

Inspection of Arts Educational School

Inspection dates:

14 to 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness**Outstanding**

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Information about this provider

The Arts Educational School, London (ArtsEd) is a small specialist institution in Chiswick, London, offering education and performing arts training for children from the age of 11 up to degree and postgraduate level. This inspection was of the provision for students studying level 6 diplomas in either professional acting or professional musical theatre; both are validated by Trinity College London.

At the time of inspection, 83 students were in receipt of Dance and Drama Award funding. All students are over 18 years of age.

The school does not work with any subcontractors.

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

From their first contact with the school, students feel welcome and valued for who they are. Staff, leaders and trustees are highly committed to training each student to become the performer they want to be. This contributes to students being highly motivated. Their attendance is excellent, as is their application to practical and theoretical classes, rehearsals and performance.

Students find the work demanding and rewarding in equal measure. They know the very high standards expected of them from their tutors, which they understand reflect the standards they need to achieve for careers in their chosen performance discipline. Students consistently attain the highest level of skill. For example, musical theatre students achieve fluency in executing the complex rhythm of triplet and semiquaver combinations in tap. They rehearse and practise difficult steps, demonstrating resilience to achieve new skills in syncopated and rapid footwork.

Students participate fully as members of an ensemble of trainee performers. Teaching staff very successfully create a culture of collaborative working practice and an environment in which students can safely take risks without fear of critique. This helps students to take responsibility for their performance work, develop confidence in rehearsals and explore new ways of working.

Through the subject material they use, and the projects that they devise, tutors prepare students thoroughly for work in a rich and diverse range of contexts. For example, tutors teach students to understand how to research and enact regional dialects for voice-over work, using technical sheets and the international phonetic alphabet to articulate credible vowels. Tutors teach students British Sign Language so that they can work in inclusive theatre settings. Tutors teach diverse dance motifs and movement vocabulary from global dance, so that students are ready to work in a variety of genres.

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

Senior leaders have a thoroughly thought-through ethos for the school. They focus extraordinarily well on students' learning through the lens of their own cultural background. They have a deep understanding of the different elements that intersect within each student's experience while training. This approach to the development of each student as an individual person and performer runs through every aspect of the training and is fully understood by staff. Tutors place this approach at the centre of their curriculum design and teaching. When they work with industry experts, for example to teach workshops or direct productions, they make sure that they, too, adhere to this way of working with each student.

Trustees, leaders and staff have an exemplary focus on inclusion and diversity. They use the Dance and Drama Award funding highly effectively to widen participation in the training. This contributes to a high proportion of students being from minority ethnic backgrounds and feeling fully at home at the school.

Staff expertly teach the curriculum through a continuous return to previously taught practice, so that students deepen and refine their performance skills. They repeatedly refer back to foundation principles so that students can connect what they learn to their former work. For example, in teaching new pas de deux work, tutors build on students' previous skills in ballet alignment. They demonstrate accurately the steps required using correct balance, alignment and extension based on previously taught classical ballet technique and principles. Tutors provide precise correction to students so that they move from technical excellence to individual flair. They provide highly effective support to students who need extra help to achieve.

Leaders and staff work exceptionally well with industry experts to make sure that the training they offer continuously reflects developments in the industry. They understand well the interplay between the school as a training organisation and the theatre and media industries, in both leading on innovation and development while maintaining the employability of their students for current job roles. Students are exceptionally well trained and prepared for work as soon as they leave the school, and a high proportion gain professional contracts within a year of doing so.

Tutors skilfully give students verbal and written feedback on their practical and written work. Students respond very well to this feedback to improve their knowledge, technique and performances. Acting students use feedback constructively to become more adventurous in their interpretation and development of characters they perform. Tutors teach students to give clear and helpful feedback to each other. In acting classes, students provide their peers with constructive feedback that is thoughtful and positive as they spot and correct errors in their practical work.

Over the past three years, there have been considerable changes to the leadership team and the board of trustees. Leaders and trustees, by necessity, have updated their policies and procedures related to, for example, safeguarding, reporting concerns and codes of conduct. Leaders are very effective at hearing frequently from students, who feel listened to. Leaders act positively on students' feedback. Staff understand the need for the changes made and, with leaders, have worked highly effectively to maintain excellent standards in teaching during this period of change. However, leaders do not currently make sure that they hear the views of all staff.

Across the different departments, staff have very high levels of respect for each other, and share their very high aspirations for students. For the most part, they experience a respectful culture in the school. They feel supported to take risks so that they can continuously develop how they teach. Leaders provide good support to staff for their professional development as educators and to further their expertise in their performance disciplines.

Staff successfully teach intimacy training that helps students to know and understand their own and their peers' personal rights. Students are particularly clear on how to cope with the intricacies and permissions when dealing with intimacy work and feel completely empowered to express their preferences. Similarly, tutors

use highly effective strategies to make sure that students understand, and have the chance to express, their feelings when dealing with difficult topics in plays and productions.

Staff provide highly effective careers guidance to students. They make sure that students know how their careers could progress beyond their immediate aims. They make excellent use of industry experts in both performance and technical disciplines, who explain to students the range of jobs in the sector.

Staff continually promote citizenship to students through their highly inclusive practice. They arrange activities that students participate in to celebrate people's differences, such as a 'Talking Proudly' poetry project. Students are passionate about using their voice to effect change. They have a very mature outlook on social issues and have a true sense of community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50527
Address	Cone Ripman House 14 Bath Road London W4 1LY
Contact number	02089876666
Website	https://artsed.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Julie Spencer
Provider type	Dance and drama school
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 November 2015
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy 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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