



Laine Theatre Arts



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection Report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
January 2006

Provider reference
50012

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the college	iii
Part A: Summary	4
Part B: Leadership and management	5
Strengths	5
Weaknesses	5

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Laine Theatre Arts
Type of college:	Performing arts college
Principal:	Betty Laine
Address of college:	The Studios East Street Epsom Surrey KT17 1HH
Telephone number:	01372 724648
Fax number:	01372 723775
Name of reporting inspector:	David Hornbrook HMI
Dates of inspection:	29–30 June 2004

Part A: Summary

Laine Theatre Arts is an independent performing arts college, founded by Betty Laine in 1974. The college is accommodated on two sites in the centre of Epsom. It offers one course: dance and musical theatre. Dance subjects include classical ballet, contemporary dance, jazz and tap. Musical theatre subjects include singing, acting and voice. Individual timetables are prepared for each student. A range of external examinations is open to students, in addition to the national diplomas. The college has a management agency to help students to find employment.

Most students on the three-year professional training course, whether or not they receive a dance and drama award (DADA), take the national diploma in either dance or musical theatre. At the time of inspection, there were 186 students, 68 in the first year, 60 in the second and 58 in the third. Of the 186 students, 137 were women, and 27 were from overseas. Some 106 students were in receipt of DADAs.

The college is owned by the principal. It is a limited company, without charitable status. The college is led by the principal and two vice principals. The vice principals have responsibility for dance studies and musical theatre, and assist the principal with strategic and operational management. There are heads of department for drama, singing and classical ballet, 10 other full-time teachers and 12 part-time teachers. The college employs five pianists, four of whom are full time. Five full-time and two part-time members of staff provide administrative support.

The aims of the college are to provide students with a comprehensive range of dance and musical theatre skills to enable each student to achieve the highest professional standards.

The last full inspection of Laine Theatre Arts took place in November 2002, when achievement and standards, and the quality of education and training in dance and theatre performance were graded outstanding and leadership and management were graded good. The November 2002 report can be downloaded from the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

On the basis of the short inspection carried out in June 2004, inspectors are satisfied that the outstanding standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

The leadership and management of the college were reinspected in November 2005 to assess the progress made on a number of management issues since the short inspection. Inspectors are satisfied that standards of leadership and management are good.

Part B: Leadership and management

Inspectors judged leadership and management to be good (grade 2).

Strengths

- strong, insightful leadership
- effective operational management and administration
- productive links with the profession

Weaknesses

- incomplete employment records
- development planning not linked to self-assessment

1. The principal continues to exercise strong leadership of the college. She and her staff share a confidence in the success of Laine Theatre Arts. The principal and her two vice-principals continuously review the curriculum and adapt it to meet the changing employment needs of the profession. The excellent professional contacts maintained by the college help to ensure that students are well prepared for the profession they are to enter and have a broad and appropriate range of skills with which to pursue their careers. The in-house agency effectively records students' performing arts employment, and information is available for some years back. Little information is recorded, however, about those students who have not been successful, who have changed career or who have lost touch with the college. Information on student employment is not yet used systematically to inform long term planning, although the college is acutely aware of changes in the industry and makes changes accordingly.

2. The day-to-day management and administration of the college are good. The two vice-principals carry out their managerial duties effectively. Formal communication within the college is good, and staff are kept informed of daily changes and issues relating to students, such as recent injuries. Senior management meetings and the termly meetings that the principal holds with all staff are minuted. One of the vice principals also holds a meeting with staff every month, and minutes are circulated to those who are unable to attend. An effective and accepted system of appraisal incorporating class observation has been introduced and will now take place every year. A pre-observation review form, which encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and their aspirations, begins the process, and a class is observed and graded by a member of the senior management team and followed by a discussion with the teacher. Notes on observations are supportive but critical where necessary. It is too early for the outcomes of this process to reveal trends or to inform staff development planning,

although some common issues have already been identified. There have been a number of independent staff development initiatives and the college has run useful sessions for all the staff. Staff and students are supported by good handbooks, both of which contain the college charter.

3. Staff at all levels support each other effectively. In addition to formal meetings, there are many informal meetings at which productions are planned, individual students' progress is discussed and action taken where concerns exist. A close spirit of collaboration exists amongst college staff and they are keen to ensure the success of their students. Staff take opportunities to undertake a range of staff development, often with the support of the college.

4. The college has responded to weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Group tutorials are now held every week, there is a tutorial handbook and tutors have had suitable training. From 2006, all students will receive one-to-one tutorials focused on their individual development plans. The most recent self-assessment report was produced in the autumn term 2005 and this pattern is now established. It draws on the summer's whole-college 'course review' as well as internal departmental meetings. The report is a comprehensive account of the school's strengths and areas for development which is not afraid to be self-critical. A draft goes to staff for their comments. Annual departmental reviews have been piloted, and will become a requirement in 2006. Careful analysis of financial trends has resulted in a comprehensive financial plan for the college although this plan is not linked to the college's self-assessment and does not take account of longer term issues raised in the self-assessment report. Overall, management and quality assurance systems are now in place which should serve the school effectively in the future .

5. Students' views are sought both informally and through student representatives for each year of the course. The principal appoints 'head students' from the third year who meet her to discuss matters of student concern and a new student council has been convened which contains elected as well as appointed members. Council meetings are minuted. Feedback from student questionnaires is collected at the beginning of the spring term and at the end of the summer term. Improvements have been made as a result, although students are not necessarily aware of the outcomes of the surveys.

6. The college has recently updated policies for equality of opportunity, child protection and for the health and safety of students and employees. The college actively promotes courses for male students, and a larger proportion of men is enrolled than is usual for such courses. The September staff meeting contains a standing agenda item on equality of opportunity and staff are invited to express any concerns. The college monitors the ethnicity of its applicants, those auditioned and those enrolled. Equal opportunities are monitored on student questionnaires and at the student council, where they are a standing agenda item. Issues relating to equal opportunities are also discussed in tutorials. A short disability statement

makes clear the college's commitment to the appropriate treatment of applicants with disabilities. A disability access audit is presently being carried out and an action plan has been produced in line with the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA).

7. The college continues to manage its resources effectively and maintains good reserves. Financial matters are monitored carefully by the principal, the college financial administrator and the college's accountant. Annual budgets are prepared against planned income and expenditure and the college accountant reports to the principal on a quarterly basis. The production manager has a delegated budget for the annual show, managed in consultation with the principal. The college continues to use its resources efficiently to ensure value for money.

Notes

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and the source and date of publication are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).
