



GSA Conservatoire Drama School



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection Report

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	GSA Conservatoire
Type of college:	Drama School
Principal:	Peter Barlow
Address of college:	Millmead Terrace Guildford GU2 4YT
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Name of reporting inspector:	Tony Davis ALI
Date of inspection:	9-13 May 2005

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

GSA Conservatoire (GSA) is an independent drama school based in Guildford, Surrey. It was founded in 1935 and was known as the Grant Bellairs School of Dance and Drama. Dance remained the main focus of the school until 1964, when the Guildford School of Acting was formed to give dramatic training to selected students. Musical theatre and drama teacher training was introduced in 1967 followed by stage management training in 1984. GSA has eight premises in Guildford. Productions are staged in GSA's own Bellairs Playhouse theatre and Bellerby Studio, as well as in three public theatre spaces in Guildford: the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, the Mill Studio and the Electric Theatre. Regular public performances have also taken place in the grounds of Guildford Castle. GSA offers a three-year Bachelors of Art (BA) (Hons) degree in theatre, with acting and musical theatre pathways, and one-year courses for graduates and mature students in acting and musical theatre. From September 2005, there will be a Masters of Arts (MA) in musical theatre. A part-time distance learning course is also available for performance graduates from three-year diploma courses to convert their qualification into the BA (Hons) in theatre. Stage management, technical and design students can study for a two-year, or one-year fast track, professional production skills diploma followed by a further one-year course to complete the full BA (Hons) in professional production skills.

The University of Surrey validates the undergraduate performance courses, the BA (Hons) extension and conversion courses and the MA in musical theatre. Students in receipt of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) dance and drama awards study for both a degree and a professional national diploma awarded by Trinity College, London. Short and part-time theatre courses are also offered in which people of all ages participate.

At the time of the inspection in May 2005, there were 287 students, 90 of whom were enrolled on the three-year BA (Hons) in theatre (acting), 108 on the three-year BA (Hons) in theatre (musical theatre), 35 on the two-year production skills programme, 11 on the third-year BA (Hons) extension course in professional production skills and 17 students on the BA (Hons) in theatre conversion course. On the one-year performance courses, there were 14 acting students and 12 musical theatre students. On the three-year acting course, 26 out of 33 in the first year, 13 out of 23 in the second year and 22 out of 34 in the third year were in receipt of DfES dance and drama awards. On the three-year musical theatre course, 4 out of 47 in the first year, 21 out of 35 in the second year and 18 out of 26 in the third year were in receipt of the awards. On the two-year production course, 21 out of 24 in the first year and 10 out of 11 in the second year are in receipt of the awards. None of the one year acting, musical theatre, or BA extension or conversion students

were in receipt of awards.

GSA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It has five senior managers, nine full-time administration staff, 18 full-time teaching staff and around 65 sessional, freelance and visiting industry professionals. GSA is led by the director who is accountable to a board of governors. The senior management team comprises the director and heads of performance, production, administration and curriculum. The senior managers are supported by senior tutors who are responsible for the specialist areas within the curriculum. GSA is 'dedicated to excellence in all fields and its mission is to educate a student to the highest level of his or her ability, bearing in mind that an artistic or technical career is a continuous learning experience'.

This is the first inspection of GSA under the dance and drama awards scheme. Following the inspection in May 2005, the leadership and management of the college was reinspected in November 2005 to assess the progress made on a number of management issues since the original inspection. This report, therefore, reflects the quality of provision as it was when inspectors visited in May and the quality of leadership and management following the reinspection in November.

How effective is the college?

Key strengths

- the outstanding singing, acting and technical work
- students' professional and self-disciplined approach to their work
- the very good teaching
- the thorough assessment practice in acting and musical theatre
- the very good additional learning support
- the good opportunities to perform in a range of venues
- the strong leadership and governance
- the good initiatives to widen access to provision.

What should be improved

- training in dance
 - access to computers
-

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Students' view of the college

Students' views of the college were taken into account and are summarised below.

What students like about the college

- the supportive and approachable staff
- the sense of belonging to a family
- the hands-on nature of the courses
- the variety and quality of teaching
- the many performance opportunities in a broad range of venues
- the challenging and rewarding classes
- the opportunity to work with experienced and high-profile practitioners.

What they feel could be improved

- the overuse of student-led workshops
 - the accessibility of computers, film and television equipment
 - the effectiveness of communication between different departments
 - audition and interview preparation
 - the even scheduling of productions
 - the dance training
 - the amount of singing that is available in the first year
 - the lack of technique training classes in the third term of the third year.
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Part B: The professional acting course

Inspectors judged the provision to be Outstanding (Grade 1)

Strengths

- very high retention rates and outstanding degree achievement
- the high standard of third-year performance work
- students' self-disciplined and professional attitude
- much very good and some excellent teaching
- thorough assessment practice
- very good additional learning support
- good opportunities to perform in a range of venues.

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to computers.

Scope of provision

1. The three-year BA (Hons) degree in theatre (acting) aims to train students for employment in the stage, screen and broadcasting industries. The core subjects are acting, dance, movement, singing, voice, theatre studies and performance. For much of the first year, the acting and musical theatre students study together. All students have their dance skills assessed in the early part of their course and are then taught in groups of similar ability where possible. A series of workshops run throughout the course which integrate practical techniques with theatre and contextual studies, including English naturalism, high comedy, *Commedia dell' Arte* and contemporary text. In the third year, students develop their employment skills with classes on tax, the development of curriculum vitae and publicity photographs. Students also receive lectures from visiting professionals such as casting directors, producers and directors. A casting advisory service is available for final-year students, providing them with guidance on contracts, meeting with agents and how to gain representation.

2. Final-year students perform in a minimum of four productions, a short film and a showcase which is presented at GSA and a London West End venue. Recent productions have taken place at a variety of external venues, including the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, the Mill Studio, the Electric Theatre, Guildford Castle, Hampton Court Palace and a national tour culminating in a week at Wimbledon Studio. Students have the opportunity to enter for the Carleton Hobbs Radio Award and the William Poel Festival each year.

Achievements and standards

3. GSA received 368 applications for 35 places on the acting courses in 2004. Retention is good and has been above 90% for all years since 2000. Students' degree achievement is outstanding. Virtually all students who complete their course graduate with a degree and in 2004, 12 students were awarded first-class honours degrees. The majority of students leave GSA with professional agent representation, with 29 of the 35 graduating in 2004 have had at least one acting contract.

4. Recent graduates have gained employment in television, film and theatre productions, including shows at Nottingham Playhouse, New Ambassadors, Donmar Warehouse and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Television credits include *Footballers Wives*, *The Bill* and *Midsommer Murders*.

5. The standard of students' work is very good and some third-year performance work is outstanding. Students are self-disciplined and demonstrate a strong professional ethos in classes and rehearsals. Students are confident and enthusiastic and demonstrate a high level of independence when working together and directing each other. In a second-year movement class, students watched video recordings of their work as they created a solo dance performance, sharing ideas and giving each other very precise and incisive comments. Students use journals and assignments well to reflect on their work. The links between contextual and theatre studies and students' practical work are very good and are helping them develop as considerate 'thinking' performers. In a second-year project, students demonstrated the effectiveness of their collaboration skills as they collectively directed scenes from the Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Students were confident, and their creative explorations were good. A group of third-year students demonstrated outstanding acting and directorial skills in a dress rehearsal of a fringe production of *Anton in Show Business*. Students' attendance and punctuality is good; attendance during the week of inspection was 96%.

Quality of education and training

6. Nearly all teaching is very good or excellent. In the first term, in some subjects, students are divided into groups of similar ability to enable them to work at an appropriate level. Workshops are very well planned and challenge students to utilise their contextual skills to support their practical work. For example, in one contextual studies class exploring European naturalism, the teacher made excellent use of a broad range of teaching aids, including PowerPoint, video extracts, question-and-answer, handouts and group discussion. Students were highly motivated, articulate and contributed outstanding ideas and observations to the group discussion. In a voice class, the tutor focused on the forward placement of the voice and used strong imaginative visual images to stimulate and inspire students to play with sound and develop their technique. In their second year, students lead on and participate in student-led projects. While this approach gives them the opportunity to develop as independent learners, some students found it difficult fully to realise their work and ideas. In the weaker classes, students had not prepared adequately which adversely affected their capacity to learn.

7. Teachers are very experienced. Many are working as freelance practitioners in their specialist areas and visiting professionals are employed to direct and lead projects. GSA maintains good contact with industry representatives through the casting advisory service which is available to final-year students. There are four performance spaces to which the students have access. Most classrooms are appropriately equipped. In some buildings, rooms are not sufficiently soundproofed and some students find it difficult to hear the teacher and concentrate on their task. The library is very well stocked with a good range of texts, theoretical books, videos and learning resources. Students have very limited access to computers.

8. The system for assessing students' work is well established and thorough. Students receive comprehensive verbal and written feedback on their assignment work, which is assessed against detailed criteria. All written assignments are double marked. First and second-year students complete a personal learning statement during the year and are given specific feedback on all core areas. After every public performance, third-year students are assessed by a panel of tutors and visiting professionals on their work.

9. The course design is very good with a balance of practical and academic studies. In the foundation year, students receive singing tutorials in small groups and individual tutorials in their second year. At the start of the course, all students are given the opportunity to have two voice tutorials each term which focus on their personal technical development. Third-year students all take part in mock interviews and audition preparation and receive six individual tutorials to support their personal assignment work.

10. The audition procedure is very good. Each year, senior staff from GSA supplement their Guildford auditions by conducting workshops and auditions at

around 16 further education colleges around the country. Successful students are recalled for a two-day second audition at GSA where they watch a final-year students' show or observe classes, take part in a series of audition workshops and attend an interview. The audition panel is provided with clear and helpful audition criteria. The induction process is thorough and students find it very informative.

11. The system for providing students with additional learning support is very good. Applicants are given an initial screening assessment at their second audition followed by further tests during their induction period. Students with specific additional learning needs receive an additional diagnostic assessment. Individual support is appropriately timetabled and includes the development of their sight reading, writing and memory skills. GSA works effectively with a local dyslexia centre to diagnose students' learning needs and helps to develop appropriate support strategies. Each year-group is given a teacher as their main point of contact and to provide pastoral support. However, students do not receive regular or structured tutorials in which their progress can be systematically monitored. Students have access to a confidential counselling service if required.

The professional musical theatre course

Inspectors judged the provision to be good (grade 2)

Strengths

- very high retention rates and outstanding degree achievement
- outstanding singing and acting skills
- a high percentage of graduates employed in West End theatres
- the self-disciplined and professional attitude of students
- much very good and some excellent teaching
- thorough assessment practice
- very good additional learning support
- good opportunities to perform in a range of venues.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory design of the dance provision
- the underdeveloped dance skills of many students
- insufficient access to computers.

Scope of provision

12. The three-year BA (Hons) degree in theatre (musical theatre) aims to prepare students for careers in musical theatre, film and television. Students study core subjects in acting, dance, music, and voice with supporting classes in play text, acting theory, historical dance, Pilates body conditioning, Alexander technique, singing, music theory, comedy, ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary dance and stage combat. Second-year students take part in master classes given by visiting specialists in a variety of subjects including flamenco, dance improvisation and a variety of musical theatre choreographic styles. For much of the first year, the musical theatre and acting students study together. All students have their dance skills assessed in the early part of their course and are then taught in groups of similar ability where possible.

13. All students are involved in GSA's performance work which forms a focal point for their training as they progress through the school. Students take part in their first public performance in their second year. This is followed by a further four public performances, a short film and a showcase which is presented at GSA and a London West End venue. Recent productions have taken place at a variety of external venues, including the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, the Mill Studio and the Electric Theatre. Students have the opportunity to enter for the Carleton Hobbs Radio Award and the William Poel Festival each year.

Achievements and standards

14. GSA received 496 applications for 47 places on the musical theatre course in 2004. Retention rates are very high. Of the 144 students who have started the course since 2001, only one has left early. Virtually all students who complete their course achieve either a first class or upper-second class degree. In 2004, of the 34 students who graduated, all have gained professional work; eight joined national or European touring musicals, seven worked in West End musicals and the remainder worked in television or repertory theatre.

15. The standard of students' acting and singing skills is outstanding. Students present themselves very well and have a well-developed sense of their own individual strengths. Students develop a strong professional work ethos and readily take responsibility for their own development. When acting, students are confident and demonstrate good use of vocal and movement skills. They are articulate and enquiring performers and reflect well on their own and others' work in classes. For example, in a class exploring European naturalism, students demonstrated a keen insight into a broad range of aspects of characterisation. When singing, students have excellent intonation and control their breathing well. They have a good understanding of music theory and are proficient at sight-reading. Students understand the technical aspects of singing and use their technique effectively while maintaining good characterisation. The standard of students' dance is unsatisfactory. Students lack movement definition, dexterity and physical expression.

Quality of education and training

16. Much of the teaching is very good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan their classes well. The different elements of the course are co-ordinated well and effectively linked by themes. Teachers provide students with thorough feedback. In a singing class, the teacher worked effectively with students individually on their physiology and placement to improve their voices. Teachers ensure that subjects are taught in context. For example, in an historical dance class, students read poetry and wore costumes from the relevant era to develop their understanding of the style and period of the dance. Teaching staff have the same expectations of students' work practice as would be required in the profession. Students constantly check themselves for faults and are able to appraise their own technique and actions. As students progress through the course, classes become increasingly student-led. Students react well to this increasing autonomy, extending their creativity and developing a more in-depth understanding of aspects of performance. For example, in a class to prepare them for a public performance, students directed, rehearsed and acted in a play with minimal guidance from staff. They worked

professionally and communicated effectively with each other and with the technical students. In these student-led workshops, teachers are present and are able to guide students when necessary.

17. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a broad range of technical and industrial skills and experience. GSA also employs freelance directors, choreographers and teachers to contribute to the shows. The accommodation is situated on eight separate sites around Guildford. Studios are well used, of a suitable size and generally appropriate. However, the décor in many rooms is relatively poor and the poor sound insulation between some studios results in distractions at times. All dance studios have suitable *barres* and mirrors, a piano and a sound system. There are four well-equipped performance spaces available for school shows. The dispersed nature of the accommodation reduces its efficient and effective use. The library is well-stocked, though students have insufficient access to computers.

18. The process of assessment and monitoring of students' progress is thorough. The assessment process differs for each year of the course. Students are given a comprehensive written report of their work in the first year. They also have assessment tutorials in which they receive thorough written and verbal feedback on their progress. Assessment criteria are clear and well defined. Written work is double-marked and all assessments are moderated. Third-year students are assessed on their four public performances by a panel that includes external assessors from the industry.

19. Singing, acting and dance are the core skills of GSA's 'triple-threat' musical theatre course. However, the structure of the course does not provide students with enough opportunity to develop their dance skills to a good standard. In the first year, there are too few physical dance classes each week to enable students to develop their strength and technique. Similarly in the third year, the emphasis on dance and physical strength in classes is not consistently maintained throughout the year. GSA has attempted to organise students in dance groups of similar ability, but recognises that the current mix of abilities in each group is too wide to stretch all students effectively and appropriately.

20. Pre-entry advice and guidance for applicants is good. Students can attend open days, observe class with current students and speak to students and staff. Auditions are held at GSA and also at selected colleges around the country. All applicants take part in a physical and vocal appraisal process and a rigorous audition interview.

21. The screening for, and access to, additional learning support is very good. Students find the induction period gives them an effective introduction to GSA and their course. The student union assigns each new student a second-year 'buddy' to help them acclimatise to the school. All foundation-year students across the acting and musical theatre disciplines are assigned to one member of staff for tutorial

support and guidance, though students can elect to see another member of staff if they wish. Students do not receive regular or structured tutorials in which their progress can be systematically monitored. However, staff regularly discuss student issues in their weekly staff meetings. Students have access to a confidential counselling service if required.

The production course

Inspectors judged the provision to be good (grade 2)

Strengths

- very high retention rates
- 100% progression to degree extension year and appropriate employment
- high standard of students' practical work
- the self-disciplined and professional attitude of students
- nearly all teaching is good or very good
- very productive links with industry and experienced professionals
- very good additional learning support
- good opportunities to carry out production roles in a wide variety of venues.

Weaknesses

- peaks in the production schedule adversely affect teaching and learning
- unsatisfactory workshop accommodation at Kadek House.

Scope of provision

22. The two-year technical theatre diploma is designed to train students for careers in theatre lighting, sound, construction, stage management and design. Graduates from the two-year professional production skills diploma can study for a further year at GSA to gain a BA (Hons) degree in production. During their first year, students receive broad-based foundation training in the core technical subjects of stage management, lighting, sound, construction and design. Additional supporting training is provided in health and safety, movement for the stage manager, voice and stage combat. This is followed by periods of practical experience in stage management or technical theatre in the third term. In the second year, students are assigned to work on a range of theatre and touring productions to develop their skills. Students also choose to specialise in one area or role, such as stage manager or production electrician. Most students take advantage of a professional work placement in their second year. Students who continue for a further year to gain a degree, complete additional core modules in arts management and a further technical specialist area such as production electrics or production management.

Achievements and standards

23. GSA received 27 applications for 25 places on the production courses. Retention and pass rates on the diploma course are very high. Over the past five years, of the 70 students who started the course, only five left early. For the past three years, all students who reached the end of their course passed the qualification. Approximately 80% of the diploma graduates continue for an extra year to gain a degree. The majority of other students gained relevant production employment in the industry, including stage management at the National Theatre and a variety of roles in West End theatres.

24. Teachers have high expectations of their students, who are self disciplined and demonstrate a good awareness of professional standards. Students' understanding and technique is developed well and they produce practical work of a very high standard. They have a good understanding of the principles and applications of specialist lighting design software. Students are able to create high-quality lighting plans, accurate equipment lists and colour calls. Students preparing for a production of *The Sea* carried out meticulous research into the Edwardian period to ensure that appropriate furniture and properties were prepared for the show.

Quality of education and training

25. Much of the teaching is very good. Classes are planned well and appropriately designed to challenge students and extend their learning. Students are highly motivated and keen to make progress. Teachers manage individual students' work schedules well and there is a strong focus on gaining practical experience. For example, during a design session in the paint shop, first-year students learnt how to use paint techniques to 'age' scenic flats and grain furniture. The experienced teacher, who was also the designer for the production, was able to create a professional workshop environment in which students learned well. Teachers achieve a good balance between directed and student-centred learning. Students are allowed a degree of autonomy when working on a show allocation, but teachers continue to provide valuable advice and guidance when required. This balance is managed sensitively by teachers and the environment enables students to develop their confidence and abilities through real production goals yet within an appropriate learning environment.

26. GSA employs a broad range of technically and vocationally experienced staff, and benefits in particular from regular contributions from freelance set and lighting designers, production managers and directors. The overall standard of equipment and facilities is good. Students benefit significantly from access to a wide variety of well-equipped performance spaces, including GSA's performance venues and three local professional theatres. Students also benefit greatly from working alongside

professional technicians during shows at external theatres or when on work experience. The proximity of the sound and lighting workshops enables staff and students from each area to work effectively together. The wardrobe department is managed well and has a comprehensive stock. Efficient computer file handling between sites is impeded by the lack of an internal computer network.

27. The workshop accommodation at Kadek House is unsatisfactory. The construction and design/paint workshops are cramped and noisy and adversely affect students' learning. Insufficient attention has been given to health and safety in the construction workshop.

28. Assessment strategies and the monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Staff provide clear assessment criteria which are outlined in the student course handbook. Assessment in the first two terms of the first year is thorough. In the third term, students then work on productions and keep assessment log books. Staff update the log books with assessment results and written feedback on students' work. However, there is insufficient space to record detailed feedback on students' work and the quality of feedback from some staff is unsatisfactory. GSA are planning to improve their recording of feedback in the next academic year.

29. Most aspects of the course are structured well to provide students with a comprehensive and effective vocational training. However, peaks in the production schedule adversely affect teaching and learning and place undue pressure on staff, students and resources at busy periods of the year. For example, students reported that they often work in excess of 80 hours each week during a busy production period. Managers have identified this issue and have developed a strategy to address it which is due to be implemented during the next academic year.

30. The production department has well-developed and strong links with industry and experienced professionals. These links are used effectively during students' courses, for providing good quality work placements, and ultimately for providing employment for graduates. Teachers and support staff provide good pastoral and academic support for students. All students have an initial assessment of their study skills followed by further diagnostic testing where appropriate. The arrangements for providing additional learning support are good.

Part C: Leadership and Management

Inspectors judged leadership and management to be Good (Grade 2).

Strengths

- strong leadership and governance
- very good management of additional learning support
- strong commitment to staff development
- very good use of student feedback to improve provision
- good initiatives to widen access to the provision.

Weaknesses

- unproven system of financial reporting

31. GSA has strong leadership from the director and the governing board. The 2002 strategic plan has recently been reviewed to focus GSA on its major challenges for the next five years. The strategy is clear and understood by staff and covers resources, widening participation to socially disadvantaged and minority ethnic groups, teaching, lifelong learning, partnerships and links with the industry. Each element of the strategy has been assessed for its potential risk. GSA is aware of the unsuitability of some of its dispersed accommodation, much of which does not comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). A SENDA action plan has been developed and some adjustments to access have been made. The property and business experts from the governing board form a sub-committee which is meeting regularly to resolve this issue. GSA has recently purchased new premises for its production department and a new site for the consolidation of all its work into one area. The governors use their expertise and influence well for the benefit of the students and GSA has strong links with local theatres. A detailed implementation and project plan is in place for the strategic developments proposed, which provide detail of accountabilities and time scales.

32. The director, who is also the course director for acting, has a senior management team comprising the course directors for musical performance and production, the head of curriculum and the head of administration. The course directors are assisted by seven subject heads of acting, voice, movement, musical

theatre, singing, stage management and design. On the whole, communications are good. A comprehensive and well-established meeting structure covers all aspects of GSA's business and the minutes of meetings are clear and informative. Curriculum management is good. GSA has worked hard to develop its procedures for the early identification of students' additional learning support needs and the process is managed well. The overall management of the production schedule has recently been reviewed and amended to improve the quality of the training of production students.

33. GSA has a strong commitment to staff development. Staff have the opportunity, through the appraisal process, to identify their staff development requirements and part-time staff are paid to attend training. Many have benefited from a broad range of relevant short courses on, for example, deaf awareness and blind awareness, strategies for teaching students with learning difficulties, health and safety training, information and communications technology and first aid. Teachers have also attended workshops on movement, acting and assessment. A significant number of staff are also being supported through long courses, including MA's and doctorates. However, few staff have qualified-teacher status or are working towards it. Job descriptions and person specifications clearly outline the expectations of staff. Appraisals consider the impact of staff training on the effectiveness of the organisation. There is an effective lesson observation system for full-time staff which is helping to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching. It is intended that the system will be extended to all new part-time staff and those with significant numbers of hours. The handbook for staff is good. It clearly sets out the context in which visiting staff work and ensures that all staff are aware of the standards expected of them.

34. GSA has a well developed and effective system for using student feedback to improve provision. All students are invited to complete well-prepared questionnaires to help them evaluate the effectiveness of their training. An external facilitator then analyses the feedback and meets with each year-group of students to discuss the strengths and areas for improvement for each course. The facilitator then writes a series of informative reports for each course, and for the school as a whole, pulling together common themes for discussion and action by the senior management team. In addition, a student council meets approximately twice each term. This meeting is chaired by the director and attended by senior staff and representatives from each of the courses and year groups. The meetings are used effectively to identify and resolve a range of student concerns relating to day-to-day operational issues, the structure of their courses and the quality of the teaching they receive. Students are also in attendance at a range of meetings including the general purposes group, the academic board, marks boards and course boards.

35. GSA began accepting students with DfES further education dance and drama awards in the spring of 2004 and self-assesses its provision against the Common Inspection Framework. In preparation for course board meetings, all module co-ordinators self assess the effectiveness of their provision. The process is used well

to inform the course board of areas for improvement. For example, managers are aware of the issues with the dance curriculum noted by inspectors. There are effective processes in place for reviewing progress against identified weaknesses.

36. GSA has detailed policies and procedures for equality of opportunity, grievance and appeals. There are statements in the staff and student handbooks which indicate the commitment to equality for all. The handbook also contains information for students on courses, college life, student welfare, learning support services and the casting advisory service. There is good promotion of cultural diversity awareness. GSA continues to develop initiatives to widen access to its provision. Recruitment practice is good. A wide range of colleges around the country benefit from workshop and audition visits from GSA's staff. During the 2004/05 recruitment season, students at 16 further education colleges received first audition opportunities, supplementing the Guildford-based auditions. To help develop high quality applicants, GSA has worked closely with a local college of further education to develop and teach on three new national diploma courses in drama, musical theatre and technical theatre, although it is too early to judge the impact of this new initiative. GSA has also developed a successful range of part-time feeder courses which are offered on a Saturdays and during the summer break. New initiatives to continue its commitment to improving access to underrepresented groups include work with a musical theatre academy based in south-east London, the development of a foundation degree in small-scale theatre with a local further education college and a performance project which will integrate the casting of actors with disabilities with GSA students.

37. Health and safety practices and monitoring procedures are satisfactory. GSA recently engaged a health and safety consultant who has advised the college on the new health and safety policies, systems and procedures for recording and reporting on health and safety. Staff are familiar with the new health and safety policy and procedures. The college has relocated much of its technical theatre provision to new premises, including the wood-working machine workshop. The consultants advised on the layout and specifications for the new facility to ensure appropriate location of equipment, suitable dust extraction, noise levels, safety features and personal protective equipment (PPE) and operating instructions on equipment. Students are trained and authorised to operate each piece of equipment. They are also required to wear appropriate PPE when operating the equipment. The college has updated the terms of reference and membership of the health and safety committee which includes governor representation. There are extensive procedures in place for carrying out timely health and safety checks, risk assessments and noise level tests, recording and reporting any areas in need of attention and following up on proposed actions.

38. Staffing levels and responsibilities within the finance department have recently been reviewed. The new structure is designed to provide more effective day-to-day operation within the finance department, more accurate, clearer management reports, and improved accounting practices. At the time of the

reinspection it was too early to judge the full impact of these changes. Performance projects are chosen by the course directors for acting and musical theatre and discussed with the course director for production who then sets production budgets for each project. The final budget is agreed by the finance sub-committee before being signed off by the chair of the board of governors. Annual accounts are prepared by the external accountant and the finance sub-committee. These are approved by the whole board of governors and are subject to an external audit. GSA is in a secure financial position and has a contingency fund for repairs and renewals and an effective system for managing its cash flow. Students have access to emergency financial support. Managers seek to secure value for money when purchasing capital equipment.

Notes

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