

Royal Academy of Dance

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors, supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008–11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is a provider of initial teacher education (ITE) accredited to confer qualified teacher status. Among other teacher education programmes, it offers a one-year full-time programme in teaching dance in the 14 to 19 age range which is accredited at masters level by the University of Surrey as a postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) or as a default award by the RAD as a professional graduate certificate of education.
4. The RAD leads a partnership of some 50 secondary schools and further education colleges across London and the home counties. At the time of the inspection there were 20 trainees who had just completed their teacher training through this partnership. Although focusing specifically on the teaching of dance to students who have chosen to study it from the age of 14 to 19, the programme prepares trainees fully for teaching secondary school students from the age of 11.

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the outstanding attainment of a majority of trainees
 - the consummate recruitment, selection and preliminary preparation, which ensure that all trainees have the personal commitment and professional potential to become very good teachers
 - the outstanding progress made by the large majority of trainees as a result of various strategies working in synergy to enable them to realise their full potential
 - inspirational teaching and tutoring in RAD and in partnership schools and colleges that nourish trainees' own aspirations to reach the highest standards
 - exemplary communications throughout the partnership which ensure strong professional relationships and consistency and equity of experience for trainees
 - the excellent balance of challenge and support from RAD tutors for trainees and for tutors based in schools and colleges, leading to exceptionally well-coordinated and responsive training throughout the programme
 - the highly expansive and inclusive preparation for trainees to make a full contribution, through dance, to the social, emotional, physical and linguistic development of children
 - comprehensive and incisive review of the impact on trainees of all teaching, tutoring and assessment
 - highly responsive and innovative leadership of change in the dance and education sectors, resulting in trainees whose knowledge, skills and attitudes are current, imaginative and flexible.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the partnership should:
- make further efforts to coordinate better the timing and documentation of processes with those used by other ITE providers in partner schools and colleges

- explore more realistic, direct approaches to enabling trainees to encounter and consider different ways of managing groups of children in a range of learning spaces.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

7. The RAD secures outstanding outcomes for its trainee teachers. Throughout their programme, they are enthused by the passion for dance education that permeates the Academy, and their own desire to become excellent teachers is expertly nurtured by all those who train them. Over the last three years to 2011 only one trainee has not completed the programme successfully, and in 2010/11, 60% of trainees were assessed as outstanding and 40% as good. Of those who trained in 2009/10, all secured employment as dance teachers by September 2010. Partnership schools and colleges consistently refer to trainees from the Academy as being of the highest calibre, more willing and able than most to embrace the challenges of teaching with a confidence-imbuing combination of verve, steadfastness and flair.
8. Trainees arrive with strong subject knowledge which the programme systematically deepens and broadens. Under skilful tuition trainees quickly acquire an exceptional capacity to reflect on and critically evaluate their own practice in the classroom or studio. They have a keen appetite to learn and actively seek the critical guidance of the many teachers with whom they work. They gain rapidly in confidence and resilience as a result of the excellent combination of challenge and support they receive from their tutors. Trainees are both creative and meticulous in how they design lessons, showing a marked ability to empathise with how differently children may experience the shape and content of a lesson; this enables trainees to adapt and refine students' learning as lessons proceed, which in turn informs their own understanding of their emerging pedagogy. Thus educational theories and practices coalesce as trainees become increasingly assured fledgling teachers. Trainees are eager to exploit whatever resources are available to them, and are equally at ease with current learning technologies and state-of-the-art equipment as they are with a bare space. In particular, the programme builds on trainees' previous experience as dance performers to teach them the professional significance of their own voice and body in engaging the attention and interest of children, and they show considerable capacity to adjust tonal range, physical gesture and dynamics to vary interaction with their students.
9. One of the distinctive strengths of trainees from the Academy is their readiness to contribute to the whole life of the school over and above their role as specialist teachers of dance. As well as participating fully in extra-curricular activities, trainees enthusiastically expand their own artistic horizons to include the other performance and expressive disciplines. All trainees spend time in a special school for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and in their placement establishments many work with such

children alongside specialist staff. In preparation for working in schools with limited opportunities for the exclusive teaching of dance, most trainees also teach some elements of physical education and sports. Trainees even explore with their tutors the various ways in which mathematics, science and language can be approached indirectly through dance-related activities. Such innovative application of their discipline gives trainees a particularly expansive way of looking at what they have to offer a school community.

10. Recruitment and selection procedures are extremely rigorous, transparent and fair. The programme is between four and six times oversubscribed every year, so the Academy is meticulous in ascertaining the best potential among applicants. The initial assessment and profiling of trainees is consummate, and they begin their professional development well before the formal start of the programme by undertaking demanding pre-programme research and development tasks which seek to ensure that they are fully prepared for the intensity and pace of the programme. The Academy adroitly creates a stimulatingly diverse cohort each year so that trainees will spark off each other, complement each other's different backgrounds and provoke debate about dance and education. Despite vigorous efforts by the Academy, the proportion of male trainees is rarely more than one in 10, but in other respects the composition of each cohort reflects national demography.
11. The training and assessment that trainees experience are outstanding and consequently a large majority of trainees make excellent progress. A significant proportion of them have prior experience of working with children in community or dance company workshop environments, and several have business or arts enterprise experience. They draw well on these backgrounds and proceed fully to realise the exciting potential that the Academy identified at their enrolment. In a few more striking cases the Academy places professional confidence in its tutors' ability to take more raw, unproven signs of aptitude and accelerate the progress of such trainees so that they too reach similarly high standards of attainment. The qualitative transformation of these latter trainees into good or outstanding teachers is particularly noteworthy since it is occasionally achieved against early impediments to progress, such as loss of confidence or problems in controlling their students' behaviour.
12. The story of trainees' progress is very well told at an individual level through the various evaluative documents used by teachers, tutors and trainees. Trainees evaluate their progress towards achieving the professional standards at differentiated levels with a keen, judicious eye for their own developing attributes and skills. Moreover, they are asked to evaluate how well they develop attributes that are not explicitly identified in the standards but which nonetheless play a crucial part in a teacher's professional make-up, such as the ability to manage workload and pressure. This approach by RAD is typical of the thoroughness with which each trainee's progress is monitored. Many trainees advance rapidly in the profession from the moment they secure their first job, often taking sole responsibility for their subject from the outset.

13. The use of resources is excellent and contributes directly to trainees' achievement. The programme of training that takes place at RAD draws on the carefully balanced expertise of the training team. Trainees have access to a wide research base and their academic work thrives in an environment that encourages engagement in international research in dance education. Trainees are given confidence and taught technical skills in the use of a range of learning technologies, although a few lack sophistication in their editing of illustrative moving images. Tutors at the Academy keep their own practice fresh by continuing to work regularly with young people in a variety of contexts, so modelling imaginative and secure teaching practices. Such work helps give trainees confidence to build into their own teaching of dance a sense of adventure and discovery, both for themselves and for their students, and confirms to them that the best teaching of creativity demands an element of risk-taking which will sometimes fail. Early training sessions at the Academy give trainees a secure framework and a range of strategies to plan, organise, monitor and assess learning. However, with trainees ever keener to test their approaches in realistic environments, the Academy has not yet fully solved the challenge of enabling trainees, when outside their placement schools, to watch and analyse different approaches to managing groups of children in practical activities.
14. The very high expectations that RAD has for its trainees are shared and further prosecuted by the partner schools and colleges, who continue to propel trainees towards outstanding achievement in their placements. Feedback to trainees on lessons observed is very thorough and specific, and the dialogue between school-based and Academy tutors is frequent and detailed. The passage between the two placements is well managed by all parties, creating for trainees a strong sense of a seamless transition. Occasionally, the goals set at the end of the first placement are too vague or unambitious, partly because the Academy does not ask the school tutor to be as explicitly discriminating in their evaluation as is the trainee. All trainees feel very well supported in both placements, which complement each other significantly to provide contrasting experiences in different settings and across all three secondary key stages. Many speak of the inspirational role played by their school tutors. Both trainees and the schools continue to be frustrated, however, that RAD trainees can rarely attend the same school induction days as those from other ITE providers.
15. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Trainees are very well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society. They work with children with special educational needs both in and out of their placement schools, and demonstrate sensitivity in their responses to the multifarious needs of all children. They make vivid use of dance's potential to bring cultural fecundity directly into the lives of their students. They also exploit its potent capacity, through what it asks young dancers to do in making their work, to advance children's emotional, social, physical and linguistic development. Working in these ways contributes significantly to trainees' high achievement by enhancing their resourcefulness and flexibility as they discover and begin to delineate their own professional identity as teachers.

The capacity for further improvement Grade: 1 and/or sustaining high quality

16. The partnership has outstanding capacity to improve its excellent provision still further. Since the last inspection, all the identified strengths have been maintained or enhanced, and the recommendations have been successfully implemented. All partners work in a spirit of mutual trust and shared purpose, using a number of quality assurance and self-evaluation processes rigorously and effectively. The Academy gives strong leadership and sets very high expectations of how well trainees must be trained and supported in schools and colleges, but is equally open to hear from school tutors how the overall training programme might be improved, for trainees and trainers alike. Thus the partnership operates its formal protocols at a very mature level, with partners exhibiting a constant readiness to learn from each other and adjust behaviours accordingly. The benefit to trainees of this maturity is very evident: they are at the heart of a seamless, continuous dialogue about their emerging aptitudes, developing skills and changing needs. They profit from sophisticated coordination between all six main tutors allocated to each of them during their time at RAD and on their two placements. The Academy's policy of allotting its own tutors to schools for the year rather than to trainees has both strengthened its relationship with each school and broken any inclination to dependency on the part of an occasional trainee.
17. The work of tutors in schools is excellent and is often the single most important factor in enabling trainees to reach the highest standards. Following compulsory and much-appreciated training on how best to execute their role, the contribution of tutors in schools is closely monitored by the Academy's own tutors, as well as by a senior tutor in each school. This monitoring is sensitive and pragmatic but remains uncompromisingly focused on each trainee's entitlement to regular, full and constructively critical evaluation and feedback on their teaching. On the rare occasion when a school tutor fails to provide adequate challenge or support to a trainee, the RAD intervenes very diplomatically but firmly to remedy the situation. The reputation of the programme ensures that schools are as keen to maintain their position as active members of the partnership as trainees are to win a place on the programme.
18. The RAD demonstrates an outstanding capacity to anticipate and respond to change in dance education for students aged 14 to 19. In many ways it is a principal national driver of dance education, and it is at the forefront of the fight to keep the performing arts alive in the face of threatened changes to school curricula. With a passionate commitment to proclaim the invaluable contribution that dance can make to the lives of children in schools, the Academy thoroughly prepares trainees to be articulate advocates for education through their art. Tutors keep their own work current and

innovative. The Academy contributes significantly to the professional development of tutors in schools and to the nourishing of links between dance in education and professional dance practitioners.

19. The partnership has taken very effective action to improve the provision since the last inspection. Painstaking and often innovative ways are found to research how and why trainees develop as they do: in 2010 a series of impact studies were carried out on a sample of trainees to try and ascertain what factors in particular contributed to the rate and extent of their progress. These, together with feedback from trainees, tutors and examiners, informed the last annual review and contributed to its incisive and authoritative judgements. The plans that derive from the annual review are carefully monitored throughout the year. It is of particular credit to the PGCE tutors and quality assurance team at RAD that the coordinated quality assurance and self-assessment cycle is so thorough and robust in the light of the fact that the PGCE programme has had three leaders in as many years. The programme continues to evolve healthily through research, analysis and very productive dialogue between all partners to serve the needs and interests of trainees.

Summary of inspection grades¹

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

		Secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	1
Factors contributing to trainees attainment	To what extent do recruitment/selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	1
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	1
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	1

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted July 2008; Reference no: 080128.

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