

Arts and Media School Islington

Turle Road, London N4 3LS

Inspection dates

7 and 14–15 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have maintained a good standard of education despite recent and unexpected staffing changes. Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school and plans for development are raising pupils' performance.
- Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 11, particularly in mathematics, creative arts, physical education and humanities. In subjects where progress dipped last year, including science and English, new staff and effective middle leaders are quickly improving outcomes.
- Staff know their pupils well. Pupils' needs are considered carefully in teachers' planning, particularly those who have education, health and care plans.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They arrive well prepared for lessons and have good relationships with teachers.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that effectively supports their personal development and welfare. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work with staff, pupils and parents to identify potential risks early. Attendance and behaviour are closely monitored so that support takes into account pupils' needs and backgrounds.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils describe the school as 'a caring community'. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Plans are in place to improve further the impartial careers advice and guidance pupils receive, particularly regarding vocational and apprenticeship options.
- Pupils' personal development is supported by the school's 'scholastic' and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. However, some variation exists in the effectiveness of tutors' delivery of the programme.
- Pupils typically receive useful feedback on their work. Sometimes feedback lacks the clarity needed to guide pupils' learning and support the development of their literacy skills.
- Pupils' behaviour during social times can drop below the school's expectations. At times, pupils lack regard for others around them and the school's expectations.
- Leaders recognise that recent changes in the school have not been communicated effectively to some parents and staff. However, the majority of staff, parents and pupils recognise and appreciate recent improvements in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' behaviour and personal development by:
 - ensuring that staff and pupils hold the same high behaviour expectations during unstructured times of the day as they do for lessons and enrichment activities
 - further embedding the strategies to improve tutors' consistent delivery of the PSHE education programme
 - improving the quality of impartial careers advice and guidance, particularly regarding vocational options post-16.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that the feedback teachers provide to pupils consistently supports good and better progress, including in the development of literacy skills.
- Ensure that changes in the school are communicated clearly, so that staff, parents and pupils understand the school's development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their analysis supports detailed development planning, with effective strategies to raise the quality of provision and outcomes. Leaders are not complacent and make no excuses for a recent dip in outcomes. Their actions stabilised the school and are now raising standards towards their high expectations.
- Leaders throughout the school have a wealth of information available to them that informs their strategies for improvement. Leaders have ensured that systems and procedures are in place to support good teaching and learning. This has helped the school to cope with a higher than expected turnover in teaching staff. Leaders recognise that some pupils' experience in school has been negatively affected by staff changes. Leaders, including middle leaders, have been effective in minimising the negative effects of these changes by ensuring that curriculum plans are in place and by checking the performance of new staff regularly.
- Senior and middle leaders recognise and value the support and scrutiny they receive in their areas of responsibility. They reported that they are able to experiment with new ideas in order to meet their own rigorous 'work stream' targets. Staff, including newly qualified and trainee teachers, reported that they receive highly effective and individualised support that aligns their work to whole-school priorities.
- Leaders keep a close eye on how additional funding supports pupils' performance. This includes the pupil premium funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and catch-up funding. The whole-school policy on promoting literacy through teachers' feedback is not yet as effective as intended, and remains a school priority in improving its use of catch-up funding.
- The curriculum is effective and planned well. Leaders have ensured that pupils can choose from a range of subjects and enrichment activities that support their academic and personal development.
- Pupils' understanding of the values and attitudes of others and their respect and tolerance for all prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. A planned review of the curriculum aims to improve further pupils' performance by adjusting timings of the day to support behaviour and adding dedicated PSHE education time.
- A small number of staff and parents reported to inspectors via Ofsted's surveys that they did not agree with, or understand the benefit of, some of the changes that leaders have implemented. Leaders recognise that more work needs to be done in order to ensure that communications with parents are effective so that the whole school community understands why changes are being made and the intended outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors effectively hold leaders to account for their work to improve the school. They are aware of the challenges that the school has faced recently and have

supported leaders in bringing about necessary changes to improve standards. Governors are not complacent and have high ambitions for pupils' achievement.

- Governors use committee meetings to ask probing questions that ensure that leaders' work is effective and refined. They recognise where work remains to be done to improve some aspects of pupils' behaviour and further improve outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that all staff receive appropriate training. As a result, staff have a keen understanding of the local and regional issues that their pupils face. Pupils recognise the risks associated with extremism and when using the internet. They reported to inspectors that bullying is rare but that teachers deal with it effectively when it occurs. A small number of younger pupils reported that they perceive older pupils to be boisterous during social time, which makes them feel less safe. However, the school is very aware of this. Pupils recognise that staff are approachable and will help them.
- The school's work with external agencies and parents is effective. Persistently absent pupils improve their attendance due to leaders' effective work. This reduces the known risks some pupils face. The school's records are detailed and meticulously maintained.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well. They have access to detailed information, including about pupils who have recently joined the school, and so are aware of their needs. Consequently, teaching and learning are good because expectations are high. Teachers are ambitious for pupils' progress and pupils recognise that teachers are there to help them learn well.
- Teachers ask probing and effective questions, informed by their secure subject knowledge and high aspirations for pupils' learning. In physical education, English and creative subjects, teachers use questioning particularly well to probe pupils' understanding and application of key skills. Pupils are willing to take risks in their learning when answering questions. This supports the development of positive working relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Teaching assistants and other adults in lessons are effective in supporting learning. This is particularly the case for pupils who have education, health and care plans. As a result, pupils who receive this additional help make very strong progress from their starting points.
- Teachers plan activities that aim to stretch the most able and challenge those from lower starting points to make up the ground. These are typically effective in supporting good and better progress, but in some subjects, such as science, have not been as effective.
- Time in lessons is used well because teachers plan structured activities that play to pupils' strengths and get them learning promptly. New staff are well supported by middle leaders to support quickly pupils' needs.

- The assessment system underpins teachers' and middle leaders' work to quickly identify underperformance and intervene effectively.
- Teachers are expected to provide feedback in a manner that suits the department's aims and methods. Where this is most effective, pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and which supports the development of their literacy skills. However, guidance is not as consistent as leaders expect, with some pupils' progress hindered consequently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils attend and enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that support their personal development very well. These include trips, charity fundraisers, visits to the school and clubs.
- Pupils' self-confidence is developed through the positive relationships that most have with one another and staff. Some pupils told inspectors that they had improved their attendance and behaviour as well as their self-confidence because of the school's work with them.
- Pupils know how to be successful learners and value their education. They are able to make links between the subjects they study and possible future career paths.
- Useful careers advice and guidance occur through the cycle of drop-down days, assemblies and tutor time. Similarly, the schools 'scholastic' programme helps pupils to identify subject-based and personal goals that they then work towards. Both programmes are currently being improved after leaders' monitoring identified some weaknesses of provision. Improvements include impartial advice regarding vocational options, and support for tutors so that the scholastic programme is of consistent quality.
- The school provides extensive support for those pupils who need it. This includes arranging alternative provision for a small number of pupils. School leaders carefully monitor their welfare and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils want to learn and most give their full concentration to lessons, meeting the school's high expectations. Rarely is time wasted due to disruption.
- Records show that there were times in the past year when behaviour deteriorated, particularly Year 9 and associated with unexpected staffing changes. Leaders made behaviour a key area for development and have been effective in raising and sustaining standards of behaviour. Changes to the structure of the pastoral system and the use of rewards and sanctions have contributed to rapid improvement in this area.

- Pupils' behaviour during social times is less strong than during learning time and other structured times of the day. This is because sometimes staff do not promptly remind pupils of the school's expectations and some pupils do not self-regulate their behaviour sufficiently.
- Pupils' attendance was below average last year. However, the school's work to raise attendance, particularly of those with a record of persistent absence, is very effective in getting pupils into school and on time. Regular monitoring of attendance and support for families work quickly to overcome most pupils' barriers to good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress across year groups and subjects. In 2017, there was a dip in GCSE science results, which affected the school's overall GCSE performance. The reasons for this have been resolved. There remain some differences in the progress of groups of pupils, but these are small.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics and creative and performance subjects because of the consistently good-quality teaching that they receive. In some other subjects there have been fluctuations in the progress pupils make because of staff changes. Middle leaders and teachers have introduced strategies to tackle any underachievement through effective training and targeted support.
- Pupils' work, including of disadvantaged pupils and the most able, demonstrates that teachers' planning considers their needs and typically challenges pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- The effective use of pupil premium funding helps eligible pupils do better through targeted interventions.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because of the careful identification of their needs by the coordinator and her team. This supports the effective deployment of staff, including additional adults in lessons, as well as teachers' planning.
- Pupils who join the school mid-year, many of whom speak English as an additional language, are well supported through additional sessions to help develop their language skills.
- The great majority of pupils leave school to continue their education and pursue a range of courses. For example, pupils were complimentary about the help and guidance they receive in preparing to go to college.

School details

Unique reference number	131690
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10042094

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	635
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Flora Goldhill
Headteacher	Susan Service
Telephone number	020 7281 5511
Website	www.artsandmedia.islington.sch.uk
Email address	contact@artsandmedia.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard for attainment and progress.
- Arts and Media School Islington is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, who speak English as an additional language or who have SEN and/or disabilities are above average.
- The number on roll is increasing and pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. This includes an above-average proportion who are mid-year admissions, including from overseas. There are more boys than girls in each year group.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2016. The senior leadership and pastoral teams have since been restructured.

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils. They are City and Islington College, Quality Tutoring and Academy 21.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was in two parts. Following a short inspection under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005, a full inspection visit took place the following week to undertake a Section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors visited 38 lessons to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work. Some of these visits occurred jointly with a member of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also scrutinised a sample of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors held informal conversations with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at social times and during transitions between lessons. Inspectors visited the school's referral and internal exclusion rooms.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings; school procedures and policies; evidence of the school's work to safeguard pupils, including pre-employment checks; behaviour, attendance and assessment information; leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; school and departmental plans for development, including staff training, appraisal and performance management.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the 45 responses to Parent View, some of which included written responses. Inspectors also considered the views of 42 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey and contacted Ofsted. No responses were received for the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Matt Tiplin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tim Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Sunday Ellis	Ofsted Inspector
Dame Joan McVittie, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Katerina Christodoulou	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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