

Inspection of Arts and Media School Islington

Turtle Road, London N4 3LS

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are looked after well by staff. The school provides pupils with a caring and welcoming environment. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they feel safe. They appreciate the support that they are given by staff. Together with the ambitious curriculum, this helps pupils to achieve well in most subjects. Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

This is an inclusive school where pupils have positive working relationships with their teachers. Staff reward pupils' behaviour and efforts based on the school's cornerstone values of confidence, aspiration, respect and reflection.

Leaders do not tolerate bullying. When incidents of bullying occur, they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and during social times. They treat each other with respect. However, in a small number of instances, teachers do not make sure that pupils follow leaders' expectations for behaviour.

Pupils are proud of the diversity of their school and the wide range of opportunities that are provided, including fundraising events for a local charity. Pupils are encouraged to develop their leadership skills through responsibilities such as head of year assistant, lunch helper and school council members.

Pupils participate in a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, including music, football, basketball, art and chess.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils. In most subjects, they have identified and ordered curriculum content well, considering how this supports pupils to build up knowledge over time. As a result, pupils learn well. However, in a few subjects, leaders are less clear about the crucial knowledge that pupils need to learn and recall securely, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This means that, in these subjects, the curriculum is not supporting pupils to remember crucial knowledge as well as it could.

Teachers have expertise in their subjects and are confident delivering the curriculum. They design suitable activities which focus on helping pupils to learn the intended curriculum. They are also skilled in presenting information clearly, for example by breaking complex ideas into smaller chunks. This approach helps pupils to build on what they know. However, in some subjects, teachers' checking of pupils' learning is not sufficiently focused on pinpointing which ideas pupils are finding hard to understand. Consequently, misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge can persist.

Leaders have established suitable approaches for accurately identifying pupils with SEND. They train teachers to understand and meet pupils' specific needs through adaptations to tasks and resources in lessons. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. They typically receive the right support to learn well and be fully involved in school life.

Leaders have created a positive reading culture. They quickly identify pupils who struggle with reading and give them the extra help that they need to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders also foster pupils' love of reading. Pupils read regularly and have frequent opportunities to read in lessons.

Leaders set high expectations for behaviour. They provide specific support, including access to mentors, for those pupils who find it hard to meet these expectations. However, on occasions, teachers' expectations of behaviour do not match those of leaders. This means that off-task behaviour in lessons is, in a few instances, not challenged and addressed. When this happens, pupils' learning is disrupted.

Leaders ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to support their personal development. These opportunities are woven through the subject curriculum. For example, teaching aims to enrich pupils' understanding of their community and the wider world, and strengthen their appreciation of individual differences. Sensitive discussions in class support pupils to explore different themes fully. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships and develop an understanding of different faiths and cultures. Leaders plan educational outings to exciting local, national and international places. These aim to broaden pupils' horizons and deepen their understanding in a subject.

Pupils benefit from a coherent and well-planned programme of careers education from Year 7 to Year 11. This enables pupils to make informed choices for their next steps, including post-16 education, employment and training. Year 10 pupils have opportunities to participate in work experience.

Governors and leaders are reflective. They have an accurate understanding of improvement priorities. Governors are ambitious and they ask searching questions of school leaders about the quality of education. For example, governors and leaders are working on increasing the proportion of pupils who take the EBacc qualification.

Staff appreciate the consideration that leaders give to the management of workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are vigilant and understand the risk that pupils face, including particular risks that arise locally. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Staff have received up-to-date training and understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They know how to recognise pupils at risk of harm, and how to report concerns.

Leaders identify pupils who are vulnerable, and they work effectively with external agencies to provide a range of effective support to these pupils and their families. Leaders make suitably robust checks of applicants who want to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified exactly what key concepts they want pupils to know and remember. Consequently, pupils do not build up subject knowledge long term as well as they could, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders should ensure that, across all subjects, they identify precisely what knowledge they want pupils to know and remember and make sure that teaching supports pupils to confidently recall this knowledge.
- Sometimes, the implementation of the curriculum does not check and pick up on aspects of learning that pupils are finding hard to understand. This means that in some subjects, misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge are not addressed in a timely manner. Leaders should continue to train and support teachers in their use of assessment so that gaps in knowledge are addressed and, in turn, pupils improve their learning of the curriculum.
- In a few instances, teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not consistent with those of leaders. This sometimes results in disruption to learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers make consistent use of effective strategies to enable pupils to manage their behaviour in line with the school's standards.

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.

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	131690
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10255363
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	687
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kayte Lawton
Headteacher	Susan Service
Website	www.artsandmedia.islington.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Arts and Media School Islington is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school mid-year is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders make use of three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, art, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection, including geography, music, drama, and design and technology.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, other senior leaders, members of staff and subject leaders. Inspectors also spoke with leaders with responsibility for SEND, reading, pupils' personal development and behaviour.
- The lead inspector also met with the chair of the governing body, with three other governors and spoke with the representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. They considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding. This included looking at examples of how pupils at risk are identified and supported, as well as reviewing the record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors had meetings with pupils and staff about safeguarding and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, staff and pupils via Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Jeffery Quaye, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Cristalina Fernandes-Bates	Ofsted Inspector
Karlene Dampha	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Turvey	His Majesty's Inspector

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