

Inspection of a good school: The ArtsXchange

City Road, London EC1V 1JX

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who join this alternative provision have typically had poor prior experiences of schooling. They are keen to attend this school for its specialised curriculum in the performing and creative arts. They appreciate the high-quality specialist resources available. Pupils also know that staff care for them. Staff make sure that pupils are safe at this school. Pupils get on well with each other. Should bullying occur, staff deal with it effectively through a restorative approach.

Although pupils and staff have a strong professional rapport, expectations for pupils' behaviour are not consistently high. Often, poor behaviours are not tackled. Staff give too much leeway to pupils who are not punctual, or who choose not to attend some classes. For example, sixth-form students who have no prior accreditations in English or mathematics often do not show up for lessons in those subjects. This holds students back from further developing their English and mathematical skills and may be detrimental to their future career prospects.

Staff arrange many enrichment activities beyond the classroom. For example, pupils recently went on a residential trip. They experienced outdoor learning and teamwork. Some pupils recently enjoyed taking part in a museum-based project, which involved them photographing images around London.

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

New leaders communicate a shared vision. They aspire to give pupils the educational and social skills they need to lead successful and meaningful adult lives. They have identified a raft of areas that they have prioritised for improvement. Leaders have implemented some important changes well, such as in the recording of safeguarding concerns. However, there are still some weaknesses in the curriculum and pupils' behaviour.

In the school's specialist curriculum areas of the creative and performing arts, pupils achieve well. Leaders and teachers have subject-specific expertise. They teach the required knowledge and skills effectively and in a logical manner. Pupils have opportunities to practise and develop their skills and creativity. They also have meaningful encounters with professionals in the performing and creative industries. As a result, pupils achieve some accreditations in these subjects, bespoke to their needs.

Pupils' achievements in other subjects are not as consistently strong. There are new subject leaders in some of these other subjects. They have reviewed and made changes in their areas of responsibility. Now, in English and mathematics, for example, when pupils or students arrive, staff make baseline assessments and identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, in these and some other subjects, leaders have not thought through clearly enough what they want pupils to know and remember. Some work that teachers give to pupils does not build on prior learning in a sufficiently secure manner.

Leaders have recently introduced reading assessments for all pupils. This gives them an indication of how well pupils understand texts. Teachers use this information to plan bespoke teaching and support. However, staff do not have expertise in teaching phonics. This means that pupils who have difficulties in their reading accuracy and fluency do not get the help they need to become fluent and confident readers.

When pupils disrupt lessons, a member of staff removes them from the classroom to work in a quiet area. Sometimes, pupils also wish to work in seclusion and are supported to do so. This approach enables pupils who want to learn to gain new knowledge. However, general expectations for pupils' behaviour are, at times, low. Often, pupils arrive late to lessons, wasting valuable learning time. Sometimes, staff do not challenge pupils who use their mobile phones or swear. Some students choose not to engage with or attend their lessons. All of this serves as a barrier to pupils' achievements. Leaders know that the school's policies and procedures for behaviour management are not effective enough. They have set up a working party to review and address these concerns. Leaders have organised a series of staff training events. These are currently focused on understanding different types of pupils' needs and behaviours. Although staff are finding this all helpful, leaders' work to secure high standards of behaviour is at an early stage.

Pupils have access to an effective impartial careers guidance programme. This includes opportunities to meet with people representing a range of industries and careers. Sixth-form students also undertake work experience. When students leave school, most successfully enter employment or undertake further training.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is strong. Through lessons and external workshops, pupils are taught about healthy relationships and consent. Staff also discuss with pupils how to look after their mental health. They have arranged for all pupils to have first-aid training. Pupils have opportunities to visit the theatre, museums and other cultural venues in London.

Most staff feel that their workload demands are reasonable. Leaders also take steps to consider and support staff well-being. Nonetheless, staff would like clarity and stronger support in managing pupils' behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding, welfare and attendance leaders work closely together to keep a close eye on pupils' safety and welfare. They ensure that staff are trained with the latest statutory guidance and have revised their reporting and recording systems. These are fit for purpose. At twice-daily briefings, staff discuss and share information relating to any new or ongoing safety and welfare issues. Leaders work with a range of agencies to get pupils the timely help that they need.

Leaders have robust recruitment processes for vetting candidates' suitability to work with pupils. They seek guidance and take appropriate action in dealing with allegations or safeguarding concerns about staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders are at an early stage of thinking through what they want pupils to know and remember long term. This means that pupils do not routinely achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that across the subjects they plan a well-sequenced bespoke curriculum to meet pupils' needs so that they can reach their potential.
- No members of staff are skilled in the teaching of phonics. This means that pupils who have difficulty in decoding words are not given the help that they need. Leaders should ensure that staff gain expertise in the teaching of phonics so that pupils who are behind in their reading can be supported to become fluent and confident readers.
- Some pupils' behaviours are challenging and their attitudes to learning are weak. Some choose not to attend lessons or not to do the work their teachers set them. This limits pupils from gaining the essential core knowledge that they need to succeed in their future lives. Leaders should ensure that they raise expectations for positive behaviours and attitudes and ensure that staff have the skills to embed policy and practice consistently to bring this about.
- The new leadership team has made several essential improvements to aspects of the school's work. However, in some areas, such as improving the curriculum and pupils' behaviour, leaders' work has been slower to start. This means that pupils are not achieving well. Leaders should tackle the areas of improvement and take the actions that they have already identified in a more timely fashion.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7 and 8 June 2017.

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	141164
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10240093
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Free school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Attwood
Headteacher	Gosia Klosek
Website	www.theartsxchange.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has gone through many changes since the last inspection. It joined the T4 Trust on 1 September 2019. There is one other school in the trust. The school changed its name from WAC Arts to The ArtsXchange on 1 September 2021. That was the same date it moved into its new premises.
- In the past few years, there has been a large turnover of staff, including leaders. The current headteacher and designated safeguarding lead joined the school in the summer term of 2022. Other leaders, including those for the curriculum, took up their posts in September 2022 or later during the autumn term. The chair of the local governing body took up his post in September 2022.
- School leaders do not make use of other alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. They met with the chair of the trust, the safeguarding trustee, as well as the trust's chief executive officer. They also met with the chair of the local governing body as well as the local authority alternative provision manager.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, digital media and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered some other subjects.
- Inspectors checked the school's policies and records and spoke with the designated safeguarding lead, senior leaders, trustees, pupils and staff to check on the school's culture of safeguarding.
- The inspectors had formal meetings with staff and with pupils. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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