

Inspection of Young Dancers Academy

25 Bulwer Street, Shepherds Bush, London W12 8AR

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong, caring and nurturing ethos that supports pupils' achievement, both academically and with their classical ballet. This is because leaders are mindful of pupils' physical and emotional development and how both contribute to pupils' academic and vocational success. Pupils are happy here. They are kept safe. This is because they are confident to share concerns that may arise with staff who resolve any issues swiftly.

Pupils typically behave well during lessons. The determination and self-discipline shown during ballet sessions are very strong. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow an increasingly broad and ambitious curriculum. Pupils work hard and produce work of a good quality. In most subjects, the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Pupils access extra-curricular activities that link to the school's vocational ethos. These include contemporary dance, jazz, singing and drama. Pupils enjoy visits that further enhance their interests and future opportunities, for example to Sadler's Wells and the Royal Ballet. The academic curriculum is also enriched with outings, for example to City Hall as part of learning about democracy.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils follow a broad curriculum that typically matches the ambition and scope of what is expected nationally. In most subjects, leaders have identified what should be learned and when. This is typically well sequenced. Important knowledge and vocabulary are broken down into small steps that are revisited over time. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding and tackle more demanding learning as they move through the school. For example, in ballet lessons, pupils learn about the individual muscles that develop to perform particular movements. They practise these repeatedly, to increase precision and automaticity and to create 'flow' within a series of movements. Similarly, in French, pupils learn the vocabulary alongside the correct use of verb tenses. These build across the school, so pupils can speak, read and write more complex sentences independently. Teachers make effective use of assessment to check what pupils have learned and address any errors and misconceptions that arise.

Leaders have prioritised increasing the range of subjects and qualifications available to pupils. However, a few of the more recently introduced subjects are not sufficiently ambitious. Pupils do not secure the depth of knowledge required to prepare them sufficiently for their future studies in these subjects.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Staff benefit from specialist training to meet pupils' different needs. Teachers make appropriate adaptations that support pupils to access the same curriculum as their peers. This includes effective support for those who need extra practice to read accurately and fluently.

Pupils behave well. Classrooms are typically calm and conducive to learning. Pupils' commitment to ballet demonstrates real strength of character and high levels of resilience. Pupils readily transfer these attitudes to other lessons. Attendance is monitored rigorously to ensure all pupils come to school regularly and on time.

Provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is broad and well considered. Pupils learn about important values such as equality, liberty, tolerance and respect. Their understanding of different faiths, beliefs and traditions is promoted well. Staff are acutely aware of what pupils need to reach their potential as dancers. Central to the wider development offer is detailed nutritional advice and physiotherapy support, designed to maximise physical fitness and minimise injury. This holistic care and nurture help to ensure the physical and emotional development of every pupil is very well supported.

Leaders ensure that all pupils receive a well-structured careers programme, including information on a wide range of different professions, qualifications and courses. This helps pupils to make informed choices about their next stage of education, employment or training. The advice and guidance for pupils who decide not to pursue professional ballet is of equally high quality.

Staff are highly positive about the opportunities provided for professional development and how leaders support them in managing workload and well-being. They are happy working here and describe the open culture of dialogue, where all voices are heard and decisions reached collaboratively.

Leaders, including trustees, understand their roles. They have fully addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous standard inspection. Leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths, together with the areas they want to improve further. As a result, all the independent school standards are met. Leaders and trustees have rigorous and robust monitoring procedures in place to ensure this continues.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of vigilance where the safety of pupils is high profile. Staff are well trained. They understand how to identify and report any concerns they may have swiftly. Rigorous systems are in place, ensuring swift, effective follow up. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Safeguarding is woven carefully through the curriculum. Pupils are helped to understand important issues such as online safety and maintaining healthy relationships.

Leaders have suitable policies in place. The safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers via the school's website. The policy is up to date and reflects the latest statutory guidance. Leaders have addressed the weaknesses identified in the last standard inspection. Pre-employment checks and risk assessments of the school site, as well as off-site visits, are managed and maintained effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few more recently introduced subjects, the curriculum is not sufficiently ambitious. In these subjects, pupils do not develop as deep a knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure they identify appropriately ambitious content in each subject. This should be sequenced to allow pupils to practise and secure each step. This will help pupils to deepen their learning further and better prepare them for future learning in these subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	135729
DfE registration number	205/6200
Local authority	Hammersmith & Fulham
Inspection number	10286418
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Young Dancers Charitable Academy
Chair	Kelly Richardson
Headteacher	Kerry Williams
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000
Telephone number	020 8746 0412
Website	www.youngdancersacademy.com
Email address	info@youngdancersacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	30 September 2022

Information about this school

- Young Dancers Academy is a day school for boys and girls. The school provides specialist teaching in classical ballet for up to 55 pupils aged 10 to 16. Pupils are admitted to the school according to their performance at a ballet audition.
- The board of trustees is responsible as the school's proprietor body. The proprietor body is also responsible for the school's governance.
- The school occupies premises opposite each other at 25 and 58 Bulwer Street, Shepherds Bush, London, W12 8AR. The premises are shared with the West London School of Dance. One building is shared with a nursery although this arrangement ended on the last day of the inspection.
- The previous standard inspection was in November 2021 when the school was judged to be inadequate. An additional inspection was carried out in September 2022 when all the independent school standards checked were met.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the director of academic studies and members of staff. They also spoke with two trustees, including the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, physical education, PSHE and French. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Other subjects were considered as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through discussions. Responses to Ofsted's surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Samantha Ingram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Newby

Ofsted Inspector

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