

# School inspection report

10 to 12 December 2024

## **Arco Academy**

Camberwell Leisure Centre

Artichoke Place

London

SE5 8TS

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor and the advisory board are closely involved in the school's work. They regularly monitor the quality of education provided and make changes where necessary. They ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. The proprietor's clear vision is ambitious and thoughtful. It forms part of the day-to-day life of the school and is understood by pupils and staff. The vision is translated into action so that the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.
3. The proprietor has established a range of partnerships with local businesses and charities. These enrich the curriculum and help to widen the range of opportunities available to pupils. Through these partnerships, pupils work with a range of other adults. This helps them to develop social skills so that they are better prepared for their futures.
4. Leaders have created separate learning 'pathways' to cater for the different needs of pupils, including those who may be at the school for only a short time. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive targeted help. They are supported by a range of specialist services including therapists, counsellors and mentors, who strengthen provision and support pupils in their learning.
5. Leaders have successfully embedded a culture in which pupils understand the importance of full school attendance as a first step in taking responsibility for their own learning. Pupils achieve high levels of attendance which are celebrated by the school community.
6. Teachers know their pupils well and teaching is generally effective. Warm relationships between pupils and teachers underpin a respectful and purposeful community. This is valued by parents who recognise that the school helps to restore pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing.
7. Some teaching is less effective. Pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and this limits the progress that some pupils make. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are not fully developed. As a result, professional development is not fully effective.
8. Incidents of bullying are rare. Leaders respond quickly and appropriately when concerns arise. Pupils behave well in lessons and during less structured parts of the day.
9. Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure that health and safety standards are met. Potential risks are identified and appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate risks in areas such as fire, health and safety and educational visits.
10. The school has an effective careers programme that meets pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for their futures and for life in British society.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- ensure that teaching is always sufficiently challenging so that all pupils make the progress that they are capable of
- improve the school's approach to monitoring the quality of education so that it is sharply focused on clear criteria for high-quality teaching, with a particular focus on the progress pupils make, in order to develop the effectiveness and impact of professional development.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. The proprietor's clear vision for the school emphasises the active promotion of pupils' wellbeing and personal responsibility. This is communicated well to school leaders, who have a deep commitment to making the vision a reality. Leaders have suitable skills, knowledge and understanding. They promote pupils' wellbeing effectively, which is central to the school's ethos and at the heart of its culture.
12. The school's aims and ethos are communicated to parents and explained to them at induction days. The school's values and beliefs, known as the 'wheel of culture', form the core of the school. They are referred to frequently and displays around the school remind pupils about them. Leaders emphasise that the values and beliefs represented in the 'wheel of culture' apply to all members of the school community. This helps pupils to understand the behaviours and attitudes expected of them.
13. Leaders use external consultants to check that school policies comply with current legislation. Members of the advisory board ensure that the Standards are met through regular and systematic review of all policies. They visit the school regularly to monitor the implementation of policies and to observe how the school operates, including visiting lessons. Members of the advisory board are known by teachers and staff. This makes pupils more confident to speak to them so that members are better able to check that policies are understood and being implemented effectively.
14. The proprietor and the advisory board have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and of what could be improved. They use this knowledge to formulate strategic improvement plans that are well focused on the most important priorities. The plans are implemented fully so that the school continually develops.
15. Parents are provided with extensive and up-to-date information on the school's website which contains relevant policies and other useful material. Parents receive regular updates on pupils' progress and attainment, including an annual written report. Appropriate information is provided to the local authority regarding pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
16. There is a suitable complaints policy which is implemented effectively. The small number of informal complaints received are handled in a timely fashion. Leaders keep appropriate records and the proprietor checks that the school's processes are followed properly. No formal complaints have been made since the school opened.
17. Leaders receive suitable training about managing risks and have appropriate skills and knowledge in this area. They identify potential risks well, including those that are not immediately obvious, and put appropriate measures in place to mitigate them. Detailed risk assessments in areas such as fire, health and safety and educational visits are regularly reviewed and updated.
18. The school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place, which is followed closely. Through their practice, policies and procedures, leaders embed a culture of inclusivity, respect and tolerance throughout the school.
19. The school works with a range of organisations and agencies to help them meet pupils' needs as well as possible. The proprietor has developed an extensive network of partnerships which widen pupils'

experiences. Leaders work with a range of professionals, such as educational psychologists and counsellors, to help them meet pupils' individual needs.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

**20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Pupils benefit from a wide curriculum offer that is enhanced by use of the leisure centre's facilities. The curriculum focuses on English, mathematics and science but also includes subjects such as history, religious studies, physical education (PE), photography, music and technology. Older pupils typically study five GCSEs with some taking additional subjects or alternative qualifications. The curriculum is enhanced by externally provided workshops and visiting speakers, such as from local businesses and banks. Most pupils follow a sports leaders programme. Regular visits to a local boxing club gym, a city farm and the nearby library, for example, extend the opportunities available to pupils.
22. The school provides four different curriculum pathways to small groups of pupils. For example, one pathway provides for pupils who require a more therapeutic approach while another focuses on pupils who need greater support. Each pathway is designed to ensure that teaching is effectively targeted to better meet individual pupils' needs.
23. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. They achieve well at GCSE level from their starting points and all pupils achieve success in functional skills qualifications. This is because of the care and support pupils receive. Teachers help them to re-engage with their learning, often after a period of absence from education. Many pupils achieve well in sport, for instance, in local and national athletics competitions.
24. Leaders place a high priority on helping pupils to improve their reading and spelling and on ensuring that the foundations of mathematics are in place. Early assessment is used effectively to identify the areas pupils need help to improve. Pupils are given effective support. Reading is promoted well throughout the school. For example, pupils and staff read aloud to each other in subjects across the curriculum. This helps to develop their speaking skills and confidence, as well as fluency and comprehension.
25. Pupils who have SEND receive targeted support. A range of specialist services, including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, counselling and mentoring, strengthen provision so that pupils get the right support. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress and achieve well, leaving school with qualifications that will help them in the future.
26. Pupils' progress is closely tracked by leaders. Teachers regularly check how well pupils have understood what has been taught and identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. They use this information to help them plan the additional support or challenge individual pupils need. Pupils routinely reflect on their own learning at the end of each lesson to identify areas for teachers to work with them on in the next lesson.
27. Learning is generally well planned. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They generally engage pupils in purposeful activities and give them opportunities to show what they know, understand and can do. Teachers know their pupils well and fully understand their interests, aptitudes and needs. This helps them to adapt learning activities or teaching approaches effectively, as necessary, in response to pupils' social and emotional needs.
28. Well-established routines in classrooms enable teachers to minimise distractions and disruptive behaviour. Pupils behave appropriately in lessons and learning time is well managed. Teachers use a range of suitable classroom resources, including online resources, to support pupils' learning.

29. A small amount of teaching is less effective. At times, activities are not sufficiently challenging and pupils are given routine tasks to do that are too easy for them. Staff do not always act on opportunities to extend or enrich pupils' learning as fully as they could. Where this is the case, pupils make less progress than they are capable of.
30. Leaders regularly visit lessons to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is a lack of clarity about what leaders consider the criteria for effective teaching and learning to be. Leaders do not routinely focus on pupils' progress as a key component of high-quality teaching. As a result, opportunities to further develop the quality of teaching are sometimes missed.
31. Leaders provide a co-curricular programme which enables pupils to develop additional skills. Pupils have opportunities to develop physically, be competitive or improve their chess or photographic skills. Breakfast club provides opportunities for social interactions between staff and pupils in the shared social space.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

33. The physical education (PE) curriculum is well considered and delivered effectively. It actively promotes pupils' physical wellbeing through a daily commitment to sporting activities. It is focused on participation rather than prowess. As a result, pupils enjoy their sport and understand the benefits it can bring. Pupils' participation in sport contributes to improvements in their mental health, increased self-confidence and better self-esteem. Pupils respond positively to the tailored physical education curriculum. They develop their leadership skills through the sports leaders programme.
34. The school's curriculum enables pupils to develop their spiritual and moral knowledge and understanding. A carefully thought-out wellbeing curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop their understanding of different religions and cultures. Visits to places of worship further increase pupils' spiritual understanding.
35. The comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is taught effectively. It provides pupils with many opportunities to reflect on their own strengths as well as learning about important issues. The PSHE curriculum is matched well to pupils' stages of development. It covers a range of well-chosen issues including healthy lifestyles, social responsibilities and mental health issues. It helps pupils to be aware of the risks associated with gang affiliation, knife crime, exploitation, drugs and alcohol. Well-managed discussions promote active debate about sensitive issues.
36. The relationships and sex education (RSE) policy meets statutory requirements, including parents' right to withdraw their child from some aspects. Parents are fully consulted about the content of these lessons. The RSE programme fosters mutual trust and respect for other people. It is well considered and covers an appropriate range of issues. Key issues such as friendships, consent, sexual health and maintaining healthy relationships are delivered effectively so that pupils develop the knowledge and understanding they need in these important areas.
37. Pupils behave well. In classrooms, they follow the school's 'five Ps' and are 'prompt, prepared, productive, polite and patient'. Well-supervised social time provides many opportunities for pupils to interact with adults, to practise social interactions and develop mature attitudes.
38. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with swiftly. An effective anti-bullying strategy minimises bullying and its potential impact. Pupils are confident to share their concerns with staff when they arise. As a result, leaders quickly identify emerging trends and take effective steps to intervene. Leaders use assembly time to reinforce the school's anti-bullying strategy. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained to recognise and deal with bullying through a rigorous and ongoing training programme.
39. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Leaders carefully monitor attendance to look for patterns of absence, gaining parental support to tackle issues when required. Many pupils did not attend school regularly in their previous settings. Full attendance is a clear expectation and is celebrated. As a result, pupils attend school daily and are rarely absent. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities to the local authority by reporting when pupils join or leave the school at

non-standard times. Where pupils are dual-registered, leaders liaise closely with their main schools, informing them daily about whether or not pupils are in attendance.

40. Relevant health and safety laws, including about fire safety, are complied with fully. For example, pupils take part in regular drills to ensure that the building can be evacuated safely in the event of an emergency. The school uses external consultants to quality assure health and safety and fire safety arrangements. This provides the proprietor with assurance that standards are maintained and pupils' wellbeing is promoted. Efficient communication between the leisure centre and the school ensures that the school maintains a safe physical environment for pupils.
41. Accommodation for the administration of first aid is suitable. A comprehensive training programme ensures that staff are appropriately trained in first aid and mental health first aid.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

42. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. The curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for social and emotional development. It encourages mutual respect based on personal responsibility both through the content and the way that it is delivered. The school's values are modelled by leaders and staff. They speak respectfully and calmly to pupils who, in the main, respond in a similar way.
44. Pupils develop an understanding of economic wellbeing through the well-planned PSHE programme. The graduated approach begins with basic financial awareness and goes on to include understanding of issues such as budgeting and mortgages. Older pupils are introduced to financial management through the careers strand of the PSHE programme and through visits from external speakers, including those from industry.
45. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning through the use of an online platform which helps them to make informed choices about possible future pathways. Regular communication with parents ensures that the school and pupils' families co-operate to support the wellbeing of each pupil.
46. Leaders carefully guide pupils' choices about their futures. Pupils go on to enter employment, education or training on completion of their courses, with many joining the college of their choice. The school keeps in contact with families after pupils leave the school, providing additional support or advice as necessary.
47. Pupils' social and cultural knowledge and understanding is enhanced through a range of opportunities within the school's curriculum. Pupils are taught effectively about fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They learn about and celebrate the differences between people, such as race, religion and sexual orientation, and the importance of respect and tolerance in society.
48. The school teaches pupils effectively about British institutions and public services, such as the police and the National Health Service. Leaders provide pupils with a range of school visits to important places of interest. For example, pupils develop their understanding of politics and democracy by visiting the Houses of Parliament. Pupils are taught about and develop respect for England's civil and criminal laws.
49. Pupils appreciate the difference between right and wrong because leaders instil a deep understanding of the school's values. They understand the need to have rules in their games, in lessons and in their social times. They appreciate that being kind, helpful and supportive is a foundation for a safe, law-abiding school community. In this way pupils are encouraged to respect the law.
50. Opportunities to volunteer with outside organisations help pupils develop their social skills and understanding of volunteering and charity work. Pupils take part in a range of activities such as sorting clothes and cleaning baby equipment to be given to families in need. Opportunities such as these show pupils how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Safeguarding

52. Leaders ensure that robust safeguarding practices are embedded into daily routines. For example, pupils are escorted as they walk to lessons in the local library and a school safeguarding leader is always present whilst lessons take place there. Leaders work closely with parents in order to fully understand safeguarding risks that are specific to individual pupils. They offer appropriate support to families, as necessary.
53. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained for their roles and have sufficient time to carry out their duties. Detailed logs are maintained, which allow leaders to identify patterns of behaviour and analyse trends so that appropriate and timely actions are taken. Leaders respond effectively whenever safeguarding concerns are raised so that pupils' safety is prioritised. Leaders maintain effective partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority, and have appropriate arrangements in place to respond to any potential allegations or concerns about staff.
54. Leaders encourage pupils to share any concerns that they might have, including through a worry box which allows pupils to report concerns anonymously. Pupils know who to turn to in school and are comfortable talking to adults if something is worrying them. Pupils feel safe and happy at school.
55. Pupils learn about a wide range of safety issues including knife crime and the dangers associated with drugs and alcohol. They are taught about internet safety and understand how to stay safe online. The school's filtering arrangements block harmful content. Leaders monitor online activity effectively. Small class sizes and high levels of supervision at all times mean that the potential for the risk of harm is minimised.
56. Staff are well trained to address safeguarding concerns. They receive regular updates from the designated safeguarding lead. Staff are trained to understand the risks from extremism and radicalisation and know how to identify warning signs in pupils' behaviour. Staff are vigilant and alert to possible signs of abuse or neglect. They know how to report concerns, including low-level concerns, and do so promptly following the school's agreed procedures.
57. A robust recruitment process is in place. All required pre-employment safeguarding checks are completed on staff, volunteers and members of the advisory board before employment begins. The school's single central record of appointments is accurately maintained and checked by leaders. Leaders are well trained in safer recruitment. Regular external reviews ensure that safeguarding processes and policies are kept up to date and conform to statutory guidance.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

58. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	Arco Academy
<b>Department for Education number</b>	210/6011
<b>Address</b>	Arco Academy Camberwell Leisure Centre London SE5 8TS
<b>Phone number</b>	02031891193
<b>Email address</b>	info@arco.academy
<b>Website</b>	www.arco.academy
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lisa Miller
<b>Chair</b>	Ron St Louis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Miller
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 16
<b>Number of pupils</b>	11
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 December 2022

## Information about the school

59. Arco Academy is a co-educational day school which opened in September 2017. It provides alternative provision for neurodiverse pupils and those at risk of exclusion. Pupils are enrolled by local authorities for short- and long-term placements, including respite provision. At present, all pupils attend full time and four are dual registered. The school occupies part of Camberwell Leisure Centre and pupils have access to the sporting facilities there. There is no governing body. An advisory board offers support and challenge to the proprietor.
60. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seven pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified no pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
62. The school states its aim is to provide opportunities, especially in sport, to unlock the potential in pupils whose previous experience of school has been less than positive. The school wants pupils to become the best version of themselves by emphasising high standards, integrity, personal responsibility and professionalism to promote healthy minds and bodies.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

10 – 12 December 2024

63. A team of two inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of the advisory board
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
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