

# Arts Educational School, London

Dance and drama school

## Inspection dates

11–12 November 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding provider

- Students are very committed to their training; they adopt a professional approach and work very hard, developing very good skills and achieving excellent understanding of the industry in which they aspire to work.
- A recent capital investment programme has substantially improved the quality of accommodation and resources at the school, providing outstanding facilities for teachers and students.
- The school's particularly strong focus on developing students' experience of film, television and radio helps to build students' skills and confidence in these areas and significantly increases their employability.
- The board of trustees adds substantial value to the work of the school, providing outstanding support and challenge to leaders and helping to maintain and improve the quality of provision at the school.
- Students enjoy their courses; they work very well together, providing outstanding peer support and encouragement to each other, and they feel empowered to develop as artists and professionals.
- Managers ensure teachers improve their skills and share their expertise by creating regular opportunities for them to plan and direct student productions collaboratively.
- Students have a very strong voice, contributing significantly to quality assurance, curriculum design and strategic planning within the school.
- Students recognise and appreciate the significant value of working as part of a culturally diverse community.
- Managers enable students to have high levels of engagement and training with industry professionals.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- The Arts Educational School, London (Arts Ed) comprises several linked schools offering education and performing arts training for children from the age of 11 up to degree and postgraduate level. This inspection explored the provision for those students studying the Trinity diploma in acting and musical theatre, funded by the national dance and drama awards (DaDA) scheme, for students from the age of 18.
- The school is located in Chiswick, West London. At the time of inspection there were a total of 111 students in the Trinity diploma in receipt of DaDA funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality and format of written feedback to students, particularly from visiting directors.
- Ensure teachers encourage acting students to apply the textual analysis skills they have learnt to rehearsal work with visiting directors.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Governors, leaders and managers all work hard to ensure that the school meets its mission to deliver successful and fulfilling careers for its students and staff, all of whom demonstrate a very strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the school. The standard of education, training and personal care for students is consistently very high.
- Leaders and managers have highly effective quality assurance and improvement systems in place, which have maintained the quality of provision since the last inspection and addressed the areas for development identified in the previous report. The self-assessment process is accurate; leaders critically analyse the quality of provision, identifying areas for improvement and putting in place strategies to address them.
- Leaders maintain a close overview of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They carry out regular lesson observations which help to identify opportunities for sharing best practice. Managers create frequent opportunities for staff to plan and deliver projects in teams. These projects lead to highly creative collaborations across the production teams, and enable staff to develop their professional practice by planning with, and learning from, each other. Staff are always keen to improve and develop and, as a result, the quality of teaching is very high.
- Students have a particularly strong voice within the school, with frequent opportunities to feed their thoughts and insights into ongoing quality assurance, curriculum design and strategic planning. Leaders and managers actively encourage this high level of involvement, which helps to ensure the programme fully meets the needs of the students.
- Governors and leaders have successfully attracted substantial investment, enabling the school to complete an extensive redevelopment of accommodation and resources. This has significantly improved the range and quality of resources, including the construction of an outstanding and versatile new theatre, installation of industry-standard film, radio and television studios, upgrading of student common room areas and staff offices, and improved access for disabled people. Staff fully exploit the benefits of these improved facilities, and students benefit significantly from working with industry-standard facilities.
- Leaders have maintained a close overview of the curriculum and its content. They ensure it meets the needs and interests of students and provides the full range of skills they require to maximise their chances of progressing successfully into employment.
- Teachers and managers maintain very strong links with industry professionals who contribute significantly to the school, for example by providing capital investment, as advisers and critical friends, and also as visiting lecturers and directors. These links help students to develop a thorough understanding of what it is like to work to the exacting standards expected by professionals, with industry-standard equipment and facilities.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - The quality of governance is outstanding. Members of the board have a wealth of skills and expertise that enables them to provide a very high level of support and challenge to leaders and managers.
  - Trustees have played a key role in helping to maintain the ongoing sound financial status of the school. They have also helped shape the recent capital investment project and strategic planning of the school.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Students and staff feel very safe at the school. All staff actively promote the 'Arts Ed' values, based on British values, and foster a strong sense of mutual support, encouragement and acceptance among students. As part of their induction, teachers make students aware of standards and expectations relating to respect for each other, and how to stay safe, both in and around the school and also online. Students recognise and appreciate the significant values of working as part of a culturally diverse community.
  - Leaders and governors ensure the school has considered and met suitable standards associated with safeguarding. They have also raised awareness among staff and students of how to recognise and prevent radicalisation and extremism.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is outstanding

- Teachers plan lessons very well with suitable activities that place high demands and expectations on the students, who respond enthusiastically and develop excellent knowledge and skills as a result. Students make very good progress in lessons; for example, in a 'pas de deux' class, students quickly acquired the skills to perform a very demanding reverse turn in a Viennese Waltz.
- Teachers develop a very positive rapport with students. For example, acting students have the necessary interpersonal skills, language and understanding to interact and work with visiting professional directors during rehearsals.
- Teachers challenge students both physically and mentally. Students respond by working very hard; they demonstrate high levels of commitment, discipline and focus, which help them to build their stamina and develop a strong technical ability.
- Occasionally, visiting directors do not encourage acting students sufficiently to apply the textual analysis skills they have learnt in lessons. As a result, in the early stages of a production, a few students are sometimes slow to develop an in-depth understanding of a text.
- Teachers actively encourage students to ask questions and to review each other's work. Students are always eager to receive feedback, from both teachers and their peers, and take prompt action to continue improving their work. In a small minority of instances, the quality and consistency of written feedback to students varies, particularly from visiting directors. As a result, it does not always provide clarity to students on their relative strengths and areas for improvement.
- Teachers use the outcomes of initial assessment of students' skills effectively, from both the audition stage and from assessments undertaken within the first week of the programme. They identify the developmental needs of each individual student through the three-year programme. This process ensures that staff can, when necessary, group students of similar abilities together so that they receive the necessary support they need to help reach their full potential.
- Staff have excellent subject knowledge, and use their insight and experience of the performing arts profession well to motivate and engage students. Leaders skilfully blend the expertise of full-time teachers with that of professional practitioners, who make an invaluable contribution, for example to key performance projects. All staff help to prepare students very well to understand the industry in which they aspire to work.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is outstanding

- Students demonstrate very high levels of confidence and quickly develop a positive and professional attitude to their learning and development. Students recognise that their training is equipping them with the necessary behaviour and attitudes for a successful career in the industry and demonstrate these consistently throughout every session and rehearsal.
- Staff provide suitable support and care for students; they actively encourage students to become independent learners and to take responsibility for their work and careers. Students know whom to speak to if they have any problems.
- Students take immense pride in their work, becoming increasingly confident and self-assured as they continue to develop their skills and strengthen their work ethic.
- Learners feel safe and fully supported by the staff. Teachers are particularly good at supporting students in injury prevention and management, encouraging students to take sensible steps, but still to gain maximum value out of their lessons. For example, one student who had lost her voice was able to take a full and active part in a rehearsal, while another student read in for her.
- The standard of students' work is consistently high. As a result, the vast majority secure theatrical agents and progress quickly into professional work on completion of their training.

## **Outcomes for learners** are outstanding

- Teachers consistently maintain a strong emphasis on the vocational nature of this training programme and, under their expert guidance, students make very good progress, developing very good skills in acting and exemplary skills in musical theatre. Following the school's recent investment in film, radio and

television facilities, students gain an employment advantage due to the substantial experience they are able to develop in these disciplines.

- Virtually all students who start the diploma course successfully complete the programme, gaining the Trinity diploma and a degree qualification. Students also have the opportunity to pick up additional qualifications, for example in stage combat, alongside their main diploma.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Dance and drama school
<b>Age range of learners</b>	18+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	237
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Jane Harrison
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.artsed.co.uk">www.artsed.co.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								111
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16–19		19+		Total			
<b>Number of learners aged 14–16</b>								
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Peter Nelson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Moseley	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the school's Principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. Inspectors observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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