

English National Ballet School

Dance and drama school



Inspection dates

9–10 March 2016

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

- Staff set very high expectations, aspirations and standards for students, who respond positively and make excellent progress.
- Students develop a very high level of technical expertise.
- Teachers make excellent use of strong links with industry, in particular with the partner ballet company, to develop students' true insight into the profession.
- Students have excellent opportunities to develop their performance skills, and increase their understanding of the industry, often working as part of professional or touring productions.
- Students develop a good understanding of cultural difference that they use effectively to enhance their work.
- Students have access to an excellent range of complementary support including physiotherapy, performance psychology and nutritional advice.
- Most students successfully progress into sustained employment with high-profile ballet companies around the world.

Full report

Information about the provider

- English National Ballet School (ENBS) is an independent ballet school located in Fulham, offering training in classical ballet and complementary studies for students aged 16 to 19. On 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 English National Ballet and other prestigious companies in the UK and abroad.
- At the time of inspection there were a total of 75 students on the course, of whom 44 were in receipt of specialist dance and drama award (DaDA) funding from the Education Funding Agency.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Create opportunities for students to develop a greater awareness of the wider artistic remit, for example theatre, art and music.
- Provide more detailed careers support and guidance to the small proportion of students who choose not to pursue a career as a performer.
- Governors and all staff should plan carefully to ensure that the proposed move to new premises in 2018 does not have an adverse effect on the overall quality of provision of the school, and that students are able to maximise the benefits of being in the same building as the professional ballet company.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Senior leaders, governors and managers work closely and effectively together, helping to shape the curriculum, and to recruit, train and prepare students for high-quality jobs in the world of ballet. They are clear about the school's ambitious mission, 'to be a centre of excellence, providing intensive ballet training in preparation for students to enter a professional career, irrespective of their background'.
- Quality assurance procedures are thorough and highly effective. As a result, managers and governors have successfully maintained very high standards of provision since the last inspection. Leaders continue to improve the quality of the training, for example, staff have recently developed a technical manual to ensure a more consistent approach to dance teaching. Leaders are also involving staff and students on design matters, in anticipation of the planned relocation to new premises, alongside the parent ballet company, in 2018.
- Teaching staff are highly experienced, with a wealth of industrial and educational expertise in their respective fields. The majority of staff are employed on a full-time basis, helping to guarantee a consistent approach to course content and delivery, and high-quality training. Staff plan and work closely together; they regularly meet with managers to discuss the ongoing design, delivery and assessment of the course and to review students' progress. Most staff also take on a valuable pastoral support role as a personal tutor to a group of students. Students really value the school's 'open door' policy, where they can approach any member of staff to help resolve personal, domestic or developmental issues.
- The multinational background of the staff team complements the international profile of the student cohort and enhances the students' experience. Staff create opportunities for students to discuss and explore themes associated with the students' diverse international backgrounds, their cultural differences and how these influence their approach to equality and diversity, and British values.
- Senior managers have effective procedures in place to monitor the quality of teaching through a programme of lesson observations. This process, along with the target-setting and appraisal process, ensures that managers have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers regularly hold discussions with teachers to help monitor the effectiveness of their teaching and to identify suitable areas for continuous professional development.
- Staff have very good access to a broad range of professional development opportunities. Over the past year this has included subjects such as safeguarding, performance psychology, as well as attendance at dance symposium events and masterclasses. This training helps ensure that staff remain up to date with recent developments, as well as motivated and engaged in their work.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Members of the board of governors possess a very broad range of experience and insight. They provide excellent support and challenge to leaders, helping assure the quality of provision and financial viability of the school and shaping its strategic direction.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Students and staff receive suitable training on a broad range of issues that help to assure the safety and well-being of students. For example, as part of their induction, students receive presentations from local community police about how to stay safe in London. Students also receive effective guidance on maintaining a healthy diet, nutrition, hydration and injury prevention. Students and staff are aware of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have very high aspirations for students and set clear targets that enable them to maximise their learning and development. Teachers create a positive atmosphere, allowing students to stretch themselves and take the necessary risks in order to reach their full potential.
- Teachers give clear and direct individual correction to students to ensure that they achieve the highest standards. For example, in one lesson a teacher assisted a student to adjust her épaulement in an attitude to achieve a better line and to improve her balance.
- Teachers frequently question students to ensure that they develop an excellent understanding of technical details; they frequently refer back to previously learned techniques to help students consolidate, develop and strengthen their understanding. Students respond well, self-evaluating and practising independently and in small groups, to consolidate learning, showing a good understanding and

good technical development. For example, teachers asked students to consider their specific alignment in preparation for various pirouettes in an enchaînement. This led to them producing more controlled, neater pirouettes.

- Teachers skilfully adjust their guidance and approach where necessary to meet students' differing levels of technical ability and confidence, for example by setting a subtly different tempo in a variation for students with less elevation, so that they could achieve their best, and develop their confidence.
- Staff have very effective assessment processes in place, setting suitable targets and goals for students and analysing their progress at regular intervals, both in lessons and in weekly tutorials. Staff provide students with very clear and constructive written and verbal feedback.
- Students produce detailed written records that help them take responsibility for their development by setting their own goals, and monitoring and evaluating their own progress. Teachers regularly ensure that students use correct terminology in their records.
- Teachers use exacting professional standards when formally assessing students, particularly in the third year, to ensure that students reach their full potential and are prepared well for the workplace.
- Teachers make very good use of a recently developed technical handbook to ensure that they are all clear about the expectations of how to teach particular technical elements in a consistent, safe and cohesive way. This also helps ensure that visiting teachers are aware of, and can follow, the school's way of developing the students' technique.
- Students gain substantial benefit from working with members of English National Ballet. They also benefit from taking part in a broad range of performances with the main company, other ballet companies and also on the 'My First Ballet' programme, as part of an educational tour of well-known ballet classics. These performances stretch students technically and enable them to gain the experience of performing and responding to an audience. Students really enjoy these opportunities and respond excellently with enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- Students are aware that they need to show significant potential to secure a place at the school and they clearly value the opportunity they have earned. Attendance is very high, students are committed and dedicated to their training, confidently developing the level of skill they require to progress successfully into the industry. Students work well together and also demonstrate good independence and autonomy when required.
- Students enjoy their training and are safe. They particularly value the high level of personal support and guidance they receive from staff at the school, which helps them stay focused and make excellent progress. Students quickly develop a responsible and mature attitude to their training, following the clear guidelines they receive to stay fit and well, and to minimise the risk of injury. In most lessons where a student is sitting out due to injury, the teacher keeps them actively involved in classroom activities, for example by asking them to give feedback to their fellow students. Students have excellent access to complementary support, including from physiotherapists, performance psychologists and nutritionists.
- Staff create substantial opportunities for students to gain a direct insight into the professional world of ballet through sharing their own experiences involving visiting practitioners, and creating real performance opportunities, often working with professional dancers. However, students have comparatively fewer opportunity to explore wider artistic remits, for example art, drama and music to help complement their ballet studies.
- Teachers provide well informed individual guidance to each student about how to find and secure suitable work on completion of the course. Staff use their in-depth knowledge of each student's particular strengths, and contacts in the industry to create potential job openings for the students during their final year. Students benefit in particular from the close working relationship with English National Ballet. Staff help ensure that students are prepared well, both physically and emotionally, to work successfully in the industry and to continue developing and prospering.
- Students appreciate the excellent opportunities that exist for them to voice their views, both to senior leaders and to governors, via the course reps who enjoy representing the views of the students to help maintain and improve the quality of the training.
- Staff do not provide enough support and careers advice for the small minority of students who either do not develop the skills they need to secure professional work, or where injury prevents them from dancing professionally.

Outcomes for learners are outstanding

- The vast majority of students who start the Trinity course successfully complete the programme. All those students who complete the course successfully achieve the Trinity diploma.
- The school has an international reputation; places are in high demand, and the school is able to select a comparatively small cohort of those students who show the greatest potential from a significant number of applicants from across the world. As a result, the technical level of each student on entry is generally high.
- Once on the course, students make very good progress in response to the very high expectations set by staff. Students have the motivation, ability and expertise to respond to this challenge, to develop their knowledge and skills and perform to a very high standard. Staff provide excellent individual support and guidance to each student to ensure that they are able to progress successfully and achieve the school's aspirational goals, where students not only reach their potential, but surpass it.
- On completion of the diploma the vast majority of graduates secure high-quality and sustained employment, mainly with leading ballet companies in the UK and abroad. For example, over the past few years graduates have secured employment with many ballet companies including English National Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Northern Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, Leipzig Ballet and Romanian National Ballet.

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	80
Principal/CEO	Delia Barker
Website address	www.enbschool.org.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)							67	8
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Peter Nelson, lead inspector

Fiona Cave

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of studies 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, parents 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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