to careful preparation from the understanding staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Astrid lives with her son, Emmanuel, aged 17, in London. Emmanuel, who has autism, is in Year 12 at Ian Mikardo High School.

Enjoying education

Astrid is delighted with the improvement she has seen in Emmanuel's behaviour since he became settled at Ian Mikardo High School. She says: "Emmanuel now realises he needs education to get on in life and I am pleased he enjoys school and is more positive about things."

Careers advice

Emmanuel is being well prepared by staff at Ian Mikardo for life after school and is doing well academically, Astrid says. "Emmanuel is interested in a career as a police officer and will work towards it by taking A Levels. I am currently working with staff at Ian Mikardo to decide if he can handle a mainstream school next year."

Good choice

After having had behavioural problems at his previous mainstream school, Emmanuel was diagnosed with autism. The school helped Astrid look for another school that would be better able to meet his needs. "We looked round Ian Mikardo and the staff were warm and welcoming so I had a good feeling about the school from the start," she says.

Helpful staff

Emmanuel started in Year 9 at the age of 14 and it took him a while to settle, but once he was used to the school he started to do better, Astrid says. "He was upset with me for sending him there to begin with, and it was hard for me, but the one-to-one sessions with staff helped him a lot and by Year 10, his behaviour had started to improve."

Garden retreat

"The pupils work in small groups, which suits Emmanuel, and they can go into the garden if they are upset. This calms them if they can't express what they are upset about. They don't have to explain why they are going out, provided they remain in view. Afterwards, a teacher will talk to them. They

try to send someone who has a positive effect on Emmanuel, as he responds better to some teachers than others. Allowing them to discuss their feelings helps them understand what they can do to feel better," Astrid says.

Team work

"The staff at Ian Mikardo provide good support for parents and encourage working in partnership so the child doesn't get a mixed message. I made Emmanuel understand that I am in regular touch with the teachers and that when he is at school, they are the responsible adults in charge of him, which is for his own good," she says.

Academic success

"Emmanuel is good at English and Maths and passed some GCSEs last year. He is doing work experience in a restaurant and working towards a Food and Hygiene qualification. He enjoys music and learning to be a DJ at school and writes his own song lyrics. He is now having piano lessons out of school and obtained a Merit in his first piano exam. He is interested in doing A Level music, so I am looking for a school that will give him that opportunity," Astrid says.

Intuitive teachers

"Emmanuel enjoyed visiting a Transport Depot and came home enthusiastic about transport. The teachers are good at finding out what pupils are interested in. Emmanuel enjoys the opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Now he is preparing for adulthood, his favourite activity at school is cooking and I was thrilled when he brought home a lovely coconut cake, he had made for me. The Head Teacher, Aaron Mulhern, has pledged to give the children an opportunity to excel academically and goes strongly by the school motto: Come with a past, leave with a future."

Children say

Emmanuel says: "I like doing Music and cooking at school."

Working with the family

Year-round support

We recognise that welfare issues do not begin and end with the school day or term; the staff in the Welfare Department therefore have school mobile phones which enable them to be more accessible to parents and carers.

Welfare support year round

As welfare staff work throughout the year, support is not limited to the school term. Home visits can be arranged as and when to support families experiencing particular difficulties. During times of crisis, the welfare department can offer additional support beyond normal working hours. This does not replace the statutory services but can assist parents and carers to seek help from these services more effectively. Welfare staff can signpost parents and carers to external services and agencies to make sure that they are able to access additional support if needed.

Non-violent Resistance

We also offer support for 'Non-violent Resistance', an evidence-based, non-blaming and relatively short-term intervention model that empowers parents and people working with children with SEMH needs to take positive action to end the abusive and/or violent behaviour of a child. It also helps through respecting and protecting children and all family members.



Representing parents

We are happy to represent parents in instances where they feel they may benefit from support, including meeting the needs of siblings attending other schools. Our Parent Engagement Worker runs weekly parent and carer coffee mornings. These include workshops which equip parents and carers with information and resources for dealing with key issues and challenges faced by their children, as well as contributions from Educational Psychologists, Health Care Workers, Dentists and other professionals. By working with the family, we build awareness, collaboration and resilience as well as providing opportunities for parents to improve their own education and employment prospects.

Mediating

Our Welfare Team often works as a mediator and point of connection between those who need and those who can give help. We join parents and carers at inter-agency meetings. We provide students, parents and carers with links to other professionals such as social workers, education psychologists, the Youth Offending workers and therapeutic workers from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).



Franky is thriving and making good academic progress in the supportive surroundings of Ian Mikardo High School

Clare and Joe live in Limehouse with Franky, who is 13, and his four siblings. Franky has ADHD and ODD and is in Year Nine at Ian Mikardo High School.

Enjoying reading

Clare and Joe are delighted with the positive changes they have seen in Franky since he started at Ian Mikardo High School. Clare says: "Franky is a lot more confident and is making good educational progress now. We can tell he is happier than he was at his mainstream school and his reading is a lot better because of the phonics work the staff are doing with him, which he really enjoys."

Right move

Franky joined Ian Mikardo in the middle of Year Eight after being excluded from his mainstream school, where he had been struggling academically. Clare says: "We decided on Ian Mikardo because it was within the borough where we live and we wanted him to travel to and from school on public transport. I was nervous about him going there to begin with, as none of my other children have extra needs and they all attend mainstream schools, but I am glad we chose the school for Franky now."

Kind staff

Clare and Joe were relieved Franky settled in quickly and adapted well to his new surroundings. "He is much happier at Ian Mikardo because the teaching is not so intense as at his previous school and he does not feel under so much pressure. He now feels confident enough to say to a teacher that he can't do something and he is less embarrassed about it. He has good relationships with all the adults at the school."

Tailored teaching

Clare says: "We are pleased the school is small because the staff get to know the children much better than they do in mainstream and therefore his teachers all understand him. The class sizes suit Franky more. He is good at Maths and his mental Maths is coming on a lot. They realised he likes darts and so the teachers adapted the work to involve darts scores to maintain

his interest. They are all very thoughtful and good at finding out what the students like and modifying the work to keep them interested."

Cookery skills

Franky likes working in the school hairdressing salon, where he is even allowed to cut the hair of members of staff, Clare says. "He likes playing football and basketball at school and enjoys having lunch in the school diner because he likes the food they serve. He also enjoys cooking at school, which is good for him because it is teaching him to be independent. He makes something once a week and brings it home for us to try. They let the children decide what they want to make and get all the ingredients in for them."

Good communication

"When the staff phone me to give me updates about how Franky is getting on, they always sound positive. I go into the school for a meeting about his progress every couple of weeks because I want to be involved and I am pleased with how good the staff are at communicating with parents. They are always brilliant with me and are never at all negative about Franky," Clare says.

Individual attention

"We think the school are successful with the children because the staff are well equipped and all know what they're doing. They are teaching Franky good life skills and always treat him as an individual. Sending Franky to Ian Mikardo was the best decision we could have made. We would certainly recommend the school to other parents who have children with extra needs."

Children say

Franky says: "I like all the staff and enjoy working in the salon at school."

Inclusion: meeting the complex needs of all students

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Ian Mikardo High School is a special school that strives to meet the complex needs of our students, all of whom have statements of Special Educational Need for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). Our students also have a range of further complex and profound needs, and a number of their parents receive the Disability Living Allowance. This rarely relates to physical disability, but the children are eligible because they are recognised as requiring a higher, more intensive degree of care than a child of the same age without difficulties related to SEMH.

The school is inclusive in all its practices, actively promotes equality and takes every opportunity to counter discrimination and harassment. We promote high aspirations and seek to enable our students to develop the living and working skills they will need to lead happy, fulfilling and independent adult lives.

Appropriate support and high quality teaching

As a specialist SEMH setting, Ian Mikardo High School does not require a SENCO role due to the specialist assessment, access to professionals and organisations involved with the care of our students. The Welfare Leader, Sixth Form Lead and Subject Specialists work with the Headteacher and SEN governor to determine the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school.

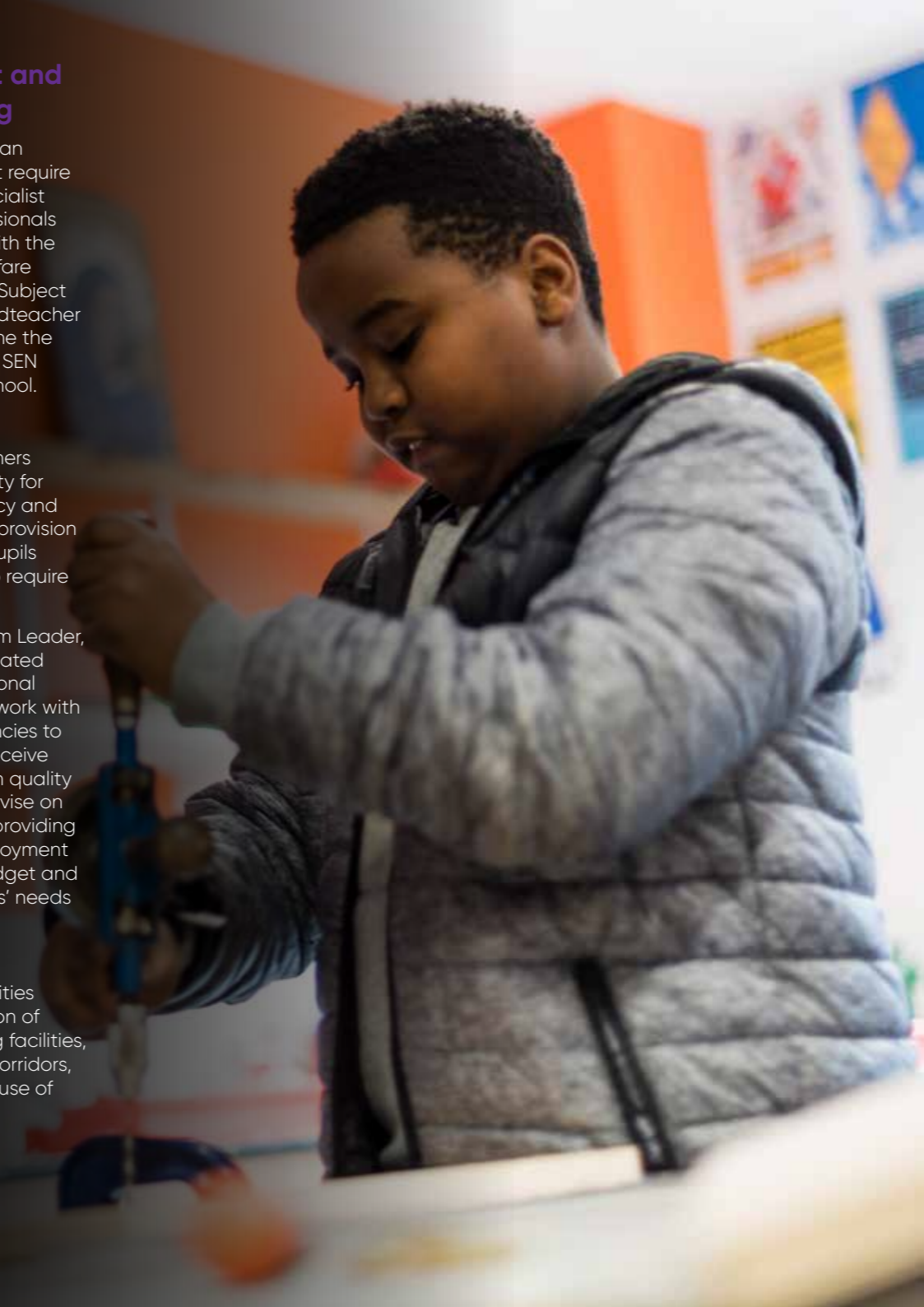
Subject Specialists

Subject Specialists and Teachers have day-to-day responsibility for the operation of this SEN policy and the co-ordination of specific provision made to support individual pupils with SEN, including those who require specific 1:1 interventions.

The Welfare Leader, Sixth Form Leader, the Head Teacher and associated professionals provide professional guidance to colleagues and work with staff, parents, and other agencies to ensure that pupils with SEN receive appropriate support and high quality teaching. In addition, they advise on the graduated approach to providing SEN support, and on the deployment of the school's delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils' needs effectively.

Access

Students with physical disabilities are catered for by the provision of disabled toilets and changing facilities, wheelchair ramps and wide corridors, large print resources and the use of accessible signage.



Kanye's creative side is being gently encouraged by the supportive teachers at Ian Mikardo High School

Nicola lives with her son, Kanye, aged 15, in Tower Hamlets. Kanye, who has been diagnosed with ADHD and ODD, is now in Year 10 at Ian Mikardo High School.

Superb staff

Nicola could not be happier with the way staff at Ian Mikardo High School are encouraging Kanye to develop resilience and independence, while still giving him the support that he needs. She says: "Kanye has really taken to the staff at the school, who are all very caring towards him, and you get the feeling that nothing is ever too much trouble for them."

Salon sessions

Kanye is also benefiting from the many creative opportunities Ian Mikardo offer students, Nicola says. "He is enjoying developing his hairdressing skills. There are a lot of girls in our family and he has always liked doing hair, and brushing and plaiting it. It is a huge bonus for us that there is a hairdressing salon at the school, where he can do regular sessions and study for a qualification in Salon Skills."

Emotional support

Kanye joined Ian Mikardo in Year 9, having been out of mainstream schools since he was in Year 3. "His last school had been a boarding school for children with SEMH, but then the Covid lockdown happened, which disrupted his routine, and he found it hard to leave home and return to the boarding school afterwards. It was sad for me as well, having to see him go away again, and so I decided to look for a school that would be able to meet his needs but would still enable him to come home every afternoon," Nicola says.

Academic progress

Kanye is now flourishing and making good progress in the caring atmosphere of Ian Mikardo, Nicola says. "When he was being home schooled during the Covid lockdown, he was not being challenged enough, but now I can see him coming on in leaps and bounds. The school really suits him because they have small classes and the lessons are kept short, which helps him to concentrate."

Learning responsibility

Nicola says the staff at Ian Mikardo know how to handle Kanye now and allow him to have age-appropriate responsibility and do not talk down to him. "They also allow the students to go out of the classroom and into the grounds to calm down if they ever need to, which is a big help to him. Kanye has learnt how to be a barista at school and enjoys pretending to be working at Costa Coffee. He has also benefited from being able to go off site to do a fashion course and to be taught about textiles and he has already learnt how to make a bag and a tee shirt."

Cooking success

Nicola is pleased Ian Mikardo have the equivalent of a home setting in part of the building, where Kanye has been able to learn to do useful domestic jobs. "He is now learning important life skills at school which will be helpful to him in the future. He particularly enjoys cooking at school and they let him make whatever he wants to. He has learnt how to prepare ingredients and to follow a recipe and has become amazingly good at it," she says.

Caring community

"In just one year I have seen Kanye make a lot of progress and have noticed a huge difference in him. It is great to see him finally settled and happy somewhere. I am told Kanye is very popular at school and he now has a good social life. He has been given the freedom to be himself at last and is thriving in his new environment."

Children say

Kanye says: "I like cooking and working in the salon at school and enjoy seeing my friends."

Social curriculum activities

- Science Club
- Computer club
- Music club
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Sports Club
- 3D Fabrics & resistant materials club
- Art Club
- Reading & Story Book club
- Boxing



Peter is now settled and content and making good progress thanks to the caring staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Shaunna and Brendan live in Waltham Abbey with their son, Peter, aged 11, and their three daughters. Peter, who has ADHD and ODD, is in Year 7 at Ian Mikardo High School.

Enjoying school

Shaunna and Brendan are thrilled with the progress Peter has made in his first few months since starting at Ian Mikardo High School. Shaunna says: "Peter is now very settled in Year 7 and seems happy at the school. He has come out of his shell a lot and has made some new friends and is enjoying lots of the activities they do. He benefits from being in a small class and is doing well in Maths and being helped with his reading."

Good choice

Shaunna says Peter had attended a mainstream primary school but, although the SENCO at the school had been very good, he often used to come home angry. "He never wanted to talk about what had happened at school and bottled things up, but we think he used to get annoyed because people didn't understand how he was feeling. We chose Ian Mikardo for Peter because we had heard it was a good special needs school and we wanted him to have help with his behaviour and his mental health needs."

Smooth transition

Shaunna says: "We had been concerned about how well Peter would make the transition to Ian Mikardo, because we knew he found it difficult to form a bond with people, but everyone at the school was very welcoming and he settled in quickly and took to his new teachers straight away."

Fun activities

"Peter is no longer in a bad mood when he comes home from school and is happy to talk to you about what he has been doing now," Shaunna says. "We know he enjoys being in the music studio at school and that he likes singing songs and playing the instruments. Peter also enjoys boxing, which the school encourage because it helps to get his anger and frustration out. They have people coming into the school to teach the

kids boxing, but also take them out during the school day to attend a boxing centre. Peter also enjoys doing forest school and learning about the outdoors."

Ready to help

Shaunna and Brendan are pleased that the staff are good at listening to parents' concerns. "When we approached the school and said we thought Peter may be dyslexic, they dealt with it immediately and got him tested and found that he was. He now has a one-to-one support worker in the classroom and receives extra help with his reading. We have found the staff are all very supportive and will do anything they can to help the kids."

Transport help

"We live a 25-minute drive from the school, so we are grateful that Peter can be collected by a transport service in the mornings and brought back by them at night. The transport people are very good and are always on time and we know that he feels safe with them," Shaunna says.

Excellent teachers

"One of the best things about Ian Mikardo is that the teachers have a lot of time for the children and treat them the way they should be treated and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the school to other parents. I have a friend with a child with special needs who is at a mainstream secondary school and he isn't getting all the support Peter is getting, so I am encouraging my friend to consider Ian Mikardo High School instead."

Children say

Peter says: "I enjoy music at school and learning outdoors with my friends."

Admissions and getting involved

Admissions

Ian Mikardo High School is a specialist school for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Whilst the majority of our students live in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, we are open to referrals from the SEN panels of neighbouring Boroughs. Our year groups run from year 7 to 13. We currently have the capacity for 50 students and hope to expand in the coming years.

How to apply

All our students have statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. If your child is yet to be assessed for SEN, you can refer to Tower Hamlets website for more information about the process.

We welcome students at any point between years 7 to 13. Following a referral from a SEN Panel, we invite prospective students and their families or carers to visit us and see if our school environment is a good fit for them. To help ensure that Ian Mikardo is the best possible place for an individual, a senior member of our Welfare team personally assesses each applicant's needs as a part of the application process. We accept applications directly from parents or carers for students who already have SEN statements. We also welcome referrals from local authorities, institutions and services. For any application, please contact admissions@ianmikardo.com

Getting involved

Friends of Ian Mikardo High School

Friends of Ian Mikardo High School is a registered charity (Charity number 1123143) dedicated to supporting IMHS by raising funds for equipment, services and additional support that will enrich students' time at the school. Established in 2008, the charity plays an important part in ensuring students have the best possible opportunities for growing into healthy, confident, happy adults. Run entirely by volunteers, including independent Trustees, every penny donated directly benefits the young people of the school. A little goes a long way at Ian Mikardo, and all donations make a tangible difference to the school community.

Volunteering

While the school is managed and staffed by an experienced and highly trained team, we welcome volunteers to work alongside them. We recognise that we have a responsibility to help young people to thrive in the world at large, and not just within an educational setting. Not only do volunteers bring different skills and experiences that can benefit students, but their place in the world outside the school plays an important role in expanding students' horizons. We regard volunteers as a valuable bridge to the wider world outside the school.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at Ian Mikardo High School, please contact the School office.



Shae has made good academic progress and now has a bright future ahead of him thanks to the skill of staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Renee lives in King's Cross with her son, Shae, aged 18, and daughter, Sienna-Rose, aged 13. Shae has been diagnosed with autism, ADHD and ODD and is epileptic. He is in Year 13 at Ian Mikardo High School.

Emotional support

Renee is very grateful to the staff of Ian Mikardo High School for the way they have helped Shae regulate his emotions and she is extremely happy with the academic progress he has made since starting at the school. She says: "I can see a huge difference in Shae now and admire how focused he has become and the way he is determined to succeed."

Right move

Shae transferred to Ian Mikardo during Year 8 from another school. Renee says: "I removed him from his previous school because I was not happy with what they were providing for Shae and I could see his behaviour was getting worse. When I went to look round Ian Mikardo, it was not at all what I was expecting, but I decided to give it a go and I am very pleased I did."

Working together

Renee says staff at Ian Mikardo are experts at dealing with emotional and social issues. "It took a while for Shae to settle in and things weren't positive to begin with, but there has been a massive turnaround now. His teacher, the Head Teacher and the welfare team have all been wonderful. They have been very helpful and invited me to meetings, where we have set targets together for Shae to achieve."

Coping strategies

Shae was angry and unable to regulate his emotions when he first started at Ian Mikardo, Renee says. "He struggled with his diagnosis because he didn't want to be seen as different and rebelled against his situation. The staff have now given him strategies to help him cope with his emotions and I have done the same at home."

Improved behaviour

"Shae's teachers were good at reading him and would act before his emotions got heightened and take him to do other

activities. They also worked with him one to one. By the end of Year 9, I was beginning to see signs of progress and this continued when he was in Year 10. Before, if Shae and I had a disagreement, he would explode and verbally abuse me. Now he doesn't raise his voice, but will go to his room and talk to me later," she says.

Sensible advice

"Shae has changed in the way he deals with his peers now and how he responds to other people. Now he will give his sister, and younger children at the school, advice. Because of what he has been through himself, it is good advice. He was behind academically when he first started at Ian Mikardo, but he has caught up now and taken exams in Maths and English. Through the school, he has begun an apprenticeship with Virgin Fitness and is going to learn to be a personal trainer. He goes to boxing and the gym and is very committed to his training," Renee says.

Caring staff

"What I love about Ian Mikardo is that it provides a home from home for the kids. I was very happy that all the teachers and the support staff took Shae under their wing after he started. Nothing has ever been too much trouble for them. They have gone above and beyond for my family and I will be forever grateful to them. Shae is anxious about leaving the school this year and I know he will miss everyone, but he has a bright future now, thanks to the staff at Ian Mikardo."

Children say.

Shae says: "I love the food at school and all the kitchen staff, who give me extra helpings."



Archie is now doing an apprenticeship in something he enjoys thanks to the support he was given at Ian Mikardo High School

Rachel lives in Essex with her son, Archie, who is now 17 and currently doing an apprenticeship in sports coaching.

Patient staff

Rachel is grateful that the staff at Ian Mikardo never gave up on her son, Archie, and believes that it was their patience and perseverance that helped him turn his life round. She says: "With the help of the teachers, he managed to complete his secondary education and he has gone on to do something he finds fulfilling."

Good support

Archie was a pupil at an SEN school where things had not worked out well for him, Rachel says. "Eventually he was permanently excluded and had to be out of school for nearly six months. When Ian Mikardo said they were willing to take him, I went to have a look round and I got a good first impression of the school. It meant he had to have transport to school because it was a long journey from where we live, but it was well worth travelling there because of all the help they were able to give him."

Making friends

Rachel says after Archie joined the school in Year 8, it was not plain sailing to begin with and that he didn't settle in well for the first few months. "But eventually he managed to make friends with some of the other children and he is still in touch with some of the people he met there, even though he has now left the school."

Specialist care

Archie had behavioural issues when he first started at Ian Mikardo, but the staff got him diagnosed with developmental language disorder and put things in place to help him after consulting specialists about his issues, Rachel says. "They discovered music helped him and that he enjoyed rapping and working in the studio at the school. He wrote lyrics for songs and the teachers helped him organise his thoughts to get the words down on paper. Archie is intelligent, but not very academic."

Although he didn't enjoy subjects such as English and Maths, he loved PE and football, and he benefited from spending time in the salon at the school and having facials."

Understanding teachers

Rachel says Archie absolutely adored some of his teachers and had a good rapport with most of them. "The teachers who built up good relationships with him knew how to calm him down when he was upset. Sometimes they would take him off site and either talk to him, or just play basketball with him."

Working in sport

She says Archie now loves learning about sports coaching. "He has done one level of his apprenticeship and is just about to start the next one. He is learning how to run sports clubs and work with children with disabilities, organising sports activities and events for them at holiday clubs."

Showing perseverance

"I am delighted with all the things they put in place to help Archie at Ian Mikardo. The secret of their success is that the staff do not give up on the children in their care. All through Archie's life people have given up on him, but the staff at Ian Mikardo didn't. They supported him well and helped get him through his years at senior school," Rachel says.

Living up to words

"Every day was a new day and it didn't matter what had happened the day before. Archie knew he had the chance to reset the next day and that no one would bear a grudge against him for anything. He could go in and make a fresh start and I think that is what kept him going. I really like the school's motto: 'Come with a past, leave with a future' and I think in Archie's case they lived up to it very well."



Ben can now look ahead to a job and a bright future thanks to wonderful support from the dedicated staff at Ian Mikardo High School

Sonia and Richard live in Chingford with their sons, Joshua, aged 19, and Ben, aged 18, and their daughter, Ruby, aged 14. Ben is a former student at Ian Mikardo High School and is now at college.

Catering success

Sonia and Richard could not think more highly of the staff of Ian Mikardo, who have helped their son, Ben, turn his life around and launched him on a promising career path. Sonia says: "Ben is now enjoying studying catering at a college and is looking forward to doing a work placement in the kitchens at Ian Mikardo during his course, thanks to all the help he has had at the school."

Good choice

Sonia and Richard had a long wait before they received definitive answers about Ben's issues and he was not diagnosed with ADHD until he was about to start secondary school. "Some mainstream schools in our area did not want to take him at all and, after we went to look at one school we were offered, we did not feel it would be right for Ben. But after Ian Mikardo was suggested, we went to look at it and decided to send him there. Although it was out of our area, it was reassuring that he was offered transport," Sonia recalls.

Encouraging teachers

"When Ben started in Year 7, he did not settle well and we often received emails about his behaviour. But the teachers managed to get through to him and encouraged him to think about bucking his ideas up and Ben made the decision to turn things around for himself when he was in Year 9," she says. "He got on so well with some of the staff and they established such strong bonds with him, that to this day they ring him up to see how he is getting on. They have told him he is always welcome to go back and visit and when he told them he was going to do a work placement for college they said he could do it in the school kitchen."

Interesting course

Sonia says after Ben left Ian Mikardo and started at college, he still had an EHCP plan in place and so he could have one-to-one support if he needed it. "But he now loves going to college and, even though there is another former Ian Mikardo student there, he has enjoyed meeting new people. He has always been interested in hospitality and catering as a career because, when he was at Ian Mikardo, he did work experience in a café once a week. Also, his older brother, Joshua, is doing an apprenticeship in a pub."

Approachable staff

"We think going to Ian Mikardo has been brilliant for Ben. The staff have helped him out in some tough situations and he has known there was always someone available for him any time he needed to talk about something. It was good for him to have members of staff he knew he could confide in about anything that was worrying him," Sonia says.

Excellent opportunities

"The staff were always considerate to us as parents and kept us up to date with what was going on with him. They used to have good parent coffee mornings which gave us the opportunity to speak to the teachers if there was anything we wanted to raise. We think Ian Mikardo have been 100 per cent brilliant with Ben. They made him Chief Executive of catering and one of the teachers even took him to IKEA to get his perspective on what was needed for the school kitchen. If he had gone to a mainstream secondary school, he would not have been given the same great chances, and so we could not have been more satisfied with the school."

Students say:

'Ian Mikardo is a wonderful school. You can come with a bad past, but this school is all about second chances and by choosing the correct path, you can leave with a brilliant future that you will be proud of'.

Zak, Year 13

'This is the best school I've been to. I had a few schools before I found Ian Mikardo and I'm glad I found it as I am really happy here. There are lots of caring teachers and TA's here who really support you with what you need'.

Skylar, Year 12

'When I came to Ian Mikardo met my Key Worker Lynn, who I've built a really great relationship with, she's the best'. Franky,

Year 10

'Before coming to IMHS I didn't realise that I had a love and talent for making music. The Teachers really encouraged me to create my own music and I even got to visit a professional studio and record my own beats. I performed a DJ set at the end of year school celebration which has given me a lot of confidence. I am feeling really positive about my future being at this school'.

MPB, Year 7

'I'm glad I come to Ian Mikardo because it is a really fun school and good place to be. It's not as stressful as my last school and I like how the teachers relate to me and are always available to listen. I feel like I belong here'.

Mo, Year 11





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