

Inspection of Ashcroft Technology Academy

100 West Hill, London SW15 2UT

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since February 2015.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff nurture pupils' aspirations and self-belief from the moment they join this school. Pupils work hard in their lessons and they enjoy plentiful well-planned opportunities outside the classroom. The science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) club is especially popular. Pupils also spoke enthusiastically about the rich range of activities offered in the creative arts. They are particularly proud of their school drama productions.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They plan pupils' learning so that all achieve highly across all subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study the same broad range of subjects as their peers. For example, all pupils learn French until Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils enjoy reading several Shakespeare plays as well as important world literature such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird'.

Pupils said that they enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils manage their own behaviour very well. They are respectful to one another and to staff. Bullying and name-calling are not tolerated in this school. Staff encourage pupils to 'call it out' if it occurs. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. On the few occasions it does happen, pupils know who to speak to and they trust their teachers to resolve it.

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

Most parents and carers would recommend this school. It is easy to see why. Leaders make sure that all pupils receive an excellent education, both in and outside of the classroom. Pupils know that staff want them to excel and aim high for the future.

The curriculum is designed to make sure pupils develop and deepen their knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Subject leaders make ambitious and deliberate choices about the essential knowledge pupils need to know by the end of their courses. They also give careful thought to the order pupils learn new subject content. For example, in psychology, Year 11 pupils learn about memory shortly before they revise for exams.

Leaders are just as ambitious for students in the sixth form. There is a broad range of subjects for students to choose from. Teachers are experts in their subject areas. Subject leaders plan the teaching of knowledge and skills with the same care as throughout the school. For example, in English, students learn about the treatment of women in Victorian Britain to understand the portrayal of women in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'.

In all subjects, teaching is planned to increase pupils' knowledge step by step. Teachers check pupils' understanding thoroughly and expect pupils to apply prior learning. They set pupils demanding work and revisit subject content if pupils need more practice.

Leaders give reading a high priority. Pupils read a wide range of novels, plays and poems from the start of Year 7. This includes books chosen to reflect the school community. Staff check that pupils read often and widely. Pupils were keen to share their favourite books with inspectors.

Pupils with SEND receive the support they need to succeed in the full range of subjects. This includes those pupils who attend the resourced provision. Teachers know and plan carefully for each pupil. They provide support which is matched precisely to pupils' needs. Leaders check that this support enables pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. They do not hesitate to make changes to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. Pupils with SEND achieve very well in this school.

Pupils learn well because there is very little low-level disruption. In classrooms, pupils focus on their work. They want to learn and they are curious. Pupils follow teachers' instructions without delay. Well-practised routines contribute to the school's calm, orderly atmosphere. Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed unanimously that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

High expectations for pupils extend beyond the classroom. This is clear in how leaders plan for pupils' personal development. The diverse range of extra-curricular activities is popular and well attended. Examples include clubs for sports, performing arts, games and debating. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships, diversity and how to keep themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. Leaders have developed a well-structured careers programme, including in the sixth form. Pupils receive information about non-academic courses and colleges, for instance at an annual careers fair.

Teachers, including early career teachers, value support from leaders immensely. This includes the training they receive to strengthen their expertise. Teachers also appreciate how leaders ensure that their workload is manageable. Staff enjoy working at this school and they are proud to work there.

The executive board of trustees meets regularly and holds leaders to account. For example, trustees ask leaders helpful and challenging questions about the curriculum, safeguarding and finance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff at all levels receive safeguarding training. Training in school is supplemented by additional online training modules on topics such as peer-on-peer abuse and radicalisation. Leaders check that staff understand the information and guidance they receive. Staff are aware of the risks pupils may encounter in the school and the local area. They can identify signs of potential harm and they know how to report them.

Leaders work closely with outside agencies to provide support to pupils when necessary, for instance through the early help service. Leaders and staff know the procedures to follow if there are concerns about an adult working in the school.

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.

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

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	135316
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10203352
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1363
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	242
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Whitcutt
Principal	Douglas Mitchell
Website	www.atacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2015 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. The provision provides up to 16 places for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with the chair of the executive board of the trust by telephone.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography, French, art and psychology. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, a trustee, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils in all key stages. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding and behaviour and about their workload in school. Inspectors looked at 41 staff responses, 86 parent responses and 202 pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

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