

The Royal Ballet School

46 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2E 9DA

Inspection dates

17–18 September 2014

Overall outcome

Unmet independent school standards identified

Reason for the inspection

- This emergency inspection was conducted without notice to the school, at the request of the Department for Education (DfE), the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.¹²
- The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.^{3,4,5}
- The purpose of the inspection was to report on the school's compliance with the independent school standards Part 3, the welfare, health and safety of students. Inspectors assessed the regulatory requirements for the school's premises, accommodation and the management of boarding provision.

Main findings

- The school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school are not effective. The arrangements do not take sufficient account of the guidance issued by the Secretary of State, 'Keeping children safe in education' (April 2014), from the Department for Education.
- Inspectors scrutinised the single central record. The school checks the identity of staff using enhanced criminal records checks, medical information and references. The school's ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the single central record has shortcomings. The current format is difficult to manage and the checking system for recruitment and vetting of staff is liable to error. Inspectors identified that a recently employed member of staff has not been adequately checked prior to employment. Documentation checks for other members of staff are incomplete. The single central record of staff checks is not routinely monitored by senior leaders or governors. It is not robust and appropriate risk assessments are not in place.
- The school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently and fairly. All students behave impeccably. Behaviour and relationships between students and with staff are excellent. Case studies of the most vulnerable students show the school's sensitive yet robust approach to students' emotional needs. Weekly network meetings between health professionals and staff carefully coordinate agreed support and care for identified students.
- An effective anti-bullying policy is in place. Awareness of bullying in all its forms is a high priority through the curriculum, students' weekly house meetings and the student council. The new leadership team ensure that, in this high-intensity training environment, staff are well briefed

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents.

⁵ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

about teaching classes designed to really push students yet maintain a balance of criticism and support. Students say teachers rightly expect and insist on the highest standards of performance and commitment, as befits a school of this nature. However students also feel well supported and respected. No bullying by staff was reported to inspectors.

- The health and safety policy is compliant with relevant laws. The teaching accommodation at both the upper and lower school is well maintained. Closed circuit systems monitor school entrances, and external door keypads ensure access is controlled and secure. The staff ensure that all visitors sign in and out of each site. Fire safety is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire safety records show termly day and night fire evacuations and regular fire alarm and safety equipment checks. Fire safety officers complete the annual safety audit. The school records confirm that fire marshal training is up to date.
- The school's first-aid policy is implemented effectively. First aiders are accredited through St John's Ambulance. Members of staff qualified in first aid are on duty 24 hours a day. First-aid boxes are well maintained. Medicines are carefully administered and monitored by the school nurse. Medical and treatment rooms are fully equipped to respond to injuries or support recovery from any physical conditions. A team of health professionals for example, physiotherapists and nutritionists, provide comprehensive first-aid, medical and health support for students.
- Staff are managed appropriately to ensure the proper supervision of students. The new Principal and vice principal have implemented a new staffing structure which ensures students' pastoral care and well-being now have a much higher profile in school.
- Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- The new artistic director, senior leaders and governors have reviewed the school's annual approach to 'assessing out' students who fail the required standard. From October, the outcomes of new weekly dance assessments will be shared with students and parents and carers. If students do not meet expectations they will be alerted much earlier than previously to the possibility of failed standards. Additional support will then be given prior to the annual assessment when the final decision has to be made.
- Boarders are inducted effectively. Year 7 attend summer school before admission. Year 11 mentors and Year 8 'guidelings' offer sensitive induction advice. The independent listener, a local vicar, is accessible by phone and he visits the school frequently. External contacts and helplines are clearly displayed. Traditions such as gifting a hand-embroidered ballet shoe to each new dancer help new entrants feel welcomed. Older students and those from overseas are introduced to life in the United Kingdom and London.
- The provision for the health and well-being of boarders is comprehensive. The school nurse oversees the successful implementation of all health and well-being policies. First-aid, washing, toilet and accommodation facilities meet requirements. Boarders have access to local medical services. The confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected. There are no reports of confidentiality being breached.
- Boarders' contact with parents and carers is actively encouraged by use of phone or electronic devices.
- Safer recruitment processes are not routinely applied. The single central record of staff checks has gaps and is not compliant with requirements.
- School leaders have ensured that all staff understand current safeguarding guidance. In September, four training days were devoted to child protection for the entire staff faculty. Welfare plans are in place for students subject to a child protection plan or those for whom there is concern.
- The school consistently implements its written policy to promote good behaviour. Older students report a positive change in adult-student relationships which are now more constructive and mutually respectful.
- There is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding. A staffing structure with greater clarity about roles and responsibilities has improved links between academic and boarding staff. Senior boarding staff are experienced and have an adequate level

of training.

- Supervision of students by staff is appropriate. A staffing restructure has reviewed all job descriptions to reflect duties. Professional development and training are effective. Staff spouses or partners have signed agreements with respect to their roles and tenancy. The policy for missing children is in place. Two members of staff sleep in each of the boarding areas in rooms separated from the dormitories. Boarders contact residential staff using doorbells or mobile phones. Students do not access private accommodation.
- Boarders do not experience discrimination. Differences in students' backgrounds and personalities are celebrated; tolerance of others is actively promoted. Male and female students get on well together.
- Boarders have the opportunity to express their views or make complaints through the student council, house meetings, a suggestion box and suggestions book. For example, boarders proposed bed dividers in larger dormitories to provide additional privacy. These were installed.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended, and associated requirements

Ensure that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.	Paragraph 7
Ensure that, in future, the checks specified in 19(2)(b) are completed before a person's appointment.	Paragraph 19 (3)

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

Ensure that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.	NMS 11
Operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements, having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.	NMS 14

Inspection team

Ann Debono, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Cox	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare Davies	Social Care Inspector
Sharon Lewis	Social Care Inspector

Information about this school

- The Royal Ballet School was founded in 1926 as the Academy of Choreographic Art. It trains and educates classical ballet dancers to perform in national and international dance companies. The school operates on two sites, both of which have specialist ballet facilities.
- The Lower School in Richmond Park offers boarding provision, classical ballet training and academic education to GCSE level for students between the ages of 11 and 16. One hundred and twenty five students were on roll at the time of the inspection, including 122 boarding students and three day students.
- The Upper School is located in Covent Garden. Eighty nine students between the ages of 16 and 19 were on roll. A-level courses are offered for Year 12 and Year 13. A third senior year prepares students for professional careers. All students are accommodated in three boarding houses locally or within a short travelling distance.
- The school is academically non-selective. Before entry all students audition to be selected on the basis of their talent and abilities as dancers. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds from the United Kingdom and overseas.
- No students are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs.
- The school's education and boarding were last inspected in October and November 2011 by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

School details

Unique reference number	102947
Social care unique reference number	SC017400
Inspection number	452518
DfE registration number	318/6074

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Independent secondary school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	89
Number of part time pupils	none
Number of boarders on roll	209
Chair	The Marchioness of Douro OBE
Artistic Director	Christopher Powney
Date of previous school inspection	October 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,805
Annual fees (boarders)	Lower School £32,151 Upper School £28,080
Telephone number	020 7836 8899
Email address	karen.davies@royalballetschool.org.uk

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