

Inspection of BOA Stage and Screen Production Academy

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

BOA Stage and Screen Production Academy (BOA SSPA) is a 16 to 19 academy. The academy specialises in the skills required for the creative industries, offering highly specialised curriculums and working with partners on collaborative projects to develop learners' work skills. The academy is located in the centre of Birmingham and learners study on site as well as at the Old Repertory Theatre.

At the time of the inspection, there were 243 learners studying either level 3 in creative media practice, performing arts practice or production arts practice. Learners follow one of four pathways including broadcast, film and content, writing, directing and screen craft, technical theatre and live events, and production arts and stage management.

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

Learners are proud to study at BOA SSPA and enjoy being part of a creative community where they collaborate with professionals in the stage and screen industries. Learners frequently work with sector leaders, experienced freelancers and industry experts.

Leaders and managers create a welcoming, calm and supportive environment. They actively promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion. Learners benefit from being taught by experienced staff, having access to professional workshops and industry-standard equipment to develop their knowledge. Learners participate in high-quality work experiences in which they demonstrate their newly acquired skills.

Learners' attendance is high. They understand the need to attend and are punctual to their lessons and activities outside of the academy. Most learners achieve their qualifications and produce high-quality work, leading to distinction grades.

Staff ensure the importance of maintaining professional behaviours when learners are studying at the academy and when in the workplace. They reinforce mutual tolerance and respect, explore healthy relationships and relate these concepts to working in the stage and screen industry. Staff teach topics to prepare learners to live in modern Britain and raise awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. However, too few learners can recall the content of these lessons and relate them to their current lives.

Learners feel safe. Leaders develop a respectful and positive culture where learners feel cared for. Staff members know their learners well. Learners understand who to speak to if they have concerns, and are confident that staff will deal with any concerns quickly and professionally if issues arise.

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

Leaders and managers have created curriculums to enable young people to pursue careers in film, television and theatre. The ambitious curriculums ensure that learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to work in the sector. Teachers design industry-led projects and work-based training that enable learners to gain the skills and experience to move on to their next stage of education, training or employment.

Leaders have developed curriculums that equip learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to work in the stage and screen industry via specialist pathways. Learners gain additional qualifications, including health and safety, working at heights, production etiquette and working with hazardous materials. On completion of their course, learners leave with a portfolio containing work credits, which are valued by the industry and contribute to them gaining employment, an apprenticeship or a place at university.

Leaders and managers work closely with sector leaders to co-design their curriculums. They also work with employers to identify emerging skills needs and quickly respond to gaps. Leaders and managers have recently developed a writing, directing and screen-craft pathway to provide learners with the knowledge and skills they need to gain employment in television production.

Leaders and teachers plan and sequence their curriculums well so that learners increasingly gain new knowledge, skills and experiences. Learners start with key concepts such as health and safety, historical perspectives of lighting design and set construction. They work together to create projects such as designing escape rooms, producing theatre-in-education tours and working with others to produce professional public performances for theatres in Birmingham.

Teachers are experts in their specialist subjects and have extensive experience of working in the sector. Managers support staff to take part in additional training to ensure that they are professionally updated, including training freelancers to achieve teaching qualifications. Learners benefit from their teachers' expertise and, as a result, are aware of local opportunities, including shadowing directors, listening to job pitches and working in commercial art venues.

Most teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies to check learners' understanding and their recall of previous learning. These include discussions, presentations and quizzes. However, in a few cases, teachers use limited questioning techniques that do not enable learners to expand on their answers and acquire new knowledge.

Teachers successfully assess learners' skills at the start of their course to establish their prior knowledge and skills. They use aptitude tests, English and mathematics assessments and skills audits to assess learners' starting points. Teachers ensure that learners participate in projects at the start of their course. This enables them to develop their knowledge of topics such as recycling and reusing costumes and sets and enables teachers to assess learners' teamwork and leadership skills.

Learners develop their written and spoken English skills throughout their course. Written work demonstrates that learners improve their skills over time. Learners develop their understanding and use of technical language. They also develop their mathematical skills, demonstrating the use of precise measurements when designing lighting rigs, creating prosthetics and making wigs.

Most teachers provide helpful feedback to learners, which enables them to improve. However, feedback is not always sufficiently targeted and individualised to allow learners to identify the precise actions they can make to aid their progress. Managers have recognised this and introduced a reflective journal for learners to record their feedback. However, it is too early to see the impact of this.

Staff teach personal development sessions that cover a wide range of topics, including personal safety, resilience and how to live independently. Learners enjoy sessions that relate to their courses, for example how to become self-employed, budgeting and how to manage taxes. However, a minority of learners describe these

sessions as repetitive and, as a result, they do not develop new knowledge and skills in these topics.

Senior leaders work hard to ensure that learners' experience is relevant to the industry. Staff have developed strong industry links and broadened their academic networks, including building links with universities and other colleges. Leaders work closely with industry partners and national broadcasting companies. As a result, learners work on significant live projects, including the Birmingham Royal Ballet and producing promotional films for the Birmingham City Council.

Governors have relevant experience and backgrounds within the stage and screen sector. They are supportive and knowledgeable of the academy's work. Many governors have expertise in the industry and contribute to the design and content of the curriculums. Governors and senior leaders are proactive in quality assurance. They participate in learning walks and learner discussions, providing valuable advice and guidance to learners entering the industry.

Teachers ensure that learners are equipped for their next steps. They ensure that learners have the professional skills, understanding and qualifications they need to succeed in the stage and screen industry. Learners have access to a variety of industry-led careers events, including careers fairs, trade shows and university open days. Staff teach sessions on completing application forms and help prepare learners for job and university interviews. Learners also receive advice and guidance on how to work as a freelancer in the industry. As a result, most learners gain employment or secure university places at the end of their studies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that feedback enables learners to improve their skills and knowledge over time.
- Ensure that teachers consistently check learners' understanding, particularly with regards to questioning.
- Ensure that learners are aware of the risks they face with regard to radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	148635
Address	48 Stour Street Birmingham B18 7AJ
Contact number	01213599390
Website	www.boa-stageandscreen.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Michael Painter
Provider type	16 to 19 Academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the 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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