

# Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy: a parent's view

Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy' is a series of blog posts written by Sarah Sterne, a parent and governor at our school. Sarah writes from a parent's perspective about the challenges in selecting a Secondary School, getting past the jargon of new progress measures and finding the right learning community environment to suit a child's individual needs.

Sarah Sterne has a professional background in Education and Teacher Training. She is a parent of two children currently in Years 5 and 7 in the state education system. Since she has recently been through the process of selecting a secondary school and is about to embark on the process again; she is interested in sharing her experiences with others. Sarah has recently been appointed as a Governor of Ark Putney Academy.

## Post 7: End of Term Day Trips

When choosing a secondary school, it is important to look at *how* the school inspires its students. Not all learning takes place in the classroom and London after all, has a wealth of resources and learning opportunities to draw from.

Ark Putney Academy has a carefully planned trips programme which includes enriching learning experiences. During the final weeks of the summer term, students have the opportunity to take part in day trips. In July 2017, students in different year groups had experiences based on their learning needs at the time.

One year group were given the opportunity to work on team building. This was achieved through a day of sports in Wimbledon Park. The trip was not only a reward but also a chance for pupils to develop their social skills and build relationships. In addition, the year group engaged in physical activities which many had not experienced before.

Another group had an experience more directly associated with their formal learning at school. The year 9 students that have chosen art as a GCSE option went to the Museum of London, stopping en route to paint Westminster from one of the bridges. The aim of the trip was to engage the students with fine art at the highest possible level and promote discussion and opinion amongst the students that will be taking GCSE art. It was a fantastic opportunity for the students to really observe and appreciate London. It's surprising how many of us Londoners rarely get into the city and make the most of what London has to offer.

The Museum of London was also visited by Year 8, who have been learning about British values and the students were able to access a wide range of informative and interesting features at Museum of London.

Year 8 also visited London Zoo. Here, they learned about the conservation element of captive animals. Although zoos have sometimes had a bad press, the APA students were pleased to learn that all profits made by London Zoo go towards conservation charities and protecting endangered species. The students were chaperoned by sixth form volunteers and enjoyed entering the enclosures with the monkeys and the sloths. They were also fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the very interesting naked mole rats.

APA aims to engage its students in exploring future career paths. Year 7 had the opportunity to increase their awareness of different careers and roles in society by visiting 'Kidzania' in Shepherd's Bush. Kidzania has its own currency and young people are 'paid' to carry out certain jobs from a very eclectic range of careers from musician to Doctor. However, for some of the more popular jobs like making a smoothie with Innocent, students have to pay using the currency. Each task takes up to around half an hour to complete, so the APA students were able to complete around 5 or 6 shifts during the trip.

Year 7 also visited the Science Museum in preparation for a whole school focus on STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) in the forthcoming academic year. The students showed real enthusiasm for science and asked pertinent questions. Inspiring the students in this way gives them a wider context for their learning and aids their focus when they are back in school.

I am sure that all the students that took part in these trips gained a valuable educational experience which will enhance their classroom based learning.