



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
ELMHURST SCHOOL FOR DANCE**

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## Elmhurst School for Dance

Full Name of School	<b>Elmhurst School for Dance</b>
DfE Number	<b>330/6111</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1040286</b>
Address	<b>Elmhurst School for Dance 247 Bristol Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B5 7UH</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0121 4726655</b>
Fax Number	<b>0121 4726654</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@elmhurstdance.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mrs Jessica Wheeler</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Roy Shields</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 19</b>
Total Number of Students	<b>182</b>
Gender of Students	<b>Mixed (57 boys; 125 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	11-18 <b>182</b>
Number of Day Students	Total: <b>26</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>156</b>
	Full: <b>156</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>03 Feb 2015 to 06 Feb 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2012.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to students' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for students aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the dance and other activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of parents and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Dr Iain Farrell	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mrs Linda Griffith	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mr Roland Martin	Team Inspector (Head, HMC/Society of Heads school)
Ms Diane Martin	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Suzanne Thomas-Webb	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Elmhurst School for Dance is a co-educational boarding and day school for students aged 11 to 19. It is the oldest vocational ballet school in the UK, founded in Camberley, Surrey, in 1923. The school relocated to Edgbaston, Birmingham, in 2004 to be near to, and strengthen its links with, Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB). Admission is solely by potential in dance. Students in Years 7 to 11 divide their time equally between vocational and academic study; three-quarters of the curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is devoted to dance. Year 14 is a graduate year where the focus is entirely on dance, preparatory to entering a dance company. The school is owned by the Elmhurst Ballet School Trust and is overseen by a governing body.
- 1.2 The school aims: to provide a centre of excellence for the training and education of dancers for national and international dance companies; to give students a sound knowledge of allied dance genres and a quality academic education; to provide a principled, caring, living and working environment, all combined to provide a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The school seeks to support this approach through its 'Live, Dance, Learn' strategy. The school's association with BRB offers performance opportunities to students and enables vocational teaching. Most students receive financial support, some in full, mainly through the music and dance scheme and, for those over 16, the dance and drama award, both operated by the Department for Education. Since the previous full inspection, the school has revised the vocational and academic curriculum and, since 2012, has opened a new boarding house for students in Years 12 and 13.
- 1.3 Students are drawn from across the UK, mostly White British, from a wide range of backgrounds. Just over a tenth of students come from overseas, mainly from Japan. At the time of the inspection there were 182 students on roll, two-thirds of them girls, of whom 26 are day students. Boarders in Years 7 to 11 live in one of four houses on the school site; those in Years 12 and 13 in a boarding house five minutes' walk from the school. Year 14 students live in rented accommodation arranged solely by themselves and their parents. The ability profile of students on entry to the school is above the national average. This broadens by Year 10 to be in line with the national average and encompasses a wide range of abilities. A similar profile exists in Years 12 to 14. Nine students have English as an additional language (EAL), all of whom receive help with their learning. No student has a statement of special educational needs. Of the 17 students who have been identified as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), eight receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of the students' achievement and learning is excellent. Their achievement in dance is exceptional; they develop their talents to reach levels of achievement far above expectations for their age. Students demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their academic subjects. Those with SEND and EAL achieve at levels equal to their peers. More able students achieve at high levels, particularly in the sixth form in dance diploma examinations and when they study for additional A-level qualifications outside the timetable. Students become resilient, persevering, highly self-motivated and co-operative learners, in response to excellent opportunities in the curriculum and activities. Students make good progress in their academic studies and are judged to make excellent progress in dance. This is enabled by stimulating teaching which shows high expectations of students. These excellent qualities, although often reflected, are not yet universal in all academic teaching, including with regard to use of assessment and marking.
- 2.2 The students' personal development is excellent. Students develop self-discipline, confidence and high levels of self-awareness as dancers. They exhibit these traits equally in their excellent social development. They have strong moral and cultural awareness, particularly shown in their concern for those who are less fortunate and in their awareness of the rights of others. The school provides excellent pastoral care. Its holistic view of the students' well-being as young dancers also encompasses the excellent arrangements for their safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. This integrated approach informs the excellent boarding provision. The responses of students to pre-inspection questionnaires were positive. Almost every student who responded agreed that they enjoy being at the school and feel they make good progress.
- 2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's ethos well and ensures strong oversight of those areas where governors have legal responsibilities. All the requirements and recommendations of the previous inspection have been met. Leadership and management are excellent and the school maintains effective links with parents. Almost all parents who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires would recommend the school to another parent. A minority were dissatisfied with the quality of information provided about their child's progress. Inspectors agree that the style and quality of comments given in reports are inconsistent. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection, particularly in curricular provision for dance and academic study, and arrangements to support the students' well-being. Teaching has developed well, although a few inconsistencies remain. This progress supports the excellent academic achievement and personal development of students and their exceptional achievement in dance.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that academic teaching is consistent in promoting high expectations of students, and in the quality of marking and assessment.
  2. Improve the quality of reports to parents.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the students' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school's ambitious aim to be a centre of excellence for the training and education of dancers is met with great success. The students' achievement in dance and dance-related activities is exceptional across a wide range of styles. Students develop their talents to reach levels of achievement far above expectations for their age, both technically and in the quality of imagination they display. The older students demonstrate technical prowess and interpretative skills which allow them to gain places in leading ballet companies throughout the world. Younger students participate in professional productions. Students enjoy considerable success in national and international dance competitions and consistently achieve distinctions in external dance examinations. They demonstrate strong physical development.
- 3.3 Throughout the school, students develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding in their academic studies. This is particularly consistent in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Students with SEND are enabled to match the achievements of their peers. Those with EAL, mostly sixth formers, receive focused support which enables them to achieve success in dance, and in public examinations. Students read and write well, order their thinking logically and articulate their ideas clearly. They develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Art and drama are often characterised by strong creative responses and demonstrates effective technical skills. More able students achieve at high levels. In the sixth form, several study additional subjects, including further mathematics, with success, outside the timetable.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been good in relation to the national average for students in maintained schools. Four-fifths of results have been at grades A\* to C and this proportion rose to nine-tenths in 2014. Results in 2014 also show a significant increase in the proportion of results gained at grades A or A\* at just over two-fifths. These levels of attainment, considered alongside the students' responses in interviews, their written work and in lessons, indicate that progress to GCSE is good.
- 3.5 The numbers of students taking A-level examinations each year is too small to make detailed comparisons reliable, but generally, results are in line with the national average for students in maintained schools. Nearly all students attain the national diploma in professional dance, equivalent to the standard of a graduate diploma. These levels of attainment, considered alongside the students' extensive dance commitments and the fact that some result from study undertaken outside the timetable, indicate good progress. Students are judged to demonstrate excellent levels of progress in dance. Those who leave at age 16 regularly gain places in vocational dance or music theatre schools. Over four-fifths of leavers at age 19 find employment in a dance company within six months.
- 3.6 Students demonstrate particularly high learning skills in response to the high expectations of the teaching they receive. Their attitudes are characterised by perseverance, high levels of self-motivation and co-operation. Students evaluate their own success rigorously, particularly in dance, and show marked independence.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum and associated activities meet the aims of the school by offering the highest standard of dance training, combined with a strong academic education.
- 3.9 Since the previous full inspection, the academic curriculum has been developed by the addition of drama in Years 7 to 9, GCSE economics and biology at A level. The dance curriculum has been strengthened by the introduction of a two-hour ballet class each day for all year groups to improve physical stamina. Lessons in dance styles other than classical ballet have been introduced in response to current trends in dance. A well-considered programme of enrichment activities has been introduced on Friday afternoons.
- 3.10 Academic study in Years 7 to 11 covers the National Curriculum subjects. This ensures sufficient breadth to provide a strong foundation for GCSE study in a good range of subjects. French is taught from Year 7, and ICT and religious education are taught in Years 7 to 9. In Years 9 and 10 all students take GCSE dance in addition to the core subjects and three options chosen from a good range, to provide a total of nine subjects. Science is taught as separate subjects, and students take the dual award. The A-level academic curriculum includes two subjects chosen from English, mathematics, art, performing arts, biology and dance, together with a three-year diploma course in dance.
- 3.11 An emphasis on creative subjects in the curriculum such as art, music and drama reflects and supports the students' dance studies. The balance between dance and academic study varies each day and the optimum division is kept under continual review. Planning for both dance and academic curricula is regularly reviewed. Each academic subject has a scheme of work; those in the core subjects are especially detailed.
- 3.12 The school's provision is highly successful in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented in dance. The school has made good progress in identifying and beginning to meet the needs of the academically more able, for example through support for A-level students to study additional subjects outside the timetable. It is currently compiling a programme of appropriate enrichment activities to augment those available on Friday afternoons. Specialist teaching provides effective additional support for students with SEND and EAL.
- 3.13 The range of extra-curricular activities is good, in the context of the school's primary focus. Friday afternoon activities such as swimming, gymnastics and team games are especially valued by students. Opportunities are provided to develop choreographic and public-speaking skills as well as interest in academic subjects. Suitable weekend activities are arranged to enable boarders to relax in their own way after a very strenuous week. The school organises visits to see ballet and theatre performed in Birmingham and occasionally elsewhere. Recent overseas trips have visited Italy and Japan.
- 3.14 Involvement with the local community includes opportunities for students to perform in hospitals, schools and retirement homes. Formal partnerships with several other schools enable students to act as ambassadors for dance. Fundraising for a range of charities is a well-established commitment.

- 3.15 A well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme includes careers advice. This becomes increasingly focused as students develop their personal dance preferences and each is given individual advice, principally by their ballet tutor. Senior managers maintain an effective overview. Advice in Year 11 about academic choices begins early. Continued support is given to those who leave after Year 11. The few sixth-form leavers who do not pursue a career in dance receive suitable guidance for university application. A dance showcase is provided for Year 14 to which artistic directors of ballet companies are invited.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching promotes the students' artistic potential and learning with great success; it fully supports the aims of the school. The high quality of teaching is evident across the curriculum, notably in classical and contemporary dance, and in many academic subjects. The most successful teaching engenders a strong culture of collaboration which encourages the students' high levels of co-operative learning. Relationships between students and with teachers are strong. Students are encouraged to develop independence; this is most clearly successful in their annotation of dance diaries, in English coursework for AS level and in diploma dissertations by Year 14 students. Teachers are generous with their time: informal support of students beyond the artistic and academic curriculum is a key feature of teaching.
- 3.18 Teaching is planned with great care. Teachers know students extremely well and match work to their differing needs, for example more challenging tasks are provided for more able younger students in mathematics. Individual support is provided for those students with SEND or EAL through careful questioning and monitoring of their progress. A support structure whereby teachers act as learning mentors for students in Year 11 has recently been introduced, which supports their academic needs well.
- 3.19 Teaching creates a purposeful atmosphere across the school and a wide range of resources and methods is used. Students benefit from teaching by subject specialists, especially, but not exclusively, in the exceptional dance teaching they experience. Excellent subject knowledge and subject passion are widespread. The expectations of teaching are high with the result that students work diligently, often displaying the highest levels of perseverance. They are expected to demonstrate notable levels of focus and discipline with great success; for example, Year 11 dancers demonstrated extraordinary fouetté technique in response to expert, demanding guidance. Occasionally, less stimulating teaching does not match these levels of energy or demonstrate such high expectations, resulting in less rapid progress. Teaching expects high standards of presentation. The resulting care that students take characterises all areas of school life, including performance, the students' deportment and their note-taking. The high levels of organisation and self-discipline demanded by the intense physical elements of dance inform the students' engagement with their academic work.
- 3.20 Since the previous inspection, the school has worked successfully to forge stronger links across departments, including dance and academic, to ensure that the most effective practice is shared. Records of peer lesson observations across different areas, and of staff training, show fruitful mutual exploration of different teaching and learning styles. This sharing of ideas ensures that students generally experience much consistency in approaches to teaching and learning during the school day.

- 3.21 The school has also reviewed its assessment processes. Academically, the school uses nationally standardised benchmarks to assess students in all subjects. Formal academic assessments are recorded electronically. However, students are not always made aware of the level they have achieved. This hinders their understanding of the progress they make. The most useful marking enables progress because it is regular and makes effective use of target grades which reflect external benchmarks. In some students' work, inconsistency in the quality of marking and application of target grades gives less help. In dance, the students' progress is tangibly plotted through records of pre-assessments and appraisals at key points, such as Years 9 and 11. These events are comprehensive and well judged, and the outcomes are sensitively handled.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent.
- 4.2 In response to the school's promotion of a holistic education, embodied in its 'Live, Dance, Learn' strategy, students reach a high level of personal development by the time they leave the school. They demonstrate resilience, self-discipline, confidence and high levels of self-awareness. They acknowledge the part played in their development by the support and stimulating challenge they receive from adults in the school. Older students have a highly mature understanding of the significance of making their own artistic and career decisions. Students of all ages show poise and creativity as performers and carry these qualities into their daily lives. Older students react to stimuli provided in art very imaginatively. In a drama presentation in assembly, GCSE students showed great empathy with the victims of the holocaust in a physical theatre presentation. Students respond well to the traditional Christian ethos of the school and support local faith groups at weekends.
- 4.3 The students' moral development is excellent. They show a strong concern for the situations of others through charitable fundraising, successfully undertaken by individual year groups. Understanding of the need for rules within the community is strong; serious sanctions are rarely needed. Understanding of British values is strong; for example, acceptance of the rights of others is well developed in all years. Older students have participated in wheelchair dance sessions with the disabled and Year 14 students dance in prisons and mental health institutions. Students in GCSE English showed clear understanding of issues such as racism in *Of Mice and Men* and A-level students identified anti-racist principles adopted by dance companies.
- 4.4 Students are welcoming, courteous, and show very high levels of social development. The youngest readily act as 'guardian angels' for new students, corresponding with them before they arrive at the school to ensure they feel welcome. Students help each other willingly in class, sharing ideas and mutual concerns. They respect each other's accomplishments across different aspects of dance and academic work. They have a highly developed sense of personal responsibility for being prepared for dance activities, for their personal appearance and as part of a team. Senior students take their particular responsibilities seriously and act as highly effective ambassadors for the school. Students are made aware of events in the wider world during form time and respond well, although the visual resources selected sometimes offer limited challenge for those of GCSE age. The students' understanding of British institutions is developing but opportunities to extend this are limited; the school has identified ways to improve this provision, for example through experience of the legal system by visits to local courts. Students appreciate and benefit from the guidance they receive about managing finances, particularly those older students preparing to work in ballet companies abroad after leaving school.
- 4.5 The students' cultural awareness is strong. They have a strong awareness of Western cultural traditions and experience a wide range of other cultures through dance and also through performance in other genres. They articulate their cultural preferences with clarity, whether for contemporary or classical dance styles or the

work of different visual artists. Students welcome and enjoy the experience of working with those from other cultures, for example in masterclasses on South Asian dance. They view working abroad as a natural element of their chosen vocation and look forward to it. Students from overseas are integrated successfully into the school.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 Knowledgeable, empathic staff reflect the specialist nature of the school. Excellent support is given which successfully realises the school's aims. The house parent and ballet tutor are key figures in the pastoral support provided for each student. This is amplified by a collegiate approach to care which includes dance and academic studies.
- 4.8 Strong relationships between the staff and students are based on mutual trust and respect; students feel that the school is a very friendly place to learn. Support is given to students joining the school through a mentoring system, particularly effective in Year 7. Programmed, two-day intensive PSHE sessions delivered by outside agencies guide students about drug and alcohol abuse, relationship issues and financial management amongst other topics. Relationships between students are characterised by reciprocal encouragement, recognising individual talents and instilling confidence through peer group approbation.
- 4.9 The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is at the centre of the school's care and physical exercise is at the core of the school's life. Students understand that, in their physically demanding schedule, to stay fit and eat healthily is paramount. Nutrition experts work with catering staff, sit with the students at meal times, and guide the much appreciated food forum and sixth-form cookery sessions. One-to-one clinics are available for students to discuss dietary issues. Since the previous inspection broader menus have been introduced which reflect the cultural diversity of the students.
- 4.10 The school has an appropriate plan to increase accessibility. Disability access is excellent, with lift and ramps provided. These help students when physical injuries occur.
- 4.11 A comprehensive policy guards against harassment and bullying. Internal and external sources of support are identified to parents and students on the school website and noticeboards. Students state that bullying is rare and are confident that they have an adult in whom they could trust should it happen. An internal email facility enables students to report concerns anonymously. Students are well aware of the school's expectation that any such issues should be raised. The school effectively promotes good behaviour. A formal structure of rewards and sanctions involves students in taking responsibility for their actions. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of students expressed dissatisfaction with the fairness with which rewards and sanctions are employed. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Sanctions are given fairly, including, very rarely, for serious misdemeanours. Records of sanctions are monitored by senior staff effectively.
- 4.12 Opportunities exist for students to voice their ideas through the school council, food forum, boarding houses and charities committee. All of these are highly effective and students consider that they improve their experience within the school.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.13 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students are excellent.
- 4.14 The school has secure arrangements to safeguard students. Well-established links with local agencies ensure that any concerns are handled quickly and in accordance with relevant guidance. Staff understand reporting arrangements and their responsibilities through effective training, including on induction. They implement these well. Staff show strong awareness of the particular safeguarding requirements of the school's performing arts focus. Appropriate guidance is given and understood by staff regarding physical contact, the students' perception of body image and mental health. Careful arrangements exist with BRB for students who perform there. Designated staff receive regular child protection and inter-agency training.
- 4.15 Registration is regular, methodical and recorded electronically. The unauthorised absence of any day students is followed up efficiently. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register.
- 4.16 Arrangements to ensure the students' health and safety are strong. Any day students who feel unwell are cared for in the health centre. The centre monitors identification and treatment of dance-related injury. This is supported by in-house physiotherapy and nutrition services and contact with external specialists in those fields. Injured students undertake focused programmes of therapy and body conditioning; their needs are communicated clearly and dance programmes for individuals are adjusted appropriately. The first aid policy provides well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of any with special learning needs.
- 4.17 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are very thorough and checks are recorded efficiently. Scrutiny by external consultants is reviewed by senior managers and required improvements are implemented efficiently. Regular evacuation drills are held and the outcomes recorded and analysed. Electronic equipment is checked by external contractors. Assessments of risk are thorough and are supported by an appropriate policy to determine their content. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and reviewed.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. The aims and philosophy of boarding are promoted and supported by staff. They successfully encourage independence, tolerance, a sense of responsibility, unselfishness and camaraderie. Boarders are articulate, confident and happy. The atmosphere in the houses is welcoming and homely and boarders say they enjoy their experience. New boarders, including those who join the school after Year 7, are made to feel welcome. In Year 7, boarders receive excellent induction which includes contact from existing boarders in Years 8 or 9 who act as 'guardian angels'. Most houses have a private room with a payphone to enable boarders to contact family and friends. In an emergency they can use the main house phone. Most boarders, particularly sixth formers, use mobile phones to contact home. The school is seeking to resolve the lack of Wi-Fi access in the sixth-form boarding house, which is due to external infrastructure problems. Boarders are confident that the school council represents their concerns and views effectively; they receive information about the outcomes of meetings

through year group representatives. Weekly house meetings enable suggestions and comments to be put forward; sixth formers run their own meetings. Older boarders with specific responsibilities are suitably trained and guided. Boarders with SEND and those from overseas are well integrated and supported.

- 4.20 The quality and provision of care are excellent. Boarders are positive about the care they receive. They confirm that there is an adult to whom they can turn for help and comment on the strong elements of trust in relationships between boarders and staff. Required contact details for external sources of support are provided. Any concerns or complaints expressed by parents are responded to in accordance with the school's published procedures. Sick or injured boarders are cared for by qualified staff in the health centre who are on call at night. Doctors hold regular surgeries and staff facilitate other treatment as needed. The health centre provides good accommodation, is well equipped, and suitable medical protocols are established and implemented. Records are maintained well. The co-ordination of the dispensing of medicines between the houses and medical staff is now appropriate and consistent. Students with ongoing health issues have a plan which is circulated to all relevant staff. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of boarders stated that they do not consider the food provided to be good. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Food is varied, cooked well and plentiful and menus are balanced and varied. In interviews, boarders said they enjoy the food. Boarders are given suitable opportunities to give their views on the food provided and these are responded to. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Snacks are plentiful. Fire precautions are appropriate and drills are regularly and appropriately carried out, including at night time.
- 4.21 Houses are well maintained and attractively furnished. Washing and toilet facilities are sufficient in all houses. This meets the requirement of the previous inspection. Action is being taken to refurbish shower areas for younger boys, which currently leak. The sixth-form house provides excellent accommodation. Sixth-form boarders particularly appreciate the enhanced privacy which the 'pod' system gives, whereby a small group of boarders share washing and sleeping accommodation, with larger social areas provided for socialising. Suitable provision is made for private study. All boarders can access lockable storage, fulfilling the requirement of the previous inspection. Although the school does not arrange lodgings for Year 14 students, its provision for pastoral care includes this group and their welfare is monitored thoroughly.
- 4.22 The school recognises the demanding nature of the boarders' dance and academic commitments and supports them well in fulfilling these. Boarding arrangements ensure that weekday evenings are available for boarders to relax. A good range of recreational facilities are provided for all ages, which meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of students and parents commented that they are not happy with the range of activities available at weekends. Inspectors do not agree. A good range of trips and events are provided which boarders spoken to say they enjoy. Boarders can access shops at the weekends and older boarders go into the city. Many appreciate the opportunity to enjoy Sunday as a rest day if they wish.
- 4.23 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent. Boarders state that they feel safe. Great effort is made to ensure that they are also healthy. Secure safeguarding training and high awareness by staff of their roles leads to effective implementation of arrangements. Noticeboards carry all the information boarders need, including which staff are on duty and, in some cases, where a member of staff

is at any given time. Boarders consider that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively and quickly. Inspectors agree. Boarders' behaviour is exemplary and any minor misdemeanours are dealt with appropriately, fairly and consistently across different houses. Appropriate supervision exists to ensure the boarders' safety, including at night. Staff are aware of the boarders' whereabouts at all times. Boarders state that a reason they feel safe is that staff ensure that boarders are always where they should be. Recruitment checks on staff are appropriate. Adults living in boarding accommodation who are not employed by the school are suitably checked and their role and position are agreed formally. Staff accommodation is separate from that of boarders. Boarding accommodation is secure and cameras used are not intrusive.

- 4.24 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. Boarding houses are well managed and run efficiently. Consistency is maintained between the houses while maintaining individual house identities in many ways. Oversight by senior managers is appropriate and effective. Job descriptions are provided to staff together with a comprehensive handbook. House staff are appraised annually and boarding is one of the areas covered by the whole-school self-review process. Suitable staff training is arranged to promote professional development as a result of self-review. Induction of new staff is thorough and continues through the first six months of employment. Boarding is provided for in the whole-school development plan. Year group meetings held each fortnight enable boarding staff to meet with pastoral, welfare, academic and dance staff to share information about boarders. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Additional health and well-being meetings enable information to be shared about individual boarders and actions agreed. Suitable records are kept of these meetings.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors possess a range of skills which are well suited to the needs of the school. Ongoing review of governors' skills results in new appointments, most recently in ballet and finance. These increase the governors' ability to challenge the school to improve its structures and practice, which they do successfully. Governance strongly supports the school's ethos of a holistic approach to dance education. An effective committee structure ensures close monitoring of the school's work. Governors gain a good understanding of the school through regular visits. As well as attendance at events, these include visits to lessons and interviews with students and staff. Governors provide excellent support for diverse ventures, such as for the development of the school's health and well-being provision. Their actions promote the students' excellent personal development and achievement. All governors have received safeguarding training and some undertake other training although this area of governance is not yet fully developed.
- 5.3 Financial management of the school's available resources is both prudent and forward-looking, supported by recent investment decisions. Effective use of available funds has enabled developments such as the new sixth-form boarding house. Planning for development is strategic, over a five-year period, and is conducted in close liaison with senior leaders. Good human and material resources are provided within the purpose-built accommodation which promotes high educational standards of both vocational and academic study.
- 5.4 Governors provide strong oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities, particularly in the area of safeguarding. This is supported by regular reviews of staff recruitment procedures. Health and safety arrangements are monitored by a sub-committee and governors support recent appointments which strengthen management and monitoring of this area. The annual review by all governors of safeguarding policy and procedures is thorough and careful minutes are taken. This is enhanced by close liaison between the nominated governor for safeguarding and those with specific safeguarding responsibilities.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is excellent.
- 5.6 The great clarity with which senior leaders promote a vision of holistic education for young dancers enables the students' excellent academic and exceptional dance achievement. Senior leaders contribute to the students' health and well-being as young dancers through strong care and enable their excellent personal development, ensuring that the school's ambitious aims are met successfully. Senior leaders are highly approachable to both staff and students. Since the previous inspections, significant progress has been made in many areas, including the dance and academic areas of the curriculum, and welfare and boarding arrangements. Much progress has been made in unifying approaches to teaching but occasional inconsistencies remain. The opening of new sixth-form boarding accommodation has enhanced the school's provision considerably. Monitoring by

- senior managers is rigorous and perceptive and identifies areas for further improvement.
- 5.7 The success of the school is evaluated with care through a cycle of review which focuses in turn on broad areas of the school's activities, such as dance, academic provision and care for students. This review includes the views of staff, students and parents. Evaluation is focused and realistic and results in the identification of fresh targets for improvement. These are shared with governors in an effective partnership which establishes the strategic planning needed to achieve them over a five-year period. Policy-making is concise and tailored to need, and policies are implemented well.
- 5.8 The school appoints good-quality staff. The range of experience and expertise represented by permanent dance staff and associated visitors to the school is highly beneficial to students. Appraisal of staff is consistent in both academic areas and dance. Professional development needs are met through joint staff training events as well as events specific to different areas. This enhances consistent approaches to teaching and the care of students. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors are secure and recording is comprehensive. The requirement of the previous inspection is met. All staff are trained in their responsibilities in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.9 Non-teaching staff make very effective contributions to school life, for example through supporting teaching, maintaining the school's excellent facilities and efficient administration. They support students strongly and add to the school's caring ethos.
- 5.10 The school maintains an effective partnership with parents, carers and guardians. Responses to pre-inspection questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision. In particular, parents expressed a strong appreciation of the school's ethos, its arrangements for care and welfare, and the high standards of behaviour shown by students. A small minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the responses they receive regarding concerns raised with the school. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The school takes care to respond promptly to concerns expressed. It has a suitable, clearly defined complaints procedure which is followed appropriately when it is invoked by parents.
- 5.11 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a minority of parents said that they are not satisfied with the quality of the information they receive about their child's progress. Inspection evidence supports this view. Computer generated reports give parents the required information on their child's progress in both academic areas and dance. They are provided at regular intervals, but comments are inconsistent in style and content. Some give a rounded picture of an individual student's progress and achievement but others do not reflect the detailed knowledge of students which is evident in the day-to-day relationship between staff and students.
- 5.12 Many parents live some distance from the school but all are invited to all major school functions including, plays, concerts, exhibitions, charity events, lectures and fund-raising events. Communications between home and school are regular and the school has embraced the use of email and social media as effective links between parents and school. The *'Limelight'* magazine promotes the successes achieved by students in academic, artistic and other events. The website is currently being rebuilt, but all required policies are available to parents of current and prospective students.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**