

# Inspection of Tring Park School for the Performing Arts

Inspection dates:

28 to 30 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

**Information about this provider**

Tring Park School for the Performing Arts is an independent residential and day school in Hertfordshire for students aged 7 to 19. The school has approximately 358 students, from across the country and overseas, of whom two thirds are boarders. In addition to an academic curriculum, the school offers courses in dance, musical theatre, commercial music and drama for sixth-form students.

The focus of this inspection was on those students in receipt of Dance and Drama Award (DaDA) funding. The school has 24 students in receipt of DaDA funding, who are studying on the professional dance courses. Tring Park School offers the three-year, level 6 diploma in professional dance and the two-year level 5 in professional dance, validated by Trinity College London. There are 74 students aged 16 to 19 studying the level 5 or level 6 diploma. Almost all students are studying the level 6 diploma. The level 5 diploma is available as an option for those students who may leave early. All students in Years 12 and 13 study academic A-level programmes alongside the diploma.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students thrive in the disciplined and inclusive community at Tring Park School. Students are consistently polite and highly engaging. They maintain good levels of self-control and conduct, both in and out of classes. Students feel valued as individuals. They learn how to be collaborative, empathetic and to listen carefully, and with tolerance, to each other.

Students say that staff have a strong regard for their physical and emotional well-being, teaching them breathing and relaxation techniques. Teachers help them learn to be confident in new or challenging situations. As a result, students are prepared well for a demanding training environment.

Students develop a clear understanding of British values. They understand the purpose of performing arts trade unions and how they can bring protections. Students learn to expect fair and equal treatment in classes. They understand why it is important to follow rules and etiquette in dance lessons. Students learn how to be active citizens and participate in social action projects, such as fundraising. Dance students participate in shows for those in hospice care and visit the Royal Variety Home for performers.

Students demonstrate exceptional discipline, hard work and dedication. Students show great resilience in their demanding training regimes. Students benefit from very good provision of live accompaniment in dance lessons to develop their musicality. In jazz lessons, students work hard to get rhythmic clarity on the syncopated jazz beats. As a result, students achieve a new sequence of movement phrases to a high standard in a short, focused time. Students respond extremely enthusiastically to teacher feedback to achieve technical and aesthetic correction. They take on direction and correction with willingness and a good spirit.

Students have a good understanding of appropriate, healthy relationships. They benefit from specialist speakers, such as from the Amy Winehouse Foundation. They participate in open discussions about topics such as consent. They learn from listening to different perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of such topics.

Students feel safe. They are confident in the multiple support networks available, if needed. Students trust teachers, medical staff and house parents with any concerns they may have.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Managers and teachers have a strong shared goal: to prepare students for a career in the dance profession. They have planned the curriculum to specialise particularly in preparing students for ballet and contemporary dance destinations. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum beyond vocational training. They ensure that students achieve a sound academic education to support them beyond their immediate vocational careers.

Leaders have planned a well-sequenced curriculum for dance students over the three years. In each dance discipline, staff teach the underpinning safe practice, such as how to perform a safe physical warm up. Staff plan carefully so that each dance discipline has a focus in the first year on foundation techniques. In contemporary dance, teachers introduce core practitioners such as Merce Cunningham and Jose Limón. Students learn the basics of contemporary principles such as release technique or transitioning in and out of floor work. In ballet, teachers use recap and repetition effectively to ensure that students develop accurate technique in a focused and disciplined way. Teachers ensure that students maintain good-quality foundation movement and build safe and effective technique over time. Teachers then introduce more complex work, such as pas de deux and pointe work, as students' strength and control develop. As a result, students rapidly develop their technical skill.

Teachers have relevant expertise and experience as dancers and dance teachers. Students benefit from their teachers' expertise and understanding of a career as a dancer. Teachers use clear instruction very effectively to enable students to improve their dance skills. In ballet, teachers break down a series of steps that lead into pirouettes to ensure that students are clear on the correct placement and alignment required. Teachers instruct the students on how to use their core strength and posture effectively when transitioning between steps. Teachers use demonstration, adjustment and questioning to correct students' posture effectively. Consequently, students improve their core stability and weight transition to successfully perform the routine at speed.

Teachers do not always explain to students or link the theory of movement and dance effectively to students' wider dance practice. Too few teachers allow students time in their dance lessons to reflect on what they have learned and consider how they could apply new principles, insights or skills in different ways. As a result, too few students deepen their knowledge and understanding of dance to improve and perfect their work.

Leaders have not ensured that dance teachers have received training on the latest developments within the sector. Consequently, teachers do not always teach a curriculum that is reflective of the new, diverse and innovative range of stage performances in the dance sector. Leaders have not yet arranged for dance teachers to undertake intimacy training. Teachers do not benefit from insights into industry innovation recognising the performers right to discuss intimacy and create clear expectations as a working professional. Subsequently, teachers do not help students to understand the role of intimacy directors. Students do not learn how to work with these professionals to adjust contact, spatial proximity or modesty on stage or sets.

Teachers support students well to prepare effectively for additional, advanced-level dance qualifications, such as in ballet. Most students achieve distinction outcomes in these additional qualifications, and most finish their courses and achieve qualifications, including their A levels.

Teachers use their professional networks and sector experience to guide students seeking work in ballet and contemporary dance. Staff introduce students to relevant dance career bodies to explore sustainable career development. Students develop an awareness of teaching, yoga and choreography as additional areas of work they could do alongside or after their performance career. Teachers support students to produce headshots, show reels, CVs and application letters. However, leaders do not ensure that students have a good enough awareness of all the career options available to them as dance performers. For example, students have insufficient awareness of dance agents or how to progress into commercial dance careers.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. They have the appropriate skills and experience to provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Governors ensure that they prepare thoroughly for future agenda items at committee meetings. They read reports, visit lessons and talk to staff and students to develop their understanding and awareness before meetings. Governors have visited the careers team, talked to students and visited the student houses to talk to house staff about pastoral care. As a result, governors are prepared and well informed to provide further challenge where appropriate.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that students understand the breadth of careers available to them in the performing arts sector.
- Ensure that teachers continue to develop their teaching skills and participate in up-to-date professional development, such as intimacy training.
- Make sure that the curriculum content embraces the most up-to-date and innovative developments in contemporary and ballet performance.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	50525
<b>Address</b>	Tring Park Tring Hertfordshire HP23 5LX
<b>Contact number</b>	01442 824255
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tringpark.com">www.tringpark.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Simon Larter-Evans
<b>Provider type</b>	Dance and Drama
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 and 5 November 2015
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of the dance course and head of dance, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

Penny Fawcus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christina Christou

Ofsted Inspector

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