

# Inspection of Arco Academy

Camberwell Leisure Centre, Artichoke Place, Camberwell, London SE5 8TS

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Inspection dates: 14 to 16 September 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils' learning is limited in some subjects. Staff do not check carefully that pupils are learning suitable subject content that is adapted to their needs. Leaders do not benefit from guidance or challenge. The school does not have systems to check whether leaders' actions are effective.

Staff are well trained to help pupils with complex needs. They give pupils lots of individual time and attention. This helps pupils to build their confidence and self-esteem. Many pupils successfully return to mainstream provision when they leave the school.

Sport plays a big part in this school. Pupils enjoy trying out a wide range of different sports. They understand the benefit of doing regular exercise. Pupils are also taught how to handle their emotions sensibly. If they are feeling angry or upset, there is always someone they can talk to.

Leaders have set high standards for behaviour. Pupils accept the rules and follow them. Bullying is dealt with effectively here. Pupils are taught to respect each other. Pupils are well supported by the staff. Staff act quickly and intervene straightaway if any problems arise. Pupils are happy at the school and feel safe.

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

Leaders are clear about what they want pupils to achieve during their time here. Their aim is to prepare pupils to return to mainstream school or go on to post-16 education. They have planned a curriculum that supports this to some extent. The personal development programme is well thought through. Pupils are helped to manage their behaviour. Leaders provide individual mentor sessions, for example. These help pupils to re-focus and talk about and understand their emotions.

All pupils study English, mathematics, science and physical education (PE) in key stage 3. In key stage 4, they study these subjects to GCSE. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In these subjects, teachers have thought about how to build up pupils' knowledge and skills. Learning follows a logical sequence. Leaders have appointed qualified teachers who know their subjects well. Staff repeat key knowledge to help pupils understand and remember important content. Pupils recall their learning well in these subjects. For example, pupils in Year 11 English learned about the Victorian setting of 'A Christmas carol'. This helped to prepare them for the novel.

Leaders have not considered as carefully what pupils need to learn in other subjects. Curriculum plans in these subjects do not reflect what pupils have learned and pupils have limited opportunities to build their knowledge and skills. For example, curriculum plans for computing set out what content pupils should learn each term in Years 7 to 9. In reality, pupils do not follow the curriculum plans or learn computing in any depth. Computing is not a regular feature on the school timetable.

Leaders assess pupils' knowledge when they arrive. They identify the specific needs of each pupil. They make sure that the curriculum in English, mathematics, science and PE is adapted for pupils with SEND. However, staff do not use information about pupils' prior learning systematically. Assessments are not used to pinpoint gaps in pupils' knowledge or what they already know and what they need to learn next. Some pupils learn content that does not match their needs. For example, pupils in mathematics learn basic number, algebra and geometry. This is suitable for some pupils and will help them to reinforce prior learning. For other pupils, this does not build on what they already know or help them to gain new knowledge.

Leaders plan PE theory lessons that link well with pupils' learning in science. Some pupils join the school with little interest in sport. Over time, they learn to see the importance of exercise and the positive impact it can have on their physical and mental well-being. Pupils enjoy taking part in different sporting activities, such as boxing and swimming. Leaders ensure that pupils make full use of the facilities that the school has to offer.

Reading does not have a high profile. Pupils have access to a limited choice of books to read. Leaders have identified those pupils who struggle with reading. They have put in place appropriate support to help them develop reading fluency. Other pupils who are keen readers have limited opportunities to read at school.

Classrooms are calm. Pupils are settled and get on with their work. They behave well and stay focused in the school's small environment. Pupils like the individual attention they get. They feel confident to tell staff if they do not understand something.

Pupils' social skills are well promoted. They are taught to communicate with others and how to handle difficult situations. Pupils have welcomed the introduction of religious education (RE) this term. They enjoy discussing different points of view. For example, pupils could explain how various religions approach marriage and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues. Leaders have put in place a new relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education programme. This contains all the required content.

Leaders offer a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils. Some of this has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, pupils went on theatre trips, for example. Links with several universities have introduced pupils to some higher education courses on offer. A limited programme of careers guidance is in place.

Staff have no complaints about their workload or well-being. They are happy with the support they get from leaders.

Leaders lack strategic oversight of key aspects of the school's work. An advisory board gives some limited guidance. There is no mechanism to hold leaders, including the headteacher and proprietor, accountable for their actions or to check whether leaders have addressed areas for improvement.

Leaders and governors have not ensured that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are met. Unmet standards relate to the quality of education and leadership and management.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy meets requirements and is available on the school's website.

Leaders understand the complex needs of their pupils. They know about the types of risks that vulnerable pupils face. Leaders have strong working relationships with placement schools and external agencies. Together they make sure that pupils and their families get the support they need.

The school is a safe space for pupils. They receive lots of guidance on keeping safe outside school. This includes handling peer pressure, online safety, healthy relationships and county lines.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The school does not have systems in place to check on the effectiveness of leaders' work. This is not included as part of the remit of the advisory board. Leaders, including the headteacher and proprietor, are not challenged robustly or held to account for their actions. Crucial aspects of the school need better oversight for the school to improve. Leaders should ensure that procedures are put in place to check on the quality of their work.
- Pupils' learning is focused on English, mathematics, science and PE. History and RE have recently been introduced. Pupils have limited opportunities to learn about and nurture interests in subjects such as computing, art and music. Leaders should ensure that there is more breadth in the curriculum so that pupils can develop their knowledge and skills in a wider range of subjects.
- Teaching staff assess pupils regularly, but they do not yet routinely use information about pupils' prior learning and ability to inform what pupils learn next. The curriculum is not well adapted to build pupils' knowledge and skills. This is particularly the case for pupils with high prior attainment. Opportunities to read for those who are already fluent readers are limited. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is adapted for all pupils.
- Pupils are unsure of the wider opportunities available to them post-16 because careers guidance is limited. Leaders should ensure that they offer more opportunities for pupils to learn about careers options and post-16 education and training.

## How can I feed back my views?

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

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

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147732
<b>DfE registration number</b>	210/6011
<b>Local authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	10204291
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	7
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lisa Miller
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Miller
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	From £22,132
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 3189 1193
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://arco.academy">https://arco.academy</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@arco.academy">info@arco.academy</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Arco Academy provides alternative provision for pupils aged 11 to 16. All current pupils attend full time and are on dual registration.
- The school accepts pupils with behavioural needs for short- and long-term placements. Respite provision for schools is also offered. Pupils can arrive at any point in the year.
- The school specialises in sports and is based in Camberwell Leisure Centre. The school occupies part of this building and pupils have access to a wide range of sporting facilities.
- Leaders do not currently use any other alternative provision for pupils.
- The headteacher is also the sole proprietor. There is no governing body. An advisory board is in place that offers some support and challenge to school leaders.

## Information about this inspection

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

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher/proprietor, the vice-principal, the assistant headteacher, members of staff and the chair of the advisory board. Inspectors also spoke with leaders from a number of schools that have placed pupils at the provision.
- Inspectors met with all pupils currently on roll at various points during the inspection.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PE and history. All other subjects were considered as well. Inspectors met with subject leaders and teachers, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies and procedures related to safeguarding and health and safety, behaviour and attendance records, curriculum plans, and other information provided by school leaders.

- Inspectors considered the 11 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and five responses to the pupil survey. There were no responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sean Flood

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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