

# Inspection of English National Ballet School Limited

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 March 2024

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Information about this provider

English National Ballet School (ENBS) was founded in 1988 to train dancers for the English National Ballet (ENB). It is an independent business and charity but maintains close ties with English National Ballet. The school recruits students from across the world to study the level 5 and level 6 diploma in professional dance, validated by Trinity College London. The focus of this inspection was on those students in receipt of Dance and Drama Award (DaDA) funding. All these students study the level 6 diploma. This course focuses primarily on classical ballet with additional studies of contemporary dance and choreography. In 2023/24 78 students are studying the Trinity diploma course. Of these, 21 students aged 16 to 19 are in receipt of DaDA funding.

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

Students who successfully complete their course are extremely well prepared for a career as a ballet dancer. This is because they are taught a meticulously designed curriculum by teachers who are experts. They also receive support of an exceptionally high quality to maintain their health and well-being and to prepare them for life as a professional dancer. As a result, a very high proportion of students successfully secure employment in highly regarded ballet companies around the world.

Students are highly focused and dedicated to their studies. They are very ambitious, and staff fully enable students to achieve their ambitions. Students achieve very high standards of work by listening carefully to their teachers and persevering to master the techniques, artistry, and curriculum content they are taught. Of note are the very high standards of academic work that students achieve through the high levels of academic curiosity, research, and reflection that teachers help them to develop.

Students have exceptional opportunities to engage with professional ballet dancers, choreographers, and other ballet practitioners. These are most notable through the excellent relationship with ENB but also through the wide range of visiting lecturers and choreographers, and the competitions and enrichment activities in which students take part.

Staff know their students extremely well. They use this knowledge to tailor the curriculum, assessments, targets and support to the needs of each student. Teachers give students extremely precise feedback on the adjustments they need to make to improve their work. Students act on this feedback through the goals they work to and the insightful reflections they record in their journals.

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

The school is exceptionally well led. Governors provide a clear strategic vision and leaders use their expert knowledge and experience to provide training and opportunities of the highest quality. They are fully focused on developing versatile, highly technical, and highly competent classical ballet dancers who can work in ballet companies internationally. They have excellent contacts and relationships in the international ballet world and employ teachers and choreographers who inspire their students. As a result, students receive a very high-quality introduction to the dance profession.

Leaders provide an excellent mix of high-quality permanent teachers and an exceptional programme of visiting experts, including choreographers and health professionals. This is greatly enhanced by the opportunities for students to become part of the professional ballet and arts communities during the course. An example of the latter is the long-standing, strong connection with ENB. Students learn the

highest standards of professional behaviour from rehearsing with professional choreographers and dancers and performing with them in a range of ENB productions. These experiences also provide them with immeasurably valuable chances to learn about and adjust to the demands on their professional and personal lives.

Leaders provide an extensive range of wider opportunities for students to learn about the life of a dancer. These include lectures and training from industry professionals working at the highest levels in the world of ballet and from involvement with competitions, such as the Prix de Lausanne and the Fonteyn competition. In addition, students carry out choreographic projects in a local hospital and a central London gallery, where they work alongside students from the Royal Academy of Music and London College of Fashion to create original performances.

Students study a broad curriculum that includes Benesh notation, anatomy and physiology, and choreography. They are introduced to challenging subject matter through their contextual studies programme where they are required to consider, explore, reflect on and write about topics, such as misogyny and racism in dance. Staff encourage students to explore equality, diversity and inclusion through the medium of ballet. For example, male students can experiment with pointe work and study the representation of masculinity and the 'male gaze' in ballet.

Leaders use their extensive knowledge of the industry to adjust the curriculum to reflect current changes in classical ballet companies. For example, leaders introduced more contemporary dance to the curriculum as ballet companies increasingly perform work that crosses over into contemporary dance. Students now study core techniques such as release and Cunningham techniques and learn the choreography of contemporary dance choreographers, such as Pina Bausch and Akram Khan.

Teachers provide excellent training through a challenging curriculum that stretches students to become excellent dancers. They are highly skilled at identifying how each student can improve and explain in detail how these improvements can be made. For example, teachers deconstruct complex dance phrases, unpicking the exact technique of each element, including reference to the dynamics, accent and tempo of the phrase. In one example, the teacher described and demonstrated how to use the correct breath control and weight placement to successfully lead into and execute a turn in Arabesque. As a result, students can accurately reproduce the technique and successfully perform the turn. Teachers keep highly detailed records of the corrections and feedback individual students receive from lesson to lesson. This allows them to accurately monitor students' progress and to know where they need additional work or intervention.

Students reflect on the excellent feedback they receive and become adept at evaluating their own progress. They set their own focused goals and make effective use of their logbooks to chart their progress and reflections.

Students living away from home are very well supported by the school. The school gives them guidance and support about independent living, and someone to contact if they need support. Students feel very safe at school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Students feel that staff are very approachable and knowledgeable about them. They are confident that staff would act promptly on any concerns they raise.

Staff provide excellent support for students' well-being, and mental and physical health. This support includes easy access to a performance psychologist, a nutritionist, to physiotherapists and welfare support staff. Staff monitor students' well-being painstakingly to ensure the support they provide is working. Staff are highly attuned to the importance of nutrition for dancers. Each student meets with a nutritionist when they start at the school to identify any concerns about their diet and to provide advice on maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet.

Students receive valuable careers advice and guidance. They receive exceptional support when applying to dance companies. This includes support from professionals with a deep understanding of the industry when producing showreels, photographs and CVs. The knowledge that staff and other professionals have of individual ballet companies across the world is invaluable when students prepare applications and take part in auditions.

The hard work by staff and students leads to exceptional outcomes. Final year students work at an extremely high standard and demonstrate secure, technically proficient, and artistically well-developed classical ballet skills. The very large majority of students graduate into professional jobs in ballet companies around the world. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students in receipt of DaDA funding achieve in line with their peers.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	51731
<b>Address</b>	Carlyle Building Hortensia Road SW10 0QS
<b>Contact number</b>	020 7376 7076
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.enbschool.org.uk">www.enbschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Executive Director - Amanda Skoog Artistic Director - Viviana Durante
<b>Provider type</b>	Dance and Drama
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 and 10 March 2016

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Studies, 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

Steven Tucker, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Judy Lye-Forster

His Majesty's Inspector

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