

English National Ballet School

Inspection of colleges participating in the in the Dance and Drama Award scheme

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Information about the college

1. English National Ballet School (ENBS) is an independent ballet school offering training in classical ballet and complementary studies for students aged 16 to 19. Upon successful completion of their programme, students achieve a Diploma in Professional Dance validated by Trinity College London. The school aims to prepare students for employment with the English National Ballet Company and other prestigious companies in this country and abroad.
2. In 1995 the school moved to its own premises, located in the same building as Kensington and Chelsea College, not far from the English National Ballet (ENB). The school has a close relationship with the ENB and up to 5 students from each cohort joined the ENB in recent years. However, governance, management and finances of ENBS are separate from ENB. The school has a board of directors and is a registered charity, limited by guarantee.
3. Currently, there are 74 students on the course: 24 in the first year, 29 in the second year and 21 in the third year. Of these, 31 are male, and 57 are from overseas, including 25 from outside the European Union. Some students have joined the course during its second or third years. Of the total body of 74, some 47 students are in receipt of dance and drama awards.
4. Two co-directors, who share chief executive responsibilities, lead the school. The senior management team includes a head of studies, a director of dance and a head of music, and a general manager. ENBS' mission is 'to be a centre of excellence for young dancer development, providing intensive ballet training in preparation for students to enter a professional career'. The previous inspection of the ENBS took place in November 2008, when achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management were outstanding.

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
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Capacity to improve	Grade 1
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Overall effectiveness

5. ENBS is an outstanding school, with outstanding capacity to improve. Students value very highly the opportunities they have and they develop rapidly into professional dancers with sophisticated reflective skills and a strong desire to analyse and improve on their practice.

6. Achievement on the main diploma and the supplementary Benesh notation course are excellent, although some first-year students lack confidence when starting the Benesh notation course. Students make very rapid progress and are highly committed to their studies. ENBS graduates frequently gain places with ENB and other prestigious companies. At ENB, graduates occupy positions from artist to senior principal, and act as very constructive role models for students. ENB provides students with numerous work experience opportunities, including performance in core company programmes both on the main stage and at other venues. A development of significant worth is *ENB2*, a third year apprentice company which tours with a production devised in collaboration with ENB.
7. The quality of provision, in all aspects, is outstanding. Teachers provide highly skilled tuition and have excellent contacts with major dance companies. Students value and reflect well on the very high quality advice and guidance they receive from teachers, physiotherapists and other staff. The curriculum is well managed and includes a very good range of additional subjects to give students confidence and flexibility for employment. Preparation for auditions and working life is impressive.
8. Clear strategic planning and adept operational management, with a clear focus on student success, are the keynotes of excellent leadership and management at ENBS. Dance, health, nutrition and welfare staff share the ethos of the school and work successfully to deliver outstanding opportunities for students. Self-assessment is suitably lean and realistic, and enables leaders to monitor the quality of student experience. However, whilst much peer observation and shared professional development occurs, formal arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are still in development.

What does name of college need to do to improve further?

- Fully establish the arrangements for teaching and learning observation including the formal standardisation of observers' judgements and the grading of teaching and learning in observation reports.
- Improve first-year students' confidence in approaching Benesh notation courses, by better publicising the success rates of previous cohorts.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- The highly skilled and widely experienced teachers
- The caring and inclusive ethos and atmosphere of the school
- The extensive personal support received by all students, and the exceptional support that enables overseas students to settle quickly into UK life
- The high levels of support for literacy, complementary studies and study skills

- The very wide ranging opportunities to perform outside the school, and particularly the confidence and professional experience afforded by participation in *ENB2*
- The confidence that being an ENBS student gives for auditions and job applications.

What learners would like to see improved:

- More rehearsal and performance space at the school.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- The confidence and maturity of ENBS graduates approaching auditions
- The strong work ethic and professionalism of graduates as they begin employment
- Strong networking and liaison with responsive school leaders and staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- No comments for improvement were received.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

9. ENBS is an excellent provider with outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. Achievement has been outstanding since well before the previous inspection, and has been at 100% for the past three years. Retention is currently good and improving. The few students who leave the course do so for reasons unconnected with training or the school. Graduate employment is outstanding, averaging over 90% across the past three years. ENBS graduates secure positions with very prestigious companies, and currently around 45% of English National Ballet dancers have come from the school. Students produce high quality work, and rapidly develop a strong professional ethic, which prepares them exceptionally well for auditions and employment. Employers appreciate the way that ENBS students and graduates present at audition and how they settle swiftly into professional routine and cope with the demands of company life.
10. Teaching and learning are outstanding, with excellent care, guidance and support. Curriculum management is excellent with students receiving outstanding professional guidance from their tutors in classes and from managers. An excellent integrated professional studies course and a Benesh

notation course supplement dance studies and develop students' employability and understanding of choreography. Leaders communicate a clear vision for the school, and all staff share enthusiastically in the focus on student development and success. Self-assessment is realistic and inclusive. However, arrangements to secure improvements in teaching and learning through lesson observation are at a relatively early stage of development. Managers have recognised the need to develop a more formal system of observation and early planning is underway.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

11. Achievement is outstanding and has been at 100% for several years. Retention of students on the courses is good and improving, with few withdrawals during the period since the previous inspection. Where students have withdrawn, the school has a good understanding of the reasons. A number of students who withdrew for personal reasons were supported in transfers to other prestigious training companies, including Central School of Ballet and the Bolshoi School.
12. Awarding body reports from Trinity College London have been consistently excellent since the previous inspection. The Trinity annual review for 2010/11 identifies 'talents emerging due to excellent training... in preparation for a long and varied career.' Assessors have commented on students being 'totally committed to ensuring an enjoyable performance for the audience'. Students benefit greatly from the school's close connection to English National Ballet. Trinity assessors report that the school's very close link to English National Ballet 'enhances the students' artistic development, as well as sharpening their technical abilities, which amply prepares them for their careers in the future'. In recent assessed performances, students demonstrated excellent technique, fluid and lyrical use of arms and upper body and a natural sense of turn. Most students were very musical and line, elevation, sense of turn and use of feet were excellent throughout.
13. Written work is produced to a very high standard. Dissertations are well researched, detailed, thoughtful and mature. Students are able to talk about their work with good focus and clear presentation of argument. During training they develop a strong sense of trust for their peers, and demonstrate good partnering and company work. Students enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic and articulate advocates for the school. Many describe the experience of training as life changing, and the atmosphere of school as homely and exceptionally supportive.
14. During the past three years all students have achieved the main Trinity qualification for which they entered. In addition, students' achievements in their Benesh notation examinations are excellent, with 100% pass rates during 2011/12. In the Benesh examinations, around a third of students received honours grading, and just under half received commendations.

15. Students make rapid progress, and are set ambitious but achievable goals for each year of their programme. These are clearly set out in useful student, technical and curriculum handbooks. Work across the years of the programme allows first and second year students to observe frequently the technique of third years, fuelling ambition and aspiration. Performance in major venues such as the Bloomsbury Theatre, additional studies in contemporary and Spanish dance, and training in Benesh notation all improve students' versatility, confidence and employability. ENBS maintains a very high graduate employment level of over 90% year on year.
16. Students feel exceptionally safe and talk warmly of the strongly caring family atmosphere at ENBS. The school rightly places great emphasis on health and safety, nutrition and safe dance practice; students understand these very well. Teaching on anatomy and physiology, healthy eating and nutrition is comprehensive and suitably prominent in the curriculum.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

17. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Tutors have a very precise awareness of each student's capability, and provide clear instruction and exceptional individual corrections that link clearly to previous classes and future work or rehearsals. Classes are well paced, offer excellent levels of challenge and highly effective use of demonstration. Tutors employ imagery and analogy very well across year groups. Students are strongly encouraged to engage in peer learning and support. Students recovering from injury receive a good range of appropriate modifications. However, in a few classes the students sitting out because of injury are insufficiently involved in critiques of peer work.
18. Students are very enthusiastic about their classes, and value highly the professional expertise and extensive industry experience of their teachers. Students use personal dance journals very well to record teachers' corrections and reflect on practice. They appreciate the way tutors challenge them in their classes, and how tutors' professional expectations help to prepare them for their future careers.
19. Frequent contact with guest teachers and visiting practitioners exposes students a very broad and productive range of approaches and teaching styles. Such contact enables students to understand the variations of style and focus they will encounter in professional companies. Assessment arrangements are excellent, with challenging and rigorous assessment and moderation of classical, contemporary and Spanish dance. Assessors provide detailed and constructive feedback to students.
20. ENBS provides good opportunities to perform beyond school settings. Students perform at a range of venues, gaining a good understanding of ways they must vary technique to suit the space and atmospherics of performance spaces. The newly established ENB2 apprentice company provides third years with excellent experience of the demands of professional touring productions.

21. Arrangements to observe the quality of teaching and learning are in development, with observation cycles, formal training of observers and standardisation of observers' judgements yet to be carried out. Judgements on existing reports are at times over-generous, with a tendency to focus on teaching rather than learning.
22. Partnership working is excellent, and students benefit from the school's very wide and productive range of industry contacts including the connection to English National Ballet. Graduates secure a wide range of audition opportunities and gain contracts with many prestigious ballet companies in the UK and internationally. In recent years students have joined English National Ballet, Northern Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Estonian National Ballet, Bayerisches Staatsoper, the Zurich Ballet and Miami City Ballet. Currently, around 45% of dancers at English National Ballet are graduates of ENBS. Employers speak highly of the school and the training it gives its graduates, citing technique, personality and confidence as major features of ENBS graduates.
23. Care guidance and support are outstanding at ENBS. A straightforward and effective system of physiotherapy referral ensures shared understanding of recovery routines between tutors, students and health professionals in the school. Those students who are unable to dance because of injury are given a range of physiotherapy, floor barre, Pilates or other exercises during their recovery period.
24. International students receive impressive levels of support in finding suitable accommodation, setting up bank accounts, registering with doctors, and buying appropriate dancewear. Students see themselves very much as professional dancers from an early stage of their training and share a strong school-company ethos.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

25. Leaders and managers set exceptionally high standards that are well understood and shared by staff and students. Directors are extremely well informed and involved in day-to-day events at the school, yet undertake effective strategic and long-term planning to secure the school's future. Tutors understand very well the direction of the school, and share an outstanding commitment to technical development and artistic achievement in their students. Measures to manage performance and provide professional updating and development are very good. Emphasis on teaching and learning qualifications through continuing professional development has been good since the previous inspection.
26. Trustees provide good oversight, challenge and support with strategic planning. They visit the school frequently and are well represented at performances and showcase events. The trustees bring a good range of skills relevant to the school's needs. Students have made presentations at Trustee meetings and presented reports from student representative council members. Trustees

provided comment upon the self-assessment process but did not comment directly on the report for the school.

27. Promotion of safeguarding and measures to ensure learners' safety are excellent. All staff have appropriate criminal record bureau checks, and all staff, including some freelance sessional staff and six board members, have completed NSPCC child protection training. Premises are safe and secure and students are well informed about matters of personal safety outside the school. Students have received training on internet safety.
28. Staff and students have a clear understanding of equality and diversity, and can discuss these with confidence. The course considers a good range of multi-cultural dance and musical forms. There is no discernible variation in performance between any identifiable groups of students.
29. Students take an active and mature role in the life of the school. A vibrant and well-regarded student representative council provides a clear channel of formal communication between the each year cohort and ENBS managers. Students have frequent opportunities to share their views with staff and managers, and are confident about raising concerns or asking for variations or improvements in their programme. Student representatives are very well established and play a key role in feeding student views to senior managers. The twice-yearly assessment process gives an excellent opportunity for students to comment on their course and the quality of the teaching they receive. Students value this. Employer and visiting practitioners provide a very good, detailed source of feedback for the school on the quality of students and graduates.
30. Annual self-assessment provides a good mechanism to record managers' accurate and detailed understanding of the school's performance. Staff and managers have a good and shared perspective of strengths and areas for improvement in training, though these are not routinely recorded as part of a quality assurance framework. All staff were observed in their teaching during the past year by visiting tutors, but measures to establish an effective and well-understood observation process are at a relatively early stage.
31. The school provides excellent value for money. Leaders have worked successfully to deal with an historic deficit, and have placed the school's finances on a secure footing. The co-directors and board are now developing long term strategies for growth. Early investigations are underway to identify new and more flexible accommodation for the school. Fundraising events are well organised and generally effective in attracting additional income. Leaders are resourceful in identifying and using funds to support students in need, enabling them to continue and complete their studies.

Information about the inspection

32. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the college's Head of Studies, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They also observed lessons.

Record of main findings			
Provider name	English National Ballet School	Inspection number	387996
Learning types:16-18 learner responsive: FE full-time and part-time courses 74 (47 DaDa recipients)			

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection Full-time learners	74
Overall effectiveness	1
Capacity to improve	1
Outcomes for learners	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1
How well do learners progress?	1
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1
How safe do learners feel?	1
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	
Quality of provision	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1
Leadership and management	1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1

*where applicable to the type of provision

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