

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Limited

Dance and drama school



Inspection dates:

7–8 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Leaders, governors and staff ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, and students in acting and musical theatre make outstanding progress.
- Teachers use their excellent industry experience expertly to prepare students for working in the theatre and associated industries.
- Governors and the new senior leadership team have a strategic vision for the academy which is focused strongly on securing employment for talented young people in acting and musical theatre.
- Governors and staff have a strong commitment to ensuring equality of access to training and have successfully raised participation from under-represented groups.
- Managers make very effective use of feedback from students, staff and employers in order to develop the curriculum and ensure that students have the skills to meet the changing needs within the industry.
- Almost all students successfully complete their qualifications and the large majority achieve high grades.
- A high proportion of students successfully gain employment in the theatre and related industries.
- Students' conduct and attitude to learning are exemplary; they adhere to high professional standards.
- Teachers thoroughly assess students' prior attainment and skills at the start of the course and use this information to plan learning that closely matches each student's needs.
- Teachers provide detailed feedback to students on their performance and progress; students reflect with maturity on the guidance given and rapidly improve their skills.
- Staff create an atmosphere of trust, in which the students very quickly gain the confidence to collaborate with each other and take risks to develop their learning.
- At the start of the year, staff provide excellent guidance to students on how to maintain their personal safety, as well as working safely in practical workshops and maintaining a professional profile online.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Limited trains students for employment in the theatre and related industries. The academy is based in North London and recruits students from across the United Kingdom and from abroad. This inspection centred on the academy's training in acting and musical theatre, in which it offers degree programmes. Students in receipt of Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) from the Education Funding Agency complete qualifications awarded by Trinity College, London. At the time of the inspection, there were 101 students on acting programmes, of whom 53 were in receipt of DaDA funding. There were 133 students on musical theatre programmes, of whom 69 were in receipt of DaDA funding. In the past two years, the academy has started a new course for actor musicians with 32 students currently enrolled and six in receipt of DaDA funding.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Governors and managers need to ensure that their safeguarding and equality and diversity policies are updated more frequently in order to reflect new or emerging issues. They should ensure that staff training in safeguarding is timely so that the staff's current good practice is maintained.
- In their evaluation of the provision, senior managers should be more self-critical and make better use of data to evaluate strengths and identify areas for improvement.
- Teachers should ensure that students receive clearer guidance when observing their peers to ensure that all students increase their learning from these activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The new senior leadership team, which has been in post just over a year, has worked extremely well with managers and staff to develop the academy's vision and aspirations for its students. They have very successfully focused on continuing to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to prepare talented young people for successful careers in acting and musical theatre.
- Managers evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment very accurately. They have implemented successful strategies so that best practice is shared among teachers across the acting and musical theatre programmes. Teachers further develop their skills through effective staff development and maintain excellent industry standards in their own practice through their ongoing training, research and professional work.
- Managers use feedback from students, staff and employers very well to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant, for example through the introduction of the actor musician pathway. They have improved considerably the audition and applications process and have made substantial and very successful adjustments to the student timetable. Students now gain a wider range of skills to prepare them better for employment to meet the changing needs of the industry.
- Staff have a strong commitment to ensuring equality of access to the academy's training. They have implemented an extremely well-considered outreach programme which has increased the diversity of students applying to and joining the academy.
- In their annual evaluation of the provision, managers are not sufficiently self-critical. They do not use data well enough to monitor trends in students' performance in order to tackle the very few areas of underperformance. Heads of department implement improvement actions well at programme level, but senior managers and governors do not have a strong enough oversight of this work across the academy.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governors have a good overview of most aspects of the academy's work and carefully scrutinise the work of the senior executives and their business plans. They provide high levels of expertise and guidance and are particularly supportive of the plans to secure new premises to protect the academy's long-term future.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Staff are quick to recognise changes in students' behaviour and attitudes which may affect their performance and welfare. Staff provide good support and guidance to address welfare problems, with effective referral to specialist services when appropriate.
 - Governors and senior managers do not review policies frequently enough to reflect new or emerging issues; for example, they have been slow to respond to the fact that they are in a 'Prevent' priority area. Although staff practices regarding safeguarding and equality and diversity are effective, managers do not ensure that training for staff is undertaken in a timely enough manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The outstanding teaching, learning and assessment are underpinned by teachers' highly successful drive to instil courage, curiosity and commitment in their students. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge expertly so that students gain the skills and knowledge necessary to work in the theatre and related industries. Consequently, almost all students successfully complete their qualifications and the large majority secure employment as actors or musical theatre performers.
- Teachers are highly skilled at planning learning, which is sequenced so that students develop new skills or understanding and are able to reflect on what they have learned. Students then apply their skills and knowledge to produce work that is original and authentic. For example, in their public performance of *First Lady Suite*, final-year students had a thorough understanding of the complexities of the piece, what they needed to convey to their audience and how to do this in performance.
- Teachers have excellent practical skills which they use in order to demonstrate technique, such as weight transference in dance, so that students learn from seeing best practice.
- Through auditions and at the start of courses, teachers assess thoroughly each student's prior attainment and levels of ability across a range of performance skills. They use this information to plan learning that is tailored carefully to meet each student's needs so that all students make outstanding progress.

- Teachers coach students very effectively to make improvements. They provide specific and detailed guidance to students during practical workshops, for example on how to improve their breathing and physicality in movement workshops. Students respond very well, reflect thoughtfully on guidance given and quickly improve their work to a high standard.
- At the start of the first year, teachers very quickly ensure that students integrate well with each other and have a commitment to their learning and to each other. Teachers establish a very strong culture of openness, honesty and respect. Consequently, students are confident to air their views, raise questions and critique each other's work.
- Teachers continually encourage students to perform at the highest level and develop good resilience to push themselves to achieve excellence. Teachers provide comprehensive verbal and written feedback to students. Students reflect with maturity and honesty on the feedback and use it effectively to help themselves improve further. In a few cases, teachers do not provide sufficient guidance to students when they observe their peers, in order to maximise their learning from these activities.
- Teachers and support staff work expertly together in order to provide a training environment that closely replicates the relationship between professionals in the industry and helps enhance students' work. For example, stage managers work closely with directors in rehearsal to ensure that commercial timings and standards are adhered to, and in the sound recording studio technicians provide detailed technical guidance to students to help them produce industry-ready voice-overs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

- Students adhere impeccably to professional codes of conduct and work consistently well to industry expectations of behaviour and work-readiness.
- Students' attendance is excellent and they have outstanding study skills; they arrive at lessons ready to learn and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, they frequently make notes in lessons, ask for clarification when they are unsure and push themselves to achieve more.
- Teachers ensure that students have a comprehensive knowledge of the wide range of areas in which they can find employment. They provide detailed guidance to students so that they are aware of where their best opportunities for employment lie. Students also have a thorough understanding of business aspects of employment, such as the relationship between artists and agents, and of self-employment.
- Teachers provide highly effective guidance to students on the quality of their English and their written work. They assiduously insist upon high standards; students write accurately and are able to express themselves cogently within their actors' notebooks. Students are eloquent in their contributions to class discussions. They listen closely to one another and develop each other's ideas. They have an excellent command of the technical language associated with their professions, including French terminology used in dance training. In the few cases where students require numeracy skills, for example in aspects of dance and music, students have the proficiency to undertake their work to a high standard.
- The admissions process is comprehensive and staff ensure that students have the skills and aptitudes to be successful before they join the academy. At the start of the course, teachers provide excellent guidance to students to prepare them for living independently, as well as for their studies. Teachers place a strong emphasis on students' well-being and students know how to keep safe. Teachers provide excellent guidance on being safe online and students know how to maintain a professional image through their presentation on social media.
- Staff positively encourage students to appreciate the social and cultural diversity within the area of North London in which the academy is located. They also foster tolerance amongst students and staff. Students have a very secure understanding of a range of social and cultural issues which they explore in detail through the scripts used for training and performances.

Outcomes for learners are outstanding

- Most students make outstanding progress. For the past three years, almost all students on the acting programme have completed their training, and on the musical theatre programme all students complete their training. On both programmes the large majority of students achieve high grades.
- A high proportion of students are signed with agents within three months of completing their course and the large majority go on to have successful careers within the theatre and associated industries.

- Students' work is of a very high standard. Third-year students demonstrate skills and professional attributes at a commercial standard. Those on musical theatre programmes are equally proficient in acting, singing and dancing. Acting students have an excellent command of their vocal and physical technique and have the skills necessary for work in television, film and radio as well as the theatre.
- Few gaps exist in the performance of different groups of students. In the past year, slightly more female students than male successfully achieved their qualifications, and fewer students of minority ethnic heritage achieved high grades compared with their peers. However, all groups of students are equally successful in gaining employment. Students who need extra help to achieve receive highly effective support and achieve high grades.

Provider details

Type of provider	Dance and drama school
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	130
Principal/CEO	Mr Stephen Jameson
Website address	www.mountview.org.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	128
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	The Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Rieks Drijver, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joy Montgomery	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Young	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of acting and musical theatre (undergraduate), as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

