

Protect Inspection

Young Dancers Academy

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	205/6200
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135729
Inspection number	342001
Inspection dates	25-26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

Published:

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Young Dancers Academy is an independent day school for students aged 11 to 16 years of age. It is situated in Shepherds Bush, London. It opened in September 2008. There are currently 22 students on roll. The academy attracts students with a desire to enter the professional world of dance. Admission is through a classical ballet audition and interview. This is the school's first published inspection report.

The school aims 'to nurture classical ballet dancers of the future while ensuring a balanced academic curriculum'.

Evaluation of the school

Young Dancers Academy has made a very purposeful start and provides a good quality of education for its students and meets its aims well. Through a well-planned curriculum, which successfully combines both academic and vocational subjects, the students make good progress, with students making outstanding progress in dance. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and their welfare, health and safety are good. The students' behaviour is outstanding and by the time they leave they have developed into mature, thoughtful and responsible young people. The school has secure arrangements for safeguarding. The school meets all but two of the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the students. It is well planned and enables them to experience a good balance of academic and vocational areas of learning. The academic curriculum covers an appropriate range of subjects. Students have a long school day and the academy tries to ensure that as many subjects as possible are studied in the time available. There are limited opportunities to study art and design technology and the academy has plans to extend the curricular provision for these subjects. The academic subjects are closely linked to the National Curriculum requirements and the students have the opportunity to take seven GCSEs. Biology is taught but there are no laboratory facilities at the premises.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

The ballet and dance curriculum is carefully structured to meet the needs of students at each stage of their development. All students take two daily ballet classes, including one master class with a guest teacher most weeks. For girls, pointe work is carefully introduced with special attention given to strength and placement. A professional trainer provides weekly fitness training, purposely structured for young male dancers. Students are well prepared for the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations in acting. Their speaking and listening skills are very well developed. There is a detailed personal, social and health education (PSHE) policy and students have weekly lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used within the curriculum and suitable resources are available. The students expressed an interest in having additional ICT studies. Careers advice, including work experience in the theatre and through performance, is provided for the students with supportive guidance on their next stage of education or training. Students with additional needs are well supported through one-to-one teaching. The curriculum is enhanced through visits outside school, most recently to the Natural History Museum, Greenwich, the Royal Opera House, Waddeston Manor and frequent theatre and ballet visits. Visitors to the academy have included well-known ballet dancers and a renowned cellist.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and the students make good progress, with students making outstanding progress in dance. The teaching of the ballet and dance classes is outstanding. These teachers bring an outstanding level of skills to their lessons in their attention to detail in improving performance, their dedication, motivation and technical expertise, which make the learning by all the students much more effective. All the staff are enthusiastic, interested in the students and engage them successfully in the lessons. They make the lessons relevant and encourage the students to discuss their effort and achievement. Staff give well-deserved praise and encouragement. Relationships are very positive with the students settling quickly into their lessons, concentrating and working hard. The atmosphere in lessons is relaxed yet purposeful; they move at a brisk pace and the students' motivation is impressive.

Students enjoy their learning and the dancing lessons especially are characterised by their dedication and enthusiasm. During both the academic and vocational lessons, students are very clear about what they are going to learn and this learning is checked thoroughly during the lesson and at the end of the lesson. The students respond very well, engaging enthusiastically in lessons, asking questions and demonstrating trusting relationships with the supportive staff. During the ballet and dance lessons, the students are extremely well motivated, dedicated to their dancing and they set themselves very high standards. They are self-critical of their own performance and give constructive criticism to their classmates to help them improve their performance. All students have an individual education plan for both their vocational and academic subjects and are set targets to work towards.

The assessment procedures are regular and well structured in both academic and vocational subjects. Samples of the students' work and assessments show that they

make good progress overall during their time at the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the students comment that they really enjoy their school life, especially the ballet, saying 'I wish we had school at the weekend', 'We are all friends here', 'It's really great here' and 'It is like a second home.' The students all mix very well together and regard themselves as one big family. Relationships are very positive at all levels with staff acting as excellent role models. Through their dancing and music sessions and assemblies, students have the opportunity to reflect on the world around them. Their behaviour is outstanding and attendance is very high. Students' self-discipline and the confidence acquired through their 'ballet etiquette' helps to equip them very well for their future lives. They understand the simple school rules and the difference between right and wrong. Older students are given the opportunity to take responsibility with the appointment of a head girl and prefects and the recently formed school council. They feel strongly that their voice is heard and that their suggestions for improvements are acted upon. The students are effectively introduced to British public services and institutions through their regular planned visits outside school, by visitors to the school and through their lessons. The cultural mix of staff helps them to appreciate other cultures and traditions. Racial harmony is promoted well. The students initiate and take part in charity and fund-raising activities, for example by sponsoring a child in a school in Africa.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is good. The academy has devised and implemented a wide range of policies, which include anti-bullying, behaviour, health and safety on visits outside school and safeguarding. The policy for safeguarding meets current guidelines, and the member of staff responsible for child protection has attended recent training and all staff are appropriately trained. The detailed health and safety policy outlines how the academy will ensure the safety of the staff and students. The students are adamant that there is no bullying. The vocational classes and the encouragement to eat healthily ensure that the students keep healthy. There are rigorous fire precautions in place with annual testing of all appliances, a fire risk assessment and regular documented fire drills. Staff are trained in first aid and well stocked first aid boxes are located where needed. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken for all visits outside the academy. The students are well supervised at all times. The attendance register is not kept according to the regulations as it is only marked at the beginning of the school day and not again at the beginning of the afternoon session. The admission register is kept according to the regulations. The academy has fulfilled its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and prepared a three-year accessibility plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The academy checks all staff to confirm their suitability to work with children and holds all the required information on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable and conducive to learning. There are three teaching rooms and two well-equipped dance studios. The changing facilities are small but equipped with showers. The premises are well maintained, warm and welcoming. There are no suitable facilities for students who are ill, which meet the regulations, but students are made comfortable, until they can be collected by parents and carers. Due to their inner-city location, there are no suitable outdoor facilities and the academy makes good use of a local park for recreational activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The parents, carers and others are provided with a good range of information through the prospectus and website. Parents and carers are welcome to contact or visit the academy at any time. All the required information is available to parents, carers and others. The vast majority of the parents and carers responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and are very supportive of the school. They made comments such as, 'This is a small and unusual school which is ideal for our daughter', 'The school brings out the best in the students' and 'This gives us the perfect solution for a vocational training.' They feel well informed about their child's progress. Parents and carers receive two written academic reports and one dance report each year. The academic reports are satisfactory but they lack detail about what the student has learnt and what they could do next to improve.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints procedure, which fulfils the regulations. Parents and carers confirmed that they are aware of them.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- maintain the attendance register in accordance with the regulations (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- increase opportunities for students to experience more art, design and technology and ICT
- investigate the availability of appropriate laboratory facilities
- provide more detail in the annual reports about what the students have learnt and what they need to do next to improve.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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School details

Name of school	Young Dancers Academy		
DCSF number	205/6200		
Unique reference number (URN)	135729		
Type of school	Dance Academy		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 14	Total: 22
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 10,500 - £11,210		
Address of school	25 Bulwer Street Shepherds Bush London W12 8AR		
Telephone number	0208 7433856		
Email address	youngdancersch@aol.com		
Headteacher	Evelyn de Villiers		
Proprietor	Anna du Boisson and Kerry Williams		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	25-26 February 2010		