

Inspection of SLP Performance College Ltd

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

SLP Performance College Ltd (SLP) is an independent performing arts college located in Garforth, near Leeds. The college specialises in training students to enter the musical theatre and dance industries. The college offers the three-year, level 6 diplomas in professional musical theatre and professional dance, both of which are validated by Trinity College London. The college also offers its own one-year foundation course, but students on this course were not in scope for this inspection.

At the time of the inspection, there were 74 students studying for the level 6 diplomas. Almost half were aged 16 to 18. Sixty-six students were in receipt of Dance and Drama Award funding. The college has no students in receipt of high needs funding and uses the services of no subcontracted provision.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students at SLP are highly professional in their attitudes to work and study. They attend extremely well. Students arrive punctually, keen and ready to learn. They participate fully in vocal and physical warm-ups at the start of each day. Students come well prepared to lessons and rehearsals. They make highly effective use of their time, both in and out of sessions, frequently accessing rehearsal spaces during free time to practise and perfect their skills.

Students build their confidence quickly, and they rapidly take on new responsibilities. For example, first-year musical theatre students take on roles such as dance and vocal captains, who lead their peers through warm-up exercises. Students contribute positively to their local community. They support fundraising and community-focused projects such as coffee mornings, open mic nights and dance-a-thons, where they happily share their talents for the benefit of others.

Students know more and can do more because of their training. Dance students build their flexibility and strength and learn to execute complex choreography. Musical theatre students develop fluidity in recall of song and dance and apply this well in live performances. Students benefit from opportunities to perform in shows with high production values, where they hone their crafts in realistic industry settings. As a result, students are well prepared for their next steps. They achieve well, and most progress into jobs in the industry, with many securing roles with cruise lines. A small number progress into very positive destinations, such as the West End.

Students feel safe at the college. They highly value the inclusive environment that staff have created. Students rightly recognise that staff will not tolerate discrimination, bullying, harassment or body shaming. They are confident that staff would act promptly to resolve issues raised. However, too many students have a limited understanding of risks that might impact on their daily lives living away from home, or risks associated with working in a predominately night-time industry.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the courses they offer. Courses meet the needs of young people who want to move into the performing arts industry. The recently appointed principal and new leadership team have reviewed the curriculum offer carefully to ensure it remains up to date. For example, leaders introduced modules on singing and acting to the dance course, recognising the need for students to maximise their employability. Leaders rightly recognise that they are early in this journey and have further work to do. For example, they recognise the need to diversify the range of dance genres taught and increase the teaching and inclusion of pair work across both diplomas.

Staff recruit and train students with integrity. They ensure that students have the ability and potential to become professional performers. They evaluate effectively

what students know and can do when they begin their training. They tailor individual learning plans to reflect prior knowledge and stream students responsibly in practical sessions. As a result, students build and improve their skills incrementally over the three years.

Teachers teach students effectively to develop the skills they need to become versatile performers. For example, dance students develop core techniques in the first year before focusing on performance and artistry in the second year. Musical theatre students build strong foundations in singing, acting and dance technique before developing their integrated practice. As a result, students work safely and confidently towards mastering their performance craft.

Teachers use a range of practical teaching strategies well. They break training into manageable parts that helps students to consolidate what they know quickly. Teachers of jazz dance carefully chunk choreography into memorable phrases to prompt recall. Dance teachers make good use of visualisation techniques to help students feel and see the correct technical positions required. Students respond very well to these approaches and improve swiftly.

Teachers use appropriate terminology and technical language when teaching students. Students in both programmes are familiar with dance terms, which helps them to execute choreography correctly, at speed and under instruction. For example, they know and can recall complex French ballet terminology and terms for advanced tap and jazz dance combinations.

Teachers provide students with continuous, useful feedback in practical sessions. For example, teachers give direction and critique, which prompts students to refine their vocal quality and sing with a brighter tone to improve the pitch of a note. As a result, students improve their technique and performance skills quickly. However, teachers do not provide students with sufficient explanation in their feedback on written assignments. As a result, students do not know why they have lost marks in the assessment of certain aspects of their work and do not know what they need to do to improve.

Teachers are experts in their performing arts disciplines. They use their industry experiences skilfully in their teaching through direction, choreography and song arrangement. However, leaders have not provided staff with support to update or develop their teaching practice. As a result, staff do not know how to improve their teaching further. Too many staff rely on contested learning theories when setting targets, and they do not focus sufficiently well on the intended impacts for students when planning lessons.

Staff support students very well to secure employment in the industry. They encourage students to consider the career options open to them from the start of their programme and revisit this frequently. Teaching staff use their industry contacts well to broker meetings with agents, representatives and employers. Staff provide helpful industry showcases that foster productive relationships between students and agents for those wishing to pursue a performance career. As a result,

students are knowledgeable about what they will need to do when they enter the industry. They talk confidently about aspects of professional practice, such as membership of Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union, as well as tax and contracts.

Leaders do not strategically plan a purposeful personal development programme for students. Students learn about topics such as equality and diversity and active citizenship in lessons and weekly assemblies. As a result, they have a well-developed and mature understanding of aspects such as colour-blind casting. However, students' access to a broad personal development curriculum is not planned for and is therefore patchy and inconsistent. Students demonstrate limited understanding about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and particularly of local risks or those posed online. Tutors do not sufficiently cover topics such as healthy relationships and predatory behaviours. As a result, too many students do not have a deep and comprehensive understanding of key areas of risk outside of the college environment.

Senior leaders at the college provide appropriate governance and oversight. Leaders benefit from helpful support and challenge from external advisors. Where advisors identified areas for improvement, senior staff have been quick to adopt these recommendations. For example, they simplified the timetable, resulting in improvements in student concentration levels. They built in structured time for staff planning and communication, resulting in better interdisciplinary working across course teams.

Leaders have recently enhanced their formal governance structures through the introduction of a new industry advisory body. This board has not yet had time to become established, and it is too early to see the impact of this arrangement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Continue to modernise the curriculum to diversify the range of dance genres taught and increase the teaching and use of pair work across both diplomas.
- Ensure teachers provide students with feedback on written work that enables them to see what they need to do to improve.
- Provide teachers with the support and professional development they need to update and improve their teaching practice.
- Ensure all students benefit from a broad and comprehensive personal development curriculum that enables them to understand local risks and those they will face on leaving college.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50070
Address	5 Chapel Lane Garforth Leeds LS25 1AG
Contact number	0113 286 8136
Website	www.slpcollege.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Kenneth Avery-Clark
Provider type	Dance and drama college
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 April 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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