

# 'Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy': A guide to applications and what Ark Putney has to offer

*'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.*

## Quick Guide to Applying to APA

Important Dates – Applications from current Year 6 pupils can be made from September but must be submitted by 31 October 2016.

How to Apply – The easiest way is on line, via the local authority (London Borough) in which you live. You can also apply on-line via [www.eadmissions.org.uk](http://www.eadmissions.org.uk).

Wandsworth Test – Pupils do **not** have to be registered for the Wandsworth Test to apply for APA. However, they do need to for other schools in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Open Days – there are still some spaces on forthcoming open mornings and evenings. Please click [here](#) for more information. Please note that the current students are not asked to behave in a different way to the normal expectations on open days, so you will be able to see the school as it normally operates.

Easy to access- Please note that the nearest main bus stop to the school is The Green Man, which is a major bus garage with buses to and from parts of Wandsworth, Merton and other local areas.

## Why Choose Ark Putney Academy?

My previous posts have discussed the value which APA adds to its students learning and the schools approach to pastoral care. APA has celebrated high exam results and 'value added' in recent years, but what can APA offer its pupils beyond academics?

## Free Tuition on a Musical Instrument

All pupils in Year 7 and 8 are offered free tuition in a choice of keyboards, drum kit, voice, guitar or bass guitar. This is made possible thanks to funding from the Grammy Award winning British rock band Mumford and Sons and is highly unusual for a state school. Many accomplished musicians including Andrew Lloyd Webber (1) have campaigned for free music tuition in London Schools. Playing a musical instrument can provide students with many benefits. Apart from being an engaging and rewarding undertaking in their own right; music lessons can contribute to academic skills, physical skills, social skills, discipline and self-esteem and can give students a wider cultural experience (2). The school boasts a new state of the art recording studio and sound-insulated practice rooms.

APA has a rich tradition of participation in music. The Alumni includes The Macabees, Members of So Solid Crew, Peter Green from Fleetwood Mac and Mercury Award Winners The XX. Current students have opportunities to join choirs and small bands at school and the Ark Network hosts an annual Music Gala at the Barbican Centre every summer.

## Other performing Arts

The school hall has a full stage with backstage and under-stage facilities. From January 2017, there will also be a new theatre with tiered seating, wings and full lighting and I can't wait to see the students benefitting from opportunities to participate in productions.

## Languages Laboratory

There is a newly opened languages laboratory which incorporates cutting-edge speech and language technology. All students learn French. However, home languages at GCSE can be made available when appropriate.

## Sports

All students take part in Physical Education and there is a 'Sport for All' ethos. Extra-curricular clubs are also available, which are seasonal such as basketball, rugby, football, girls' football, boxing, trampolining, hockey, badminton, table tennis and ballet. The facilities include cricket nets and a bowling machine; 3G Astro-Turf pitch and a sports hall built to professional international specifications, which has been marked for basketball, badminton and 5-a-side football.

## Extra-Curricular Clubs

Clubs are organised so that there is something to interest all, such as:

- Chess
- Debating
- Coding (coming soon)
- Robotics
- Film/Media
- Green Team
- Homework support
- Many sports as listed above
- Choirs/Music

## Residential Trips

Pupils in Year 7 are invited to attend a residential trip. Last year, they went to Osmington Bay in Dorset, where they took part in outdoor activities such as raft building. Forthcoming ideas include a camping trip.

## Houses

Being a relatively small school, it has been possible for APA to create a culture in which students in different year groups support one another. All students including the 6th Form and teachers are part of a house. Being part of a house gives students a real sense of belonging and identity. Inter-house events can create friendly competition and houses support charity work. House assembly takes place every 2nd week and the house cup is awarded. House points relate also to students' attitude to learning.

## Library

The school benefits from a large fully stocked library with a full time librarian. The library is available for students to use before and after school.

## Small Things

Sometimes, attention to detail can make a difference to a student's experience. For example, lockers are available for all students making their daily routine easier to manage.

*I have not come across another state school in the local area which is able to offer free music tuition, a language laboratory, theatre and drama facilities, a new sports hall, a fully stocked library and a locker for every student! I hope you will visit APA and see the wonderful facilities for yourself.*

## References

1. [www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com](http://www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com)
2. [www.parents.com/kids/development/intellectual/benefits-of-music-lessons](http://www.parents.com/kids/development/intellectual/benefits-of-music-lessons)