

Millennium Performing Arts (MPA)

Dance and drama college

Inspection dates		5 - 6 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A very large majority of students stay at the college and almost all those who do achieve their Professional Diploma in Dance or Musical Theatre. By the time they leave MPA, nearly all students have developed strong performance skills which prepare them well for their careers in dance and musical theatre. Students enjoy their studies and develop high levels of confidence during their time at MPA.
- Most students get jobs in the industry within six months of leaving the college. The majority of students gain places as performers or dancers with cruise ship companies, in theatre, film or television. A large number of students gain jobs in prestigious companies, in high profile shows and with prominent directors or choreographers.
- At MPA, students benefit from good teaching from industry practitioners, many of whom are well respected in their fields.
- Support for students' fitness and health is good. Students develop a mature understanding of ways to remain healthy and ensure effective fitness maintenance.
- Leadership and management are good. Directors have very strong industry experience, are highly visible, approachable and involved in the work of the college.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Measures to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment need to be formalised to identify best practice and share it across subjects.
- Development of students' English skills requires improvement. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in students' work frequently remain unidentified and uncorrected.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Identify and build upon best practice within the college and across the sector. Initiate wider and more formalised and detailed discussion of the different approaches to teaching and learning amongst staff.
- Improve the quality, range and usefulness of tutor feedback to students on written assignments. Ensure that marking criteria are applied with rigour suitable to the academic level of the Diploma qualification and that all students have good written English skills.
- Develop a more closely integrated curriculum which identifies and builds positively on connections between core subjects and integrated professional studies. Share the curriculum design and content more widely amongst staff and students.
- Promote learning and a learning culture amongst students by enhancing library resources and accommodation.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good, as at the previous inspection. A high proportion of students complete their courses and almost all leave with the Professional Diploma in Dance or Musical Theatre. Pass rates for the Diplomas are currently around 99%, and retention rates average at 88% for the past three years. Reasons for leaving the course are generally connected with financial difficulties for self-funded students.
- Comprehensive records of student destinations held by the drama college show student progression is very good. Most students who complete their course secure professional employment within six months of graduating. This has improved in each of the past three years so that last year around 90% of students quickly gained performance related jobs. For Dance and Drama Award-funded students, almost all have gained meaningful employment over the past three years. Many students gain jobs as dancers or performers with cruise ship companies, in film and television work. The college also has a significant number of highly successful graduates working with prominent directors and choreographers, in prestigious companies and in major shows and productions.
- Students develop strong performance skills which equip them well for their careers in dance and musical theatre. Most students leave the college confident and well-prepared for a range of roles in the industry. Trinity College, London, reports show the standard of performance is good in both musical theatre and dance, with some dynamic dance work and, in the best students, sensitive and truthful acting both in scenes and through songs, and sensitive and articulate interpretation of songs, with performances demonstrating eye-catching energy and dynamic personality. Other notable features of students' performance included strong vocal work, and dynamic dance skills with strong and confident technique. In the most successful ensemble work students demonstrated a good range of dance and theatre styles, and students were well prepared technically. However, some students in final year assessments found difficulty sustaining a believable character, and for some students the organisation of final year shows gave insufficient opportunities to demonstrate individual skills and technique.
- Students enjoy their studies, are highly engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. They are working at a high level from early in their courses, and they rise to this challenge very well. In lessons and during practical assessments, students demonstrate high levels of concentration and focus. Almost all students work hard to improve their skills and have a clear sense of what will be expected of them as professional performers.

- During their time at MPA, students feel very safe and are well cared for by staff, who are approachable, helpful and know their students well. Almost all students feel confident to ask for support when they need it, including help in finding appropriate accommodation.
- Health, fitness and well-being are promoted very effectively during lessons, including good guidance on nutrition. Students have a good understanding of ways to maintain fitness and health, and are prompt in reporting injury or illness which may affect their work. Counselling and injury support services are accessible, well-regarded and effective.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, matching the outcomes for learners, as at the previous inspection. Classes are challenging, and teachers encourage students to push themselves within safe limits. Teachers know their students well, treat them as professionals from the outset of the course, and have high expectations for professional performance and behaviour. In a Matt Mattox jazz class for instance, students received sensitive but challenging instruction which significantly improved their technique and encouraged them to test and advance their own skills. Students left the session feeling that they had achieved some professional work.
- All teachers are working practitioners, some with strong national and international reputations in dance, theatre and musical theatre. Teachers' subject knowledge is invariably excellent, and they give students a valuable insight into recent developments within the industry and into industry standards and expectations, which enhances their confidence and employability prospects. Students are enthusiastic and work hard and successfully achieve the standards required. Teachers give some very good individual coaching and direction during classes. Often teachers will recall and re-visit individual points given in earlier lessons to ensure technique is improving and that students work on their own development. In a small minority of cases, however, remarks to students are too general and do not provide sufficient clear guidance for improvement. Too few teachers ensure that students routinely record points for improvement in their journals after or between classes.
- Assessment is good. Good questioning elicits good dialogue and advances technique and understanding in most lessons. Students are confident in asking for clarification of questions, and teachers explain the purpose of questions and tasks well. Formal assessments occur frequently and these give students good guidance about progress and areas upon which they need to focus. Students benefit from and value the detailed feedback they receive from assessment panels. Often the formal assessment panels include guest directors, choreographers or teachers, who give valuable industry perspectives on students' work.
- Feedback on written work is variable in quality. The best marking is thorough and constructive, giving students clear guidance for improvement or further study. Weaker feedback is too brief and general, providing students with a disappointing response to what is often a considerable body of work. Initial diagnostic assessment works effectively and leads to appropriate provision of support for students with specific learning needs. Directors and staff encourage students who have specific learning needs to express their ideas through a wide range of media as well as in written form. However, support for the development of English skills at a level appropriate to the Diploma requires improvement. Significant spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in students' written work frequently remain unidentified and uncorrected.
- The curriculum meets learners' and industry needs very well. The combinations of ballet, jazz and contemporary dance, combined with classes in singing and acting provides students with the 'triple threat' set of skills required for employment in dance and musical theatre. Students appreciate and benefit from the college's focus on ballet skills to underpin dance and musical theatre courses.

- Curriculum integration requires improvement. Students do not benefit from a closely planned and integrated curriculum which makes full and effective use of integrated professional studies (IPS) to contextualise students' skills for triple threat. Staff in some areas successfully contextualise technique and practice during demonstrations, but overall, there is too little formal planning of curriculum to develop students' understanding of historical and cultural movements in dance, musical theatre and theatre.
- Support for students' fitness and health is good. Students develop a mature understanding of ways to remain healthy and ensure effective fitness maintenance. Access to counselling, physiotherapy, osteopathy, medical and other specialist support is good. Injury records are well kept. Staff are alert and responsive to any changes in students manner or bearing and act quickly to put support in place. However, there is not enough routine exploration of injury trends across time by the whole teaching team to inform curriculum planning and developments in teaching.
- Trust and mutual respect between students and between teachers and students during classes is good. Good attention is given to multicultural dance and theatre forms, and promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Levels of respect and collaboration are high in classes and throughout the college.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Directors set high standards, are highly visible, approachable and involved in the work of the college; all three directors have a teaching role and lead in subject areas. They bring a wealth of industry contacts, expertise and reputation which is valued by students and beneficial in enhancing their employability, leading to the many very good employment outcomes for graduates.
- Students have frequent contact with the directors and consult them for subject specific and careers advice. Staff and directors meet frequently to discuss students' progress and needs. The ethos and vision of the college are well understood by students and staff. Leaders and managers make sure that the considerable professional expertise of the teachers is well-directed to drive students' progress. The high standards of work produced students as they approach graduation and when they begin employment is reflective of the determination of directors and staff to train every student to be a confident, industry-ready dancer or performer.
- Measures to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment require formalisation and development in order to identify best practice and secure sustained improvement across the college. Wider and more detailed discussion of approaches to teaching and learning amongst staff is needed to ensure cross-curricular good practice in teaching and learning. Directors and subject heads carry out lesson observations, and these result in useful discussions of practice, with teachers receiving written development and action points after the observation. However, the observations do not receive a grade and trends in observation outcomes receive insufficient formal analysis.
- Directors are enthusiastic in their support for staff professional development, providing very good support for many members of staff to take part in training and professional activity and updating. Staff appreciate the encouragement and flexibility shown by directors to accommodate professional engagements and training, and careful steps are taken to ensure that teachers' professional activities do not have a negative impact on timetables and teaching.
- Studio resources are adequate, as is provision of fitness equipment. Accommodation is currently in the process of a programmed refurbishment, but this is moving slowly and much of the college is in need of decoration. Library resources require improvement, and the environment provided in the library space does not promote learning and a learning culture.
- The college promotes equality and diversity well. Clear and sustained efforts are made to attract male students and students from groups under-represented in dance and musical theatre. MPA

has engaged in some productive and beneficial collaboration with schools to increase the diversity of its intake.

- Since the previous inspection, very good progress has been made to formalise and clarify safeguarding arrangements. The provider now meets statutory requirements for safeguarding of students. A clear central list of Disclosure and Barring Service checks is now maintained, and good measures are in place to check the identity and residence of all visiting tutors. Clear and recently updated policies for child protection, anti-bullying are in place. Senior staff have received recent training as designated safeguarding officers. Security in the college is good, and students feel safe on the premises.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Millennium Performing Arts

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	2	2	2					
	Outcomes for learners	2	2	2					
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2					
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Performing arts	2

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time							38	83
Part-time								
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<div> <div></div> <div>N/A</div> </div>							

Additional socio-economic information

The college is based in a purpose-converted arts centre in Woolwich, south London, but enrolls students from across the United Kingdom. Millennium Performing Arts Ltd is an independent further education college for performing arts. It trains students aged 16 and over for employment in the performing arts industry. The college runs a three-year course in dance and musical theatre leading to the diploma in either professional dance or in musical theatre, awarded by Trinity College, London. The college is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET).

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Beynon HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), assisted by one of the three company directors as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and recent Trinity College London reports. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the past three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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