

Millennium Performing Arts

Dance and drama school

Inspection dates

3–4 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Senior managers have not maintained the overall effectiveness of the provision since the last inspection.
- Not all students develop a sufficient range of performance skills to a high enough standard.
- Students' attendance at lessons is poor and not enough stay to the end of their course. On completion of their course, a significant minority of students are slow to gain sustained employment in the industry.
- The quality of teachers' target-setting, assessment and feedback on students' written work does not always support their development.
- The poor standard of décor and cleanliness around the college does not match the exacting professional standards promoted by managers.
- Staff do not do enough to help raise students' awareness of British values, or to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

The provider has the following strengths

- Students work hard; they are focused, determined, polite and self-assured.
- All staff provide a supportive and nurturing environment, underpinned by effective pastoral support, medical guidance and counselling to help promote students' welfare.
- Teachers possess a rich wealth of experience of the performing arts industry which they willingly share with students to provide them with greater insight into working in the industry.
- Managers also make particularly good use of industry professionals to enhance the experience of students.
- Students make good use of peer assessment and evaluation to develop their awareness and understanding of performance techniques.
- Students benefit from good individual verbal feedback from teachers in practical sessions.
- Students experience a wide range of stimulating and worthwhile tutorial topics that highlight how to survive and prosper in the performing arts industry.
- Students develop good awareness of physical and vocal welfare and understand how to stay healthy.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Millennium Performing Arts is a private performing arts college located in Woolwich in South East London. The college is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training and offers a range of courses including a foundation course and a degree in musical theatre. This inspection focused solely on the three-year diplomas in dance and music theatre accredited by Trinity College, London, which is funded via the national dance and drama awards (DaDA) scheme.
- At the time of inspection, there were a total of 51 students on the Trinity diploma, of which 37 were in receipt of DaDA funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the focus and rigour of quality improvement initiatives, prioritising areas of concern identified by students and weaknesses identified at inspection.
- Establish higher expectations with students about their attendance; ensure that thorough processes to tackle absence are in place, so that staff challenge students when they are absent.
- Analyse why students leave the course prematurely, and develop effective ways to maximise their chances of remaining on the programme.
- Increase the focus on developing the quality of students' performance skills, in particular in acting, singing, and voice.
- Provide more support to students to help them secure their first, and subsequent, roles in the industry.
- Train staff to set suitable targets for students, to make best use of different assessment methods, and to provide sufficiently detailed feedback to students to help them improve.
- Identify more opportunities to explain and promote British values to students, thereby helping prepare them better for life in modern Britain.
- Implement a clear plan to improve the quality and cleanliness of accommodation, and provide better access to resources for students.
- Consider how to strengthen governance arrangements through the introduction of the advisory group. Develop suitable terms of reference for the group, to include providing guidance, support and challenge to leaders and managers, helping steer the strategic direction of the college and helping to monitor the quality of provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers are not succeeding in achieving their high strategic aspirations for the college to provide an outstanding opportunity for young performers, and to be a leading training provider for the performing arts industry. All managers and staff are ambitious for the college and its students, but a significant minority of students are not making sufficient progress on the programme or successfully progressing into work in the industry.
- Leaders have not ensured that quality assurance and improvement procedures bring about improvement. They have been slow to act on recommendations made at the previous inspection and feedback on the quality of the provision gathered from students in previous years.
- Teachers and managers have a rich wealth of experience both of teaching and of working in the performing arts industry as professional performers, directors or choreographers. Senior staff at the college have a very high profile as experts and practitioners in the industry. Teachers and managers use their experience and insight well to help provide students with the technical skills and knowledge they need to develop.
- Managers frequently employ current industry professionals to produce work with students, to enable them to explore current repertoire from leading West End productions and to contribute to formal assessment activities. This provides valuable opportunities for students to develop their experience and insight into professional standards, and to start to be judged against the expectations they will face when working in the industry.
- The curriculum generally meets the needs of students and helps them improve their skills. Managers are aware of the evolving demands of the industry and the changing skill set that performers need to be successful in gaining employment. They continuously work with teachers so the range of techniques and specialist training evolves over time to meet these changing demands. For example, managers have recently improved the focus on developing the range of performers' singing skills by increasing the opportunities for individual singing lessons.
- Managers' methods for developing the work of individual staff, and for observing lessons, require improvement. These systems add little value, for example to identify and share best practice among the teaching team. Managers have recognised the need to strengthen these areas and are in the process of introducing new procedures. It is, however, too early to judge the impact of these.
- The quality of accommodation and resources requires improvement. While the studio and classroom spaces are generally fit for purpose, the building is in a poor state of repair and the overall quality of décor and cleanliness around the building too low. Very few displays exist around the college to help inspire and motivate students. Library and information technology (IT) facilities are poor. The shabby appearance around the college and poor access to resources do not support the exacting professional standards that managers are trying to promote as part of the organisational culture of the college.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The college does not currently have any formal governance arrangements in place. Managers are at the early stages of introducing an advisory board to take on this function.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Students feel safe around the college. Managers have suitable pre-employment checks in place for staff. All staff provide a supportive and nurturing environment, underpinned by effective pastoral support, medical guidance and counselling, to help assure students' welfare. Managers maintain a 'zero-tolerance' approach to bullying across the college and manage situations well on the very rare occasions when such incidents occur. While staff advocate suitable values with regard to equality and diversity, they do not create sufficient opportunities to promote these themes actively to students or to raise their awareness of life in modern Britain.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- In weaker lessons, teachers do not challenge or check students' understanding frequently enough to ensure they are securing knowledge. On occasion, teachers do not set targets for students or encourage them to record developmental feedback in their journals; they do not integrate students who are injured into the lesson to ensure they remain engaged in productive learning activity.

- Students do not have enough opportunity over the three-year programme to integrate different performance disciplines; students tend to develop the different disciplines in isolation and therefore do not make the expected progress in integrating their developing skills.
- While teachers structure final assessment well, they use ongoing assessment, target-setting and monitoring of progress less effectively. These processes lack structure; tasks do not consistently build on students' targets, past accomplishments or the differing needs of students. These weaknesses lead to a lack of challenge, or too much challenge for some students. As a result, not all students make sufficient progress.
- In a majority of instances, students benefit from teachers' thorough marking, including detailed annotations and specific and individualised feedback on their written work, which clearly identifies what they need to do to improve, including in their written English. However, teachers do not apply this approach consistently, with much feedback consisting of statements that are too generic. Students report that feedback is not always timely, and as a result has little impact on improving their work.
- In practical sessions, teaching is of a high standard. For example, in a singing lesson, students used some innovative problem-solving to unlock vocal technique and secure their musicianship. In a ballet lesson, teachers constantly challenged students to think about their own physicality and technique, and provided highly effective, individual feedback to students, which directly led to improvement. In these lessons, staff encouraged students to maintain valuable notes in journals.
- Students benefit from teachers who are current industry professionals. Staff motivate students with their own success stories and demonstrate proficient and expert technique in their respective specialisms.
- Students make good use of peer assessment and evaluation during practical lessons to develop their critical skills and understanding, both of their own technique and that of other students.
- Students benefit from detailed individual verbal feedback from teachers in practical lessons; this is constructive and identifies what students need to do to improve. For example, in an acting-through-song lesson, the students were encouraged to deconstruct the lyrics, line by line, contextualising the song and adding dynamic variation and interest, leading to improved theatrical interpretation by the students.
- In most lessons, students benefit from teachers' detailed review of practical exercises, where they often take students back to basics to ensure the students fully understand the core technical requirements and demands. This helps to ensure correct technique, enabling students to develop safely and with increased confidence.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

- Students do not develop quickly enough the English and mathematical skills that they require to improve the standards of their written work and numeracy. Although students attend drop-in sessions aimed at improving their study skills, these are often 'reactive' rather than developmental, and too late on in the programme, so that the impact and benefits are limited.
- Attendance rates at lessons are too low. This has a detrimental impact on the development of group work, for example when students are rehearsing ensemble pieces and other participants are absent.
- Students do not develop a sufficient understanding of British values or issues surrounding the risks of extremism and radicalisation. They are not sufficiently well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students work hard, sustaining good levels of focus and determination when developing artistic and practical skills. They develop confidence and self-assurance, and learn about many of the required professional attributes and the behaviour needed to succeed as performers. Students particularly enjoy recognising their personal improvements in vocal and movement work. This drives and encourages them in their aspirations to reach their potential as working artists.
- The behaviour of students around the college and in their resting and work areas is good. They demonstrate high levels of respect, politeness and helpfulness towards their peers and teachers as they build mutual trust and freedom to develop their artistic expression.
- Students benefit from valuable mock auditions and receive good support in selecting and preparing suitable specialist vocal repertoire. However, students do not receive enough timely, individual advice and guidance towards the end of their programmes to help them secure their first jobs.
- Teachers provide a supportive and nurturing environment and encourage students to explore and solve any issues that inhibit learning, whether these arise in lessons or are domestic and welfare issues. Students have access to specialist counselling support if required.

- Teachers help students develop a good knowledge of how to keep fit and healthy as performers. Students develop a good understanding of physical and vocal health, as well as the importance of thorough warm-up and hydration.

Outcomes for learners require improvement

- While a minority of performers acquire and demonstrate exceptional talent and ability, too many students do not achieve the technical level that would be expected on this level of course to maximise their chances of securing employment once they complete the diploma course. The overall standard of dance is generally good; however, not all students develop similar levels of proficiency, technical refinement or fluency in singing, vocal and acting skills.
- Over the previous three years, too few students have completed the full three-year training programme. Of those students who remain on course to the end of the programme, all successfully achieve the Trinity diploma.
- On completion of their courses, students are slow to gain sustained employment in the industry. While a minority of students use their significant talent and expertise to secure high-profile roles, for example in the West End, many students are slower to build their careers, succeeding only in securing short-term contracts, for example in provincial pantomime or at theme parks. Past graduates who have remained focused on building their experience and careers have been more successful at securing more substantial contracts and higher-profile roles, for example with dance companies, in regional and national stage productions and on cruise ships.

Provider details

Type of provider	Dance and drama school
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	54
Directors	Ikky Maas, Jacki Mitchell, Donald McLennan
Website address	www.md2000.co.uk

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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
							30	42
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships								
	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Peter Nelson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christina Christou	Ofsted Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by one of the college's directors 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 and telephone calls to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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Store Street
Manchester
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