

Young Dancers Academy

25 Bulwer Street, Shepherds Bush, London, W12 8AR

Inspection dates 4–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Students make outstanding progress in most subjects and particularly in ballet. They achieve above average results in GCSE examinations including in English and mathematics.
- Students' consistently thoughtful behaviour and their developing self-confidence and resilience are outstanding factors in their successful learning.
- Teachers' exceptional subject knowledge and expertise inspire students to reach high standards.
- The curriculum is exemplary in meeting students' vocational and academic needs, interests and aspirations.
- The academy's leaders and managers are passionate in their pursuit of excellence in all aspects, including the welfare, health and safety of each individual student. They have improved on the good quality of teaching and learning in the previous inspection and are eager to ensure all students make outstanding progress in all subjects throughout the academy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- The inspector observed 10 lessons taught by eight different teachers, almost of all which were observed jointly with senior staff. She listened to students reading, looked at students' work, and met with groups of students, staff, the headteacher, head of academics and proprietors.
- The inspector examined school documentation, including records of students' progress, anonymous teacher appraisals, teachers' planning and schemes of work, safeguarding policies and procedures, and improvement plans.
- The inspector took account of the views of students, staff and parents and carers in discussion and in examining the 10 questionnaires completed by staff and 30 responses by parents and carers to Ofsted's on-line survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Sue Frater HMI, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Young Dancers Academy is an independent day school that specialises in the teaching of ballet. It caters for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16 years. The academy aims to nurture classical dancers of the future while ensuring that there is a strong, stimulating approach to all academic subjects. Admission is through a classical ballet audition and interview. The academy has close links to The Royal Ballet School and a close association with English National Ballet.
- The academy is registered for 40 students and currently has 38 students on roll. A small number of students speak English as an additional language. No students have a statement of special educational needs, although a few students have been identified as having special needs in dyslexia.
- The academy opened in September 2008. Since then it has grown in size and now occupies three separate buildings in the same road in Shepherds Bush, West London. The most recent addition to the premises has been refurbished with a large dance studio. The school was last inspected in February 2010 when it was judged to provide a good quality of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all students make consistently outstanding progress across all academic subjects by:
 - checking and comparing students' levels of progress across all subjects and year groups systematically each term in order to address any underachievement
 - making sure comments in the marking of students' work, and in their reports, consistently inform students how to improve their work.
- Encourage students to read more widely.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students' achievement is outstanding due to teachers' high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. Students' academic attainment on entry to the academy is wide ranging but broadly in line with the national average. Students make rapid and sustained progress in a variety of subjects throughout the school and attain GCSE results, including in English and mathematics, which are well above average. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. While they develop very good understanding in reading, not all students are reading widely enough to be able to discuss a variety of texts and authors. Students with special educational needs, in this instance dyslexia, and those who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress as a result of very effective individual support and the attention they receive in the small classes.

Students' achievement in the vocational subjects, particularly in ballet, is exceptional due to inspirational teaching and dance expertise. Students constantly strive to improve their performance, developing physical strength and exquisite shaping, emotional resilience and the ability to focus and quickly memorise new dance routines. Given the very good balance of academic and vocational skills that they develop, they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. Almost all students go on to leading dance or performing arts colleges at the age of 16 years, and sometimes earlier. Many current and former students are performing in West End theatres. Thus, the academy meets its aims.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students' behaviour and personal development are outstanding and the regulations for this standard are met. Students demonstrate impressive levels of concentration and commitment to learning, and they are fully engaged in lessons. The exceptionally positive relationships between staff and students ensure that students feel safe and valued as individuals. They are polite and extremely considerate of others. This creates a calm and positive school ethos in which all students can thrive in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Instances of bullying are rare and students actively try to prevent it, for example by the head boy and girl and others mentoring younger students. Students are aware of all forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and are confident that staff would address any concerns promptly. Attendance is high and pupils are punctual in arriving at school and in lessons, because they enjoy school and they are eager to succeed.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Their spirituality is enhanced through dance and music lessons. In lessons such as humanities and personal, social and health education, students develop empathy towards others, including those of different faiths and cultures, and a strong moral compass by which to live. They learn about public services and institutions including the police and democratic government. In working together, students develop excellent social skills. They are courteous and proud of their contribution to the academy and community, for example through dance productions, singing to local elderly residents and supporting the education of a child in Africa. Staff carefully nurture the talent of each student and enable them to excel. As a result, students' confidence and self-esteem are improving strongly.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

Most of the teaching is outstanding and it is never less than consistently good. The proportion of outstanding teaching has increased since the previous inspection. Teachers' excellent academic subject knowledge and high-quality dance expertise inspire students to make exceptional progress. Teachers have high expectations of students and instil confidence through humour and encouragement. A key feature of the highly effective teaching is the teachers' ability to assess each student's work during the lesson in order to adapt the pace, activities and questions to meet

individual needs. This is most successful where the teacher maintains the pace of learning for all students, while enabling them to work at their own level. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on probability, students worked on mini-whiteboards at the start of the lesson, applying skills that the teacher had demonstrated on the large whiteboard. This enabled the teacher to check their understanding, address any misconceptions and provide further challenge for those who had quickly grasped the concept. All students worked productively throughout this time. Similarly, in a Year 7 ballet class the teacher encouraged the students to constantly evaluate and improve their performance by adjusting her expectations of each individual as the lesson progressed. This, together with the teacher's demonstration of techniques, resulted in the students being highly motivated and making rapid progress. This focus on the learning of individual students supports those with special educational needs to make outstanding progress.

The teaching of reading within English lessons develops students' very good understanding of the set texts, but students are not reading widely. They complete homework during 'prep' lessons as they have further dance or drama commitments after school and often long journeys home. They are not making the most of the time between school and evening classes, or in travelling, to read. Homework produced for a Year 8 humanities lesson on understanding the importance of Baghdad and the Muslim faith, in a historical context, made a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. It involved research using the internet and art work, such as making a model of a mosque. Students were proud to present their findings. Independence in learning was also seen in a Year 9 biology lesson where students applied a range of revision techniques, including visual representation, to support each other's learning. Students take pride in the presentation of their written work, which is extensive and very neat. Teachers mark their work regularly, with the best practice giving specific tips on how to improve it further. In some marking, and progress reports, the targets for improvement are not precise enough to help students know what to do to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding in the way that it meets the vocational needs, interests and aspirations of the students while providing them with opportunities to do exceptionally well in their academic studies. All students take at least five GCSE examinations, including in English and mathematics, and most take seven. Opportunities to take more GCSEs have been provided through the recent introduction of music and physics courses. Students are encouraged to reach the highest possible grades and so they are not entered for GCSE examinations early. Given the constraints of time, the very well-balanced curriculum is developed imaginatively. Discrete lessons are provided in a range of dance and music activities, as well as in English, mathematics, science, humanities, French and personal, social and health education. In addition, students experience art and design and technology through an arts week each term, which is a development since the last inspection. Food and music technology, and information and communication technology, are woven across the curriculum. Progression in subjects is supported by schemes of work which follow the National Curriculum and underpin very good-quality lesson planning. Individual support for the students with special educational needs, such as in reading and spelling, enables them to progress as well as others.

The curriculum is enriched by various visiting artists and visits to places such as The Globe and other theatres, The National Portrait Gallery and the Science, Natural History and Imperial War Museums. Most students are associate members of The Royal Ballet School and attend Saturday courses there. Many also attend other renowned dance and drama schools in the evenings. Thus students are able to pursue their interests to a high level. The curriculum, together with highly effective careers education and guidance, enables almost all students to progress to leading dance or performing arts colleges and the remaining few to colleges providing A-level courses. The curriculum, including outstanding provision for personal, social and health education, helps students to become well-rounded individuals.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Outstanding**

Outstanding provision is made for students' welfare, health and safety. This area has been improved since the previous inspection and all the independent school regulations, including the correct completion of admission and attendance registers, are now met. Students are exceptionally well cared for. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students, including policies and staff training in child protection, are rigorous and reviewed regularly. Staff recruitment checks are very thorough and recorded in a single central register. Robust policies and procedures have been established to promote students' welfare, health and safety at all times. These include first aid and risk assessments such as for fire safety and school trips. Through the curriculum, students become very aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including through exercise and healthy eating. Students are no longer allowed out at lunchtimes and they are well supervised at all times during the school day. Arrangements to promote good behaviour and attendance, and to eliminate bullying, are successful and result in a calm environment for learning. Students say that they feel extremely safe in the academy and the responses to the Parent View survey support this view. Through its professional contacts and scholarships, and the quality of teaching, the academy advances equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination for all students, whatever their gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity or academic starting points. Students form strong friendships and praise the inclusive school community, stating, 'It is like one big family.'

Leadership and management**Outstanding**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The proprietors' passion, drive, ambition and vision for achieving excellence in all of the academy's activities are shared with the whole school community. The proprietors provide an inspirational lead to students' vocational and pastoral education. They have recruited staff of high calibre and ensured that vocational and academic staff work together to provide a balanced education for each student. The proprietors have developed a strong academic leadership team to provide the capacity to sustain the academic improvements. All leaders and managers contribute to school self-evaluation, in the form of checking students' progress information, lessons, students' work and teachers' planning. Their self-evaluation is accurate and informs the right priorities for improvement planning. Consequently, the academy is improving rapidly.

Annual staff appraisals contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now mostly outstanding. To support this process further, the academic leadership team is aware of the need to develop a system for monitoring students' levels of progress each term across all subjects and year groups. This is in order to identify and tackle any underachievement and to make sure that students make consistently outstanding progress across all subjects throughout the school. The introduction of a reading lesson for Year 7 students is helping the students to make excellent progress in literacy, although not all students are reading widely at home.

The academy engages successfully with parents and carers, enabling them to support their children's learning. All those who responded to Parent View are satisfied with the work of the school and would recommend it to others. The academy provides parents, carers and others with all the required information, much of which is on its website. Parents and carers receive a detailed written academic report each term and a ballet assessment and end of year report, in addition to two consultation evenings. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and meet statutory requirements. The procedures for handling complaints are clear and meet requirements. The academy uses its staff and available resources very well to secure high standards for its students. It continues to extend its premises and accommodation, for example with the recent addition of a large dance studio which it offers for community use in the evenings. The accommodation is suitable for the range of the curriculum. Regulations not met at the time of the previous inspection are now met and so all the independent school standards are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135729
Inspection number	420195
DfE registration number	205/6200

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Dance Academy
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Number of part time pupils	None
Proprietor	Anna du Boisson and Kerry Williams
Headteacher	Kate Blakeburn and Evelyn de Villiers
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,100 to £11,700
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