



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**Inspection Report**  
**English National Ballet School**  
**Dance College**

Date of inspection: 18–21 November 2002

© Crown copyright 2002. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

College inspection reports are available on the OFSTED web site ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

Reference:

# **Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Basic information about the school</b>	
<b>Part A: Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Information about the school</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective is the school?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key strengths</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What should be improved</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Students' view of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Part B: The two-year professional dance course</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part C: Leadership and management</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>9</b>

## **Basic information about the school**

Name of school:	English National Ballet School
Type of school:	Dance school
Director:	Kathryn Wade
Address of school:	Carlyle Building Hortensia Road London SW10 0QS
Telephone number:	020 7376 7076
Fax number:	020 7376 3404
Name of reporting inspector:	Sandra Tweedie HMI
Date of inspection:	18–21 November 2002

## **Part A: Summary**

### **Information about the school**

English National Ballet School (ENBS) is a small independent dance school offering an intensive two-year training course in classical ballet for students aged 16 to 19. In 1995, the school moved to its own premises, located in the same building as Kensington and Chelsea College, not far from English National Ballet Company. The school has a close relationship with the company and students benefit from this, but it is governed, managed and financed separately. The school has a board of 11 governors and is a registered charity, limited by guarantee.

At the time of inspection in November 2002, there were 48 students on the course, 25 in the first year and 23 in the second year. Thirteen of the students were male and 27 were from overseas, including 18 from outside the European Union. Twenty-nine students were in receipt of Department of Education and Skills (DfES) dance and drama awards.

The emphasis of the training is on classical ballet, with supporting studies. The school aims to prepare students for employment with English National Ballet Company and other companies in this country and abroad. In its mission statement, the school refers to setting the highest standards, offering a coherent style of teaching and encouraging a dynamic and creative culture.

The school is led by the director who is also the chief executive. She is assisted by the school administrator and the principal teacher of classical ballet. The school has nine full-time staff: the director, three ballet teachers, two pianists and three administrative staff. There are eight part-time teaching staff and a number of part-time support staff.

### **How effective is the school?**

#### **Key strengths**

- strong leadership and effective management
- outstanding teaching
- high technical and artistic skills of students
- mature and focused learners
- high proportion of students finding appropriate employment
- excellent professional experience of teachers
- effective quality assurance procedures
- productive links with the dance profession nationally and internationally.

**What should be improved**

- the amount of studio space for classes and rehearsals.

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

**Students' view of the school**

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

***What students like about the school***

- the very good reputation of the school
- great teachers and training
- the two-year course
- the friendly atmosphere between students
- approachable staff
- a small community where you get lots of attention.

***What they feel could be improved***

- to have up-to-date computers
- to have more rehearsal space and a third studio
- to have a shorter working week.

## Part B: The two-year professional dance course

Using the Common Inspection Framework, inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management using a five-point scale. The range of grades include: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), and Very Poor (5).

Inspectors judged the provision to be **Outstanding (Grade 1)**.

Inspectors observed 13 classes.

### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Grade	Teaching	Learning
1	9	4
2	4	8
3	–	1
4	–	–
5	–	–
6	–	–
7	–	–

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade1), Very Good (2); Good (3); Satisfactory (4); Unsatisfactory (5); Poor (6); Very Poor (7).

#### **Strengths**

- outstanding teaching
- high technical and artistic skills of students
- excellent professional experience of teachers
- high proportion of students in gaining appropriate employment
- mature and focused learners
- welcoming and well-maintained accommodation.

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient studio space.

***Scope of provision***

1. The school aims to produce professional dancers of the highest possible artistic and technical qualities. To this end, the training concentrates on a classical ballet style initially devised to meet the needs of English National Ballet Company. All students work towards the national certificate in professional dance (classical ballet), with its associated contextual studies. Their classical ballet training is supported by the disciplines of contemporary dance, jazz dance, repertoire, pas de deux and classical virtuosity. The school also offers drama classes, aerobics and Pilates body conditioning.

2. The majority of students follow the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced (A) level courses in dance, with their requirements of choreography, analysis, dancer in action and Benesh movement notation. Some follow this with the Benesh Institute's elementary solo reading examination. Students from abroad receive English tuition and there is suitable additional support for students with specific learning difficulties.

***Achievements and standards***

3. The students work to an extremely high standard, both technically and artistically. Second-year students are reaching a professional standard in performance and presentation. Students have a mature and focused approach to learning. They are very hard working; consciously using their classwork to maximise their stamina as well as refine their technical skills. The intensity of the training means that students develop their bodies as highly refined physical instruments. Students' footwork is exceptionally strong, they have high and well-controlled extensions and well-centred torsos. They accept corrections well and practise assiduously to make the detailed improvements required. The classical ballet style as taught by ENBS is emphasised from the outset and results in an open generous style of presentation grounded in impeccable technique.

4. Students' results in GCE AS and A-level dance are among the best in the country. The requirements of choreography, analysis, dancer in action and Benesh movement notation provide a useful context for vocational studies.

5. Students get good jobs. There are close and productive links with companies both here and abroad. Recent graduates have contracts with English National Ballet Company, The Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Aalto Ballet Theatre Essen, Hong Kong Ballet, Rosella Hightower Jeune Ballet Cannes, Teatro alla Scala di Milano, Ballet Imaginaire and Israel Ballet. Students' coherent and consistent style remains extremely popular with ballet companies worldwide. The overall retention rate for the national certificate course is high, at 84%.

***Quality of education and training***

6. Teaching is very good or outstanding. Teachers bring an impressive range of experience to the course, both in performance and in coaching. They demand a high level of technical and expressive qualities from their students. Classwork is challenging and physically demanding. Teachers use their hands to adjust students' physical alignment, particularly in classical ballet. Strict guidelines for the appropriate nature of this approach

---



are described in the excellent teachers' handbook. Teachers use a variety of analogies to draw expressive dance qualities from the students. One ballet teacher for instance, used 'peeling an orange' to reach a particularly 'juicy' quality in a fondu. Another spent some time explaining the difference between 'visualizing' the exact position of each part of the body and in 'thinking' it. A ballet teacher was extremely adept at devising new exercises to correct a fault, then returning to the original exercise having improved the technique. Contemporary classes begin with Graham technique for the first year, followed by a more open and varied technical discipline for the second year, which is designed to equip students for as wide a variety of audition opportunities as possible. This approach is also followed in the jazz dance class. In the third ballet class of the week, first-year students were expected to remember not only their exercises from the previous classes, but also their corrections. This they were able to do well.

7. The audition process is fair and well organised. From an initial pool of 250 to 300 applications, approximately 25 are accepted as students. After a first-day, two-hour ballet class and tour of the school, potentially successful candidates are invited back to a full final day's audition. They are given a further class followed by an orthopaedic examination while parents have the opportunity to question administration staff. Applicants have a final class followed by an interview to determine their aptitude for the course and are then given their results immediately. There is an appropriate appeals procedure for audition decisions. The school has received government funding and provides an annual week long 'Spring Course' to enable 30 young dancers under the age of 16 to have access to the school before applying for auditions in the following year.

8. Students' induction is thorough and well organized. Parents and students are given information on matters such as health insurance, local health service facilities, the academic options available and the national qualification requirements. Health and safety policies are explained, and fire drills are carried out. There is a diagnostic assessment of students to identify those with specific learning difficulties. Extra support is arranged for those who need it, including English lessons for students from abroad. Lectures are given on the importance of warm-up and cool down procedures, and on how to keep their school diaries and folders.

9. Assessments are rigorous and thorough, and some are externally moderated. The first-year students are judged after two months with a challenging choreographic assignment involving research, writing programme notes as well the choreography itself. The performance of this assignment is attended by the whole school, including the administrative staff, and formally assessed by the director and a panel of teachers. Further into the course, the students have twice-yearly assessments in all the dance disciplines studied. These are followed by individual tutorials to ensure that students are aware of their progress and to set targets. There are also occasional group sessions to view video evidence. Written reports are sent to the parents.

10. All the teachers are very experienced professionals. They are supported by administrative staff, many of whom have a dance background. There are only two dance studios. The pressure on these is high and this compresses the timetable, making for a lack of regular lunch breaks, late classes and a shortage of rehearsal space. The school is aware of this weakness and is negotiating to secure extra space in the same building. Finances have

---

already been allocated for this expansion. Existing accommodation is exceptionally well maintained, welcoming and equipped to a high standard. Especially good library facilities include dance videos, compact discs, and tapes of music and books in English, Japanese, Danish, Russian and French. Three computers are available for students to use in their common room, although one was not working at the time of the inspection.

11. Students find the informal pastoral care very effective and responsive. They refer frequently to the 'ENBS family'. There is the additional benefit of an outside counsellor, although at present students have to pay for this service. The school emphasises the healthier dancer programme. Students benefit from aerobics, Pilates body conditioning and weight training classes, as well as visits from a nutritionist. Two physiotherapists supervise injuries and progress in recovery from injury is well monitored by all staff.

12. Students have the opportunity to perform annually at the Chelsea Festival and The Britten Theatre in London and, for the last two years, they also performed at the Internazionale di Danza in Florence. Students perform for parents on several occasions during the year. They also participate in numerous community and fund raising events. Some students have the opportunity for work experience with touring ballet companies.

## Part C: Leadership and management

Inspectors judged leadership and management to be **Outstanding (Grade 1)**.

### Strengths

- strong leadership and effective management
- excellent teamwork of staff in sustaining high standards
- effective quality assurance procedures
- productive links with the dance profession nationally and internationally
- thoughtfully targeted and well-devised policies and codes of practice
- thoughtful and accurate self-assessment report.

### Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

13. The course and the school are efficiently organised and well managed. The director provides strong and effective leadership, closely supported by the principal teacher of ballet, teaching staff and the school administrator and team. All staff, teachers and administrators work closely as a team. They have a shared purpose and have been very successful in maintaining high standards. The director is closely involved in all aspects of teaching and management.

14. Communication amongst the small group of staff is good. Roles and lines of communication are clearly understood. Weekly meetings, at which minutes are taken, enable the director and staff to monitor progress and to plan the activities of the school. Part-time staff attend these meetings when possible and are made aware by telephone and e-mail of important decisions. Formal staff meetings are held twice a term. 'Technical' meetings have been held by the director every two weeks to ensure consistency of standards in the dance programme. The views of students are gathered informally through close daily contact with staff and formally through questionnaires. Responses to questionnaires are taken seriously by teaching staff in their annual review of the curriculum. As a pilot project this year, students are keeping a 'performance diary' to record their progress on the course which is then discussed during individual tutorials.

15. There is a good range of expertise on the board of governors including expertise in law, accountancy and public relations. Members attend many of the performances and give their expert advice on fundraising to support the school. Governors are well informed about the day-to-day operation of the school and have recently formed a development committee and appointed a fundraiser. The director reports formally to governors three times a year and presents the school's recent activities, details of retention, pass rates and performance.

16. The school has developed thoughtfully targeted and well-devised policies and codes of practice for both staff and students. For students, these include school rules, guidance on health and safety, information on support services including those provided by the doctor and the counsellor, equal opportunities and disability statements, policies on anti-bullying and alternative careers advice. Students receive all this information in the form of handouts, allowing staff to talk through the content at the appropriate time during induction and the rest of the year. The updated staff handbook is informative. Policies have been adapted or extended to reflect the needs of staff; for example, there are statements on equal opportunities for employees and bullying in addition to the usual information on conditions of service and grievance procedures. Equality of opportunity is promoted well in the planning of teaching, class review and evaluation. Teaching staff are given detailed guidance and are effective in applying the school's policy in class. Students respect staff. The ethnicity of all applicants is recorded, but there is no analysis of trends in recruitment.

17. Detailed job descriptions are in place for all staff. Staff are informally appraised and documentation is being developed to record the process. Following the last inspection, the school has made good use of the Government's Standards Fund. Staff development opportunities taken up by staff include first aid training, conferences related to dance training, pastoral care and support for dyslexia.

18. Extensive contacts with national and international ballet companies and schools are highly beneficial for students and staff. The school has close relationship with, for example, the Paris Opéra Ballet School and La Scala, Milan. Eminent guest teachers are invited regularly to visit the school, providing teaching staff with valuable information on current practice and standards. Auditions for new students are held each year in London and Europe. Auditions are planned for New York in 2003.

19. The school was last inspected in December 2000. Since then very good progress has been made in strengthening quality assurance procedures. The approach over the last two years has been systematic and the school has been effective in monitoring progress towards planned objectives. Targets have been introduced for retention and pass rates for each year of the course. Many improvements have been made; for example, there have been changes to the students' induction week for second-year students and additional jazz dance classes have been introduced in response to students' requests. The self-assessment report is thorough, thoughtful and accurate. It draws on extensive, well-documented sources of evidence and was prepared using the headings in the *Common Inspection Framework*. The chair of governors was involved in the process. Strengths and weakness are clearly identified and the action plan has appropriate measures for assessing progress and promoting further improvements.

20. The school manages its resources efficiently. Finances are monitored carefully by the director and members of the governors' finance committee, who receive monthly reports from the school accountant. The school budget is managed by the director. The school ensures that it secures value for money in purchasing resources.

## Notes