

K-BIS Theatre School

Independent School

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| DCSF Registration Number | 846/6022 |
| Unique Reference Number | 131463 |
| Inspection number | 322018 |
| Inspection dates | 14 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Jane Cooper HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

K-Bis is a small specialist performing arts school registered to take pupils between the ages of 5 and 18 years. The school was opened by the principal in 1997 and occupies former church buildings adjacent to a church in Brighton. It aims to provide a broad academic curriculum whilst offering its pupils specialist education in the performing arts and a range of professional performance opportunities. A theatrical agency is also run from the school. There are currently 41 boys and girls aged 7 to 18 years on roll. The school was last inspected in February 2004.

Evaluation of the school

K-Bis offers a good quality of education overall and its provision for the performing arts is outstanding. It provides a wealth of inspirational teaching by experts in their field and a rich and vibrant school community in which the talents of every individual are nurtured. It is well led by a dynamic principal, and has developed well since its last inspection. It has implemented the recommendation of the last report to provide appropriate facilities for pupils when they are sick, and now complies fully with all the regulations for independent schools. Pupils and their parents rightly express a high level of satisfaction with the school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It offers an extensive range of specialist studies in the performing arts in addition to a broad and balanced academic curriculum. This enables pupils to make outstanding progress in all aspects of performance and to develop their knowledge of the world of show business and the media through the professional opportunities they receive. The curriculum is strongly weighted towards the performing arts, as befits a school of this kind, and most afternoon sessions are devoted to rehearsals for plays and concerts and to the specialist studies taken by all pupils. These include drama, improvisation, voice, speech, 'stage combat', film and television acting, audition techniques, modern, jazz, tap, ballet and contemporary dance, choreography, music theory, musical theatre and singing, and are augmented by individual singing and instrumental tuition.

Every effort is made to prepare pupils well for forthcoming auditions and to provide them with opportunities to showcase their talents and this, together with the strength of the specialist curriculum, has a positive impact on their aspirations and ultimate professional success. Opportunities arise constantly through the on-site theatrical agency for pupils to perform professionally and this gives them an excellent understanding of the performing arts lifestyle. The school celebrates success but also helps pupils to take disappointment in their stride. It provides clear and realistic guidance about the nature of work in the performing arts and for this reason places strong emphasis on providing a good, broad and balanced curriculum which enables pupils to achieve well in most academic subjects too.

The curriculum for juniors follows the National Curriculum closely. It covers numeracy, literacy, science, history, geography, French, ICT, art, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, in addition to the wide-ranging performing arts curriculum described above. There are no formal lessons in physical education apart from swimming, but pupils undertake much physical activity in dance.

As pupils move through the school, the curriculum offers a wider choice in addition to a common core of subjects taken at GCSE level, although only biology is taught, as there are no specialist facilities for science. The range of post-16 courses is well suited to the aspirations of the students and enables them to gain A level qualifications in English, French, Spanish, theatre studies, media studies, art and design, psychology, performing arts and dance.

There are schemes of work available for all academic and professional subjects taught. These vary in the level of detail they contain but all provide clear guidance to teachers on the material to be covered with each class and are used to good effect. A sensible age-related programme of PSHE and citizenship is enlivened by visits from experts in the local community.

The quality of teaching and assessment overall is good with outstanding features. The expert teaching which pupils receive in the performing arts is outstanding. It is characterised by high energy levels and a very demanding pace, sharply focused critical interventions which improve performance rapidly and constant challenge for each individual. Expectations are extremely high. The pupils bring their own personalities, experiences and creativity to their performance, but also take direction well and behave in a business-like manner. Importantly, the pupils also enjoy these lessons, for they are generally great fun.

On the academic side, teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. They demonstrate good knowledge both of their subject and the pupils they teach. Small classes enable them to offer individual tuition and support, which is important when students return from auditions or performances and need to catch up work. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, this inspection took place just before the public examination season, and teachers had prepared well-focused revision sessions and gave useful advice on examination technique. A good

range of teaching methodologies is used and pupils' interest is well engaged in learning through practical activities or by building on their skills and talents, for example in the critical analysis of literature through use of empathy. There are few occasions where teaching fails to inspire pupils but when this happens, they lose heart or get lost because explanations lack clarity, and this reduces their progress.

The school assesses pupils' learning and achievements in a variety of ways. In the specialist curriculum, assessment is continual and feedback is clear, detailed and immediate, resulting in rapid progress. In academic subjects, regular testing occurs, but this does not inform planning in all subjects, and although homework is set regularly, it is not always marked by the teacher.

As a result of the outstanding curriculum and teaching they receive in the performing arts, the pupils make excellent progress and achieve very high standards of performance. Many current and former pupils have obtained roles in theatre, television and film. Crucially, the pupils also make good progress in their academic studies, particularly where these relate to their professional interests, for example in English. The school enters its pupils for GCSE and A level examinations as well as for a range of qualifications in music, dance and drama and pupils generally achieve well, although results in mathematics have recently compared unfavourably with those of other subjects.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils genuinely love their school and the opportunities it provides. Attendance is good, pupils are highly motivated and the principal says "it's hard sometimes to get them to go home!"

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They participate fully in lessons, are polite and responsive, and ask pertinent questions when they need help. Relationships in the school are excellent. It is a lively, vibrant and fully inclusive community in which all pupils are valued for their unique talents. Boys and girls of all ages and backgrounds mix well, respect one another and form strong friendships. They gain a very good understanding of both race and disability equality issues and learn to be tolerant and kind. Within a competitive environment, there is a generous spirit of celebrating everyone's successes, and pupils care for one another well, thrive and develop into confident, articulate and poised young people.

There are excellent opportunities for cultural development through both the academic and performing arts curriculum. The pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community by using their talent to raise money for charities such as Children in Need, the Rocking Horse appeal and the Royal Theatrical Fund, and also perform for patients at a local hospice. Discussions in citizenship classes ensure that they are well informed about British society and contemporary issues.

The school provides excellent induction for pupils into their chosen careers in the world of performing arts but is also realistic about the uncertainties of their chosen

profession, and prepares them very well for understanding the demands and disappointments of the business. Thus it helps them to prepare for their future economic well-being by enabling them also to achieve good results in most academic subjects at GCSE and A level.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school takes all reasonable steps to minimise risks to pupils' welfare, health and safety and provides an outstanding level of care for them. All essential policies and records are in place. There are robust procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding children which comply with the latest guidance. A single central register is in place recording that all the necessary checks have been conducted, which is of particular importance in a school where all staff are part-time and many offer individual tuition. There are clear arrangements to chaperone pupils undertaking work outside the school. The school has close links with outside agencies and there is very good awareness of child protection issues.

Staff are particularly vigilant about pupils' health and safety. Careful guidance is given on technique for lifting or supporting pupils in dance. Teachers are vigilant and remind pupils of the clear rules for 'stage combat'. An appropriate record is kept of any injuries or accidents. Pupils gain a good understanding of healthy lifestyles through work in PSHE, and are regularly to be seen about the school carrying their bottles of water.

The school has very good awareness of disability and fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve the quality of teaching and resources in mathematics in order to improve pupils' progress and examination results in this subject
- monitor closely the quality of teaching and marking.

School details

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| Name of school | K-BIS Theatre School | | |
| DCSF number | 846/6022 | | |
| Unique reference number | 131463 | | |
| Type of school | Stage school | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | November 1997 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 7-18 years | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll | Boys: 11 | Girls: 30 | Total: 41 |
| Annual fees | £ 3,597 - £5,790 | | |
| Address of school | Clermont Hall Cumberland Road Brighton East Sussex BN1 6SL | | |
| Telephone number | 01273564366 | | |
| Fax number | 01273564366 | | |
| Email address | k-bis@zoom.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Miss M King | | |
| Proprietor | Miss M King | | |
| Reporting inspector | Mrs Jane Cooper HMI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 14 May 2008 | | |