



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
SYLVIA YOUNG THEATRE SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Sylvia Young Theatre School

Full Name of School	<b>Sylvia Young Theatre School</b>	
DfE Number	<b>213/6319</b>	
Address	<b>Sylvia Young Theatre School 1 Nutford Place Marylebone London W1H 5YZ</b>	
Telephone Number	<b>020 7258 2330</b>	
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Email Address	<b>info@sylviayoungtheatreschool.co.uk</b>	
Head teacher	<b>Ms Frances Chave</b>	
Principal and Chair of Directors	<b>Mrs Sylvia Young</b>	
Age Range	<b>10 to 16</b>	
Total Number of Pupils	<b>251</b>	
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (92 boys; 159 girls)</b>	
Numbers by Age	10-16	<b>251</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>251</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>31</b>
	Weekly	<b>31</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>07 Oct 2014 to 10 Oct 2014</b>	

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of directors, observed a sample of the vocational activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited long-stay lodgings and the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of parents and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Martin Bussey

Mrs Lizbeth Green

Mr Richard Robson

Mrs Catherine Sams

Mr Stephen Bailey

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, SoH school)

Team Inspector (Vice Principal, GSA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 The Sylvia Young Theatre School is an independent co-educational day school for students aged 10 to 16. It offers facilities for students to stay in long-stay lodgings on weeknights. It focuses on education in the performing arts, offering opportunities to develop skills in these areas alongside an academic curriculum. This is facilitated by the division of the working week into three academic days, from Monday to Wednesday, and two vocational days. The school was founded in 1981 by the current principal, who is supported by four other directors in providing oversight and governance, and who manages vocational provision. Responsibility for management of academic and pastoral areas, including for students in long-stay lodgings, is given to the head teacher. Since late 2010, just after the previous ISI inspection, the school has been accommodated in a former church, refurbished to meet its needs. This has enabled new facilities; these include dance studios with sprung floors, a studio theatre and performance space, science laboratories and art rooms, a recording studio, and outdoor areas for relaxation.
- 1.2 The school aims to enable students to: achieve high academic standards and excel in the performing arts through high expectations and a broad, balanced and challenging academic and vocational curriculum; develop as individuals, and play an active and positive role as members of the school and the wider community; develop self-esteem, responsibility and tolerance. It currently educates 251 students, of whom around two-thirds are girls. There are 31 students who stay in lodgings during the school week. There are 12 students in Year 6.
- 1.3 The ability profile of the students is above the national average, with most being of average or above average ability. Students come from across the south of England and from a range of backgrounds. Many travel long distances daily to and from school. Those who stay in lodgings come from across the UK. There are 10 students who come from a home where English is spoken alongside another language, but none requires specialist help with their learning. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Of the 32 students who have been identified as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 29 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of the students' achievement and learning is excellent. Students achieve exceptional standards in relation to their gifts and talents in their vocational studies and activities, and demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their academic work. Those with SEND, or who speak English alongside another language at home, achieve at levels equal to their peers. More able students in academic subjects are enabled to achieve scholarships at academically demanding sixth forms. Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in all they do. They respond very effectively to the high expectations evident in much teaching and to a broad and stimulating curriculum and associated vocational activities. This enables good academic progress, and excellent progress in vocational areas. These levels of progress are enabled by good teaching, which is particularly strong when it fully utilises the students' strengths as learners. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in the use of assessment data to inform academic teaching, although this is not currently matched by consistency in marking.
- 2.2 The students' personal development is excellent. Students show strong spiritual development, characterised by self-confidence, self-esteem and heightened self-awareness as performers. They have excellent moral and cultural awareness. Their high social development results in friendliness and high levels of courtesy. The school provides excellent pastoral care. All those students who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires said that they enjoy being at the school. Good arrangements exist to ensure the students' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety but the requirement to obtain and certify references and medical declarations before staff begin work has not always been met with sufficient rigour. The school's arrangements for students to reside in long-stay lodgings are excellent.
- 2.3 Good governance supports the school's aims well, particularly through the provision of resources, which has resulted in the excellent facilities which students enjoy. Through effective oversight of academic and pastoral areas overall, the directors enable the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. In the past, directors have not audited the school's checking of staff, and its single central register of appointments, systematically enough to ensure that all checks required by statutory guidance have been completed. More robust systems have now been implemented. The recommendations of previous inspections have been met. Leadership and management of academic and vocational areas are good and the school has close and constructive links with parents. Monitoring of the students' development in academic and vocational areas is good and ensures that their progress in the school is viewed as a whole. Formal opportunities for vocational and academic staff to share teaching strategies, the most effective practice, and their experiences of the students' strengths as learners are limited. The school's highly effective pastoral care for students has been enhanced since the previous inspection by the successful organisation and monitoring of provision for those who stay in lodgings.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that references and medical declarations are received for all staff before they begin work in the school [Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) and 8 (a) and (b), under welfare, health and safety; and, for the same reason, National Minimum Standards 11 under Child protection, and 14.1 under Staff recruitment].

2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, as described above.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure equally high expectations of students in all vocational and academic teaching, and that work is marked regularly and consistently.
2. Strengthen the monitoring of regulatory areas by the directors.
3. Provide structured opportunities for both vocational and academic staff to develop common strategies to further enhance teaching and learning.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the students' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The students reach exceptional levels for their age in their vocational studies and related activities. The school's aim to enable them to excel in the performing arts is met with resounding success. Students fulfil their gifts and talents, and many students are able to participate in professional stage and television performances at the highest level. In the three principal areas of dance, drama and singing, the students' achievement is uniformly strong in response to a stimulating vocational curriculum. This encompasses their strong physical development. Students, including those of junior age, demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in response to the academic curriculum, going a long way to meeting the school's aim to enable high academic standards. Good standards are evident in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and also in Spanish. Those students with SEND achieve consistently at similar levels to their peers through good support in and out of class. The students' achievement is excellent in those subject areas related most closely to their vocational studies, including music. In GCSE expressive arts and drama, all write with genuine involvement, and more able pupils write perceptively. Students develop good skills in history and art. They speak with clarity and often write well although some writing lacks refinement, for example in grammar and spelling. They use effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills in media studies, music and art.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Broadly, results in GCSE have been good in relation to the national average for pupils in maintained schools, although the small size of cohorts limits the effectiveness of detailed analysis. Over four-fifths of results have been at grades A\* to C and this level was maintained in 2014; almost all students in 2014 gained a grade of C or higher in expressive arts at GCSE at the end of Year 10. These levels of attainment, considered alongside the students' responses in interviews, their written work and in lessons, indicate that progress to GCSE is good, including for those students with SEND, and those who speak English alongside another language at home. The progress of students of junior age is similar. Results show that the progress of students of lower ability to GCSE is frequently excellent. Students demonstrate high levels of progress in vocational studies. When they leave at age 16, students regularly gain places in vocational sixth-form colleges to study performing arts, and at academically demanding independent and maintained schools and sixth-form colleges throughout the UK, often gaining scholarships.
- 3.4 Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in all they do. They demonstrate confidence as learners, and are particularly effective when listening to their teachers and other students. They respond with great success to the high expectations evident in most teaching but can lose focus when explanations are too elaborate, or instructions lack clarity. They work very co-operatively in both academic and vocational classes to meet the aims of teaching.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.5 The contribution of the curricular and vocational activities provision is excellent.
- 3.6 The school fulfils its aims to provide a broad, balanced and challenging academic and vocational curriculum very successfully. For the first three days of the week, all students, including Year 6, enjoy a range of appropriate subjects including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science together with history and Spanish. Students have lessons in ICT until the end of Year 9 and thereafter study is successfully incorporated in academic subjects. Year 6 students swim on a weekly basis. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and stimulating to provide appropriate provision for students of high academic ability. The majority of students study for nine GCSEs; options include media studies, art and music, and speech and drama examinations are also available.
- 3.7 On the final two days of the week, all students receive specialist tuition in dance, drama, singing and music study in classes which mix Years 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 in groups arranged by ability in dance. These arrangements ensure that the stimulating vocational curriculum is tailored to the individual needs of students. Year 11 students are split into two 'companies' which focus on either acting and singing or dance and music theatre; students appreciate the school's recent introduction of these arrangements, partly at their prompting, to enable them to focus on their areas of strength.
- 3.8 All students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires said that they enjoy being at the school. A minority of parents, and a few students, felt that there is not a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports. Inspectors do not agree, considering the school's aims. Students undertake a wide range of very physical activity in their extensive vocational work, and the focus of this study includes many areas usually offered as activities. The school day is successfully concentrated in order to facilitate the travel arrangements of day pupils, limiting available time for other activities. These are therefore limited to opportunities in drama, ICT and a recently formed, and very popular, acrobatics group. The school also offers help for those preparing for auditions and, nearer examination time, provides academic revision sessions. Those students in lodgings are provided with additional opportunities for evening activities.
- 3.9 Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is provided through form time at all ages, assemblies, and across subject areas through systematic planning. In form time, older students discussed robustly the reliability of media reporting and younger students acted out the school rules.
- 3.10 The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection in providing for students with SEND. The school identifies students' individual needs through information from parents, outside agencies or staff. Students are then tested before being given several different levels of support. Younger students are withdrawn from class teaching for individual or group support from dedicated staff in English and mathematics. From Year 10 support is within class, including through the presence of additional staff. The provision of laptops is a further effective strategy.
- 3.11 The balanced curriculum, together with a very comprehensive careers guidance programme in Years 9 to 11, ensures that students are both well informed and well prepared for either an academic or vocational career. Ongoing discussion with academic and vocational staff for both students and their parents is enhanced by a

meeting in Year 10 to explore options. Many opportunities are provided for students to visit a range of potential schools and colleges.

- 3.12 Students are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and enjoy playing an active role in the local community. Choirs entertain local groups, such as an association for carers, students entertain the elderly at tea dances and participate in events such as a candlelit parade for the local hospice.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Throughout the school, much teaching is characterised by high expectations in line with the school's aims. This is strongly evident in vocational teaching and in some academic teaching. The most successful academic teaching harnesses the strong curiosity of students and channels their enthusiasm towards a common goal. In less successful teaching, limited management means that the students' questions lose focus, to the detriment of the attentiveness and progress of others.
- 3.15 Teaching is often of excellent quality, enabling students to gain scholarships for vocationally and academically demanding courses. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school's provision for very able students. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The needs of particularly able and talented students are generally well met in academic teaching and receive outstanding support in vocational teaching.
- 3.16 Teaching is often well planned to motivate the students through links between their academic and vocational study. The students' individual responses are encouraged and students welcome and value the targeted support they receive, which enhances their progress. A variety of effective teaching methods is used throughout the school. In particular staff appreciate and make excellent use of the students' high levels of co-operative skills. The school is appropriately resourced, with increasing use of digital technology. Tasks set in some academic teaching are repetitive or lack sufficient structure, which leads to occasional disengagement and hinders progress. Students are most enthusiastic about tasks which require research and independent learning and make excellent progress in response.
- 3.17 Both academic and vocational staff are aware of the students' particular needs and plan accordingly. Academic staff make effective use of the training they have received regarding the impact of dyslexia. All staff implement the improved SEND provision well. With support from staff and their parents, pupils with SEND aim for, and reach, useful targets, renewed and refreshed every half term.
- 3.18 The quality of marking varies across academic subject areas. At its best, marking is thorough and includes constructive and supportive comments which enable further progress. Some marking is very limited in scope and there is little evidence in students' work in some subjects that instructions or suggestions have been acted upon. Students appreciate the oral feedback which is often given in both vocational and academic teaching and feel that this enables them to make further progress.
- 3.19 As recommended by the previous inspection, systems have been established to monitor the students' academic progress and these are used effectively. Information from standardised tests is used to track individual students' progress and set targets against external benchmarks. There is ongoing discussion about a variety of strategies such as peer and self-assessment, and end of unit or topic tests. These

have begun to be used to identify additional targets and to publish clear criteria by which students can judge their success.

- 3.20 Teaching embraces opportunities to identify and address areas for development across and within individual subjects, both vocationally and academically. At its best this results in improved teaching strategies, particularly the increased use of dialogue between staff and students using email. This is of particular benefit when students have engagements outside school. It enhances the very effective schemes which ensure that students who have authorised absence from school receive details of the work covered each day and also homework. Informal contact between all teaching areas is valued. Some teaching is developing structures to promote common methodology, and consistent lesson content where relevant, but formal structures to sharing teaching strategies and the most effective practice across the whole school are limited.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent.
- 4.2 The high level of the students' personal development by the time they leave the school is evident in their strong spiritual development. This is characterised by self-confidence, self-esteem and heightened self-awareness as performers. These qualities demonstrate that the school's aims are met with much success. Students are supported well by the school's culture of celebrating success at many levels. They develop their own interpretations of new songs rapidly and these are often characterful and personal. Students have the confidence to learn from one another, including by individuals modelling a performance for the whole class. They are often guided to explore their own feelings and do so very successfully; they empathise with a variety of situations. In dance, students reflect with insight on everyday situations and channel this into physical expression. In drama they search very successfully for integrity and identity in the characters they portray.
- 4.3 The students' moral development is excellent. They show a strong understanding of the need for rules and accept that their individual preferences may not always coincide with the needs of the whole community. They discuss issues of morality with maturity and sensitivity; for example, when writing about *Macbeth*, some older students showed a high degree of moral awareness for their age. Others quickly perceived the injustice of child labour in nineteenth-century factories. Younger students responded readily and thoughtfully to an invitation to consider the cost of feeding a child of their own age for a year in Africa, when considering the school's chosen charity for the year.
- 4.4 Students are friendly, courteous, and demonstrate very high levels of social development. They act as mentors in a structured system and also help each other readily in classes. Students of different ages mix well, encouraged by vocational groups organised across different year groups. They enjoy one another's successes and have a mature approach to taking responsibility for their own development as performers. They express their opinions with confidence but also listen to others' views with an effective awareness of how this underpins democracy. Senior students fulfil posts of responsibility diligently. Students develop effective awareness of the wider world and British institutions through presentations by transport groups about safe travel and visits to a centre to learn about social media, as well as through their engagement with the community in performances. In ICT lessons observed, students showed good knowledge of business practice and profit and loss.
- 4.5 Students develop a strong cultural awareness. They experience a wide range of cultures and genres through their own performance. They give extremely strong personal responses to the many different aspects of Western European culture which they encounter through academic study or as an audience, from performances of Shakespeare to the work of modern artists and music theatre. In art, younger students responded imaginatively when asked to consider how images can be used to promote different messages. They are able to articulate their cultural preferences with maturity. Students from diverse cultures are integrated with ease into school life and the traditions of different cultures are celebrated through dance and drama as well as by international food days.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The school's highly effective pastoral structure fully supports its aims. It enables the development of excellent relationships within a caring, supportive and warm environment. All students receive support from their form tutor and senior managers are readily accessible. High-quality relationships between staff and students, and between students of all ages, are indicative of the very positive ethos of the school. Younger students value the system through which older students mentor younger students. They consider that it enabled them to settle quickly when new to the school.
- 4.8 Students appreciate the very high level of pastoral care they receive and state that staff are helpful in resolving any pastoral issues. Senior managers work effectively with the school counsellor to ensure that individual students' well-being is monitored and recorded. Any concerns are dealt with as swiftly and efficiently as possible, to excellent effect.
- 4.9 Students participate in a very demanding schedule of regular exercise through the vocational programme. The school canteen provides healthy food and students are encouraged to eat a balanced diet. All are required to eat school lunch and the school monitors this. Students talk positively about the range of food on offer, which varies daily. They identify that the food provided on vocational days is designed to support their related nutritional needs.
- 4.10 The school has an appropriate policy to promote good behaviour. A clear reward structure operates equably to encourage academic success, vocational endeavour and acts of service. It is well understood by students. The school has clear arrangements for serious sanctions and exclusion which operate fairly and consistently. Sanctions are logged and monitored thoroughly. The school's anti-bullying policy is effective and students confirm that any rare bullying incidents are taken very seriously and resolved quickly.
- 4.11 A small minority of students conveyed dissatisfaction with the opportunities offered by the school for them to express their views. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The school actively seeks students' opinions through the pro-active food council and a system of form representatives. Senior students attached to each form ascertain the students' views and articulate these in meetings with senior managers. The school gives prompt responses, often acting on the students' suggestions, and senior students relay these back to form meetings.
- 4.12 The school shows concern for equality of opportunity and for providing for those students with particular needs, including SEND. The new building was designed to enable access for those with physical disabilities and a suitable plan is designed to maintain this provision.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.13 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students are good.
- 4.14 The school has effective, well-established links with local agencies and follows their guidance appropriately to ensure strong care for individual students' welfare. Arrangements reflect the school's context as a centre for the performing arts appropriately; guidance is given about physical contact, body image and

arrangements for students who fulfil external engagements. Arrangements to train all staff in child protection on induction and at suitable intervals thereafter now ensure effective communication of required safeguarding information to all staff and volunteers, including contract catering staff. Designated staff receive regular child protection and inter-agency training. The requirement to obtain and certify references and medical declarations before staff begin work has not always been met with sufficient rigour.

- 4.15 Registration of students is carefully organised and implemented. Co-ordination between administrative staff and the school agency ensures that authorised absence for those performing professionally is recorded. This is monitored well by senior managers. An efficient system follows up any unauthorised absence. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register.
- 4.16 Arrangements to ensure the students' health and safety are strong and have due regard to the school's city-centre location. Students who feel unwell are cared for in excellent facilities. The first aid policy provides well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid. The school's new building provides sufficient washroom facilities for both genders, meeting the requirement of the previous inspection. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with special physical or learning needs.
- 4.17 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are very thorough and checks are recorded efficiently. Scrutiny by the school's outside consultants is reviewed by senior managers and any necessary remedial steps are taken quickly. Regular evacuation drills are held and the outcomes analysed. Equipment is checked and appropriate actions taken. Assessments of risk are thorough. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and reviewed.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.18 Arrangements for those students accommodated in long-stay lodgings are excellent.
- 4.19 Students have the opportunity to be lodgers in accredited home-stay lodgings. The school does not operate any other form of boarding. There are currently two lodgings, with a third in process of accreditation. Students enjoy week-night and occasional weekend accommodation. Those in lodgings are confident, self-reliant and highly supportive of each other. They are acutely aware that as a consequence of securing a place in one of the lodging houses they are able to access the school's distinctive provision and balance their academic and vocational studies with occasional professional work. With the support of the host families, the students develop the enduring characteristics of determination, tenacity and resilience. They fully appreciate the benefits of hard work and, coupled with the excellent guidance given to them regarding careers and future study, they develop the necessary skills for future success.
- 4.20 The lodging houses are accredited via a rigorous vetting system, including yearly visits, which is focused on ensuring the security, welfare, health and safety of the students. This uses the relevant areas of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS) as its structure. The school only provides and recommends to parents details of accredited accommodation. Accreditation is as a result of vetting being successful, and the host family entering into a suitable written agreement with the school. Parents are required to enter into a private contract with the host family with respect to the duration of each individual student's house stay. All of the

accommodation is suitable for the age and gender of the student. This includes suitable private space, as recommended in the last Ofsted boarding inspection. The lodgings are extremely clean and well maintained. Provision is made for the students to have access to private study areas in school and in the lodgings. In the evenings, the host families arrange film nights; provision is made for students to practice music or individual acting pieces. Students also have access to the television, to keep abreast of events in the world outside school, and some games.

- 4.21 Each student in a lodging is registered with their home doctor. Host families ensure that students can be seen by a local medical practitioner or they make provision for the students to attend one of the many local drop-in centres locally. This includes dental and other medical services as required. Host families liaise effectively with the school's medical staff and parents whenever a medical need arises. The school's excellent medical provision includes an appropriately equipped first aid room with facilities for a student to lie down. There are 14 qualified first aiders as well as a full-time qualified matron. Each lodging has a host family member who is qualified in first aid. All medication for students in lodgings is accounted for and stored appropriately. The school and the host families hold meticulous, up-to-date medical details for each student. Medication given to students is logged and all parties informed.
- 4.22 The school provides students with a substantive, well-planned meal at lunchtimes. Host families provide the students with a nourishing breakfast and a variety of satisfying evening meals. They take every care to account for specific dietary need and allergies. Snacks and drinking water are regularly available.
- 4.23 The school has effective mechanisms to ensure that host families are aware of and implement its arrangements to safeguard the students' welfare. All those over 16 in lodgings receive robust vetting checks, including criminal records checks and the taking up of references, which ensure their suitability before any student is placed in the lodgings. This checking meets the recommendations of the previous inspection. The school does not meet all the NMS in this area because medical declarations and references for some teaching staff have not always been received before work commences, although no shortcomings have occurred in the checking of those living in lodgings.
- 4.24 Students report that there is very little bullying and inspection evidence confirms this; any incidents that do occur consist of minor disagreements and these are dealt with appropriately by the host families in conjunction with the school. Any sanctions needed are employed in accordance with the school's arrangements. The students have the opportunity to express their views to both their hosts and the school. This includes the required termly individual consultations the school undertakes with each student in lodgings. Any concerns expressed by students during these consultations receive an appropriate response. These various forms of consultation have resulted in improvements in areas such as the range of snacks available outside of meal times, the shortening of some meetings and the provision of 'tidy boxes' in rooms. The school and host families undertake all necessary risk assessment of buildings and facilities to ensure that the students are safe and to avoid risk from fire and other hazards. Risk assessments are particularly effective for occasions when students are performing outside school. Licensed chaperones look after students until they can be picked up either by host families or by their parents. Lodgings have appropriate security to ensure that there is no inappropriate access to students' rooms.



- 4.25 Senior managers and other designated staff provide excellent oversight of accredited lodgings. All the recommendations of the last Ofsted inspection have been met. The handbook for lodgings, and guidance given to host families and parents have been revised and reflect the most recent statutory guidance for ensuring the students' welfare. The school's existing Independent Listener recently moved away and the replacement is due to meet with students in the immediate future. A new staff post of boarding assistant has been created. This substantive position has been successfully initiated and the role has already brought greater rigour to the process of accreditation for existing and future lodgings. The school is currently considering the views of parents and host families alongside the information it gains from the students' termly interviews. This process is well suited to identifying areas for improvement in the existing, excellent provision.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance promotes the school's aims well, informed by the day-to-day involvement of the majority of directors in school life. The directors represent a good range of experience relevant to the school's vocational work, in addition to legal expertise, although there is limited academic experience outside the performing arts. The directors review the quality and standards of academic education provided by the school with care, for example through presentations by subject teachers, and offer stimulating challenge for the vocational curriculum. The absence of a formal appraisal of the head teacher limits the scope of any review of the school's academic and pastoral activities. This restricts the coherence of the vision for future development, although overall, the directors' scrutiny supports the students' excellent personal development and achievement well. All directors have received safeguarding training, but other training in areas of governance is limited.
- 5.3 Financial systems ensure that provision of human and material resources meets the school's needs very well and these areas are kept under effective review between the directors and financial managers in the school. The success of this provision is evident in the school building, to which the school has moved since the previous inspection. This provides excellent accommodation for the school's varied educational activities which is utilised very effectively.
- 5.4 Governors provide strong oversight of most areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review health and safety arrangements regularly, making good use of the information provided by the school's health and safety consultants. Previously, directors have not audited the school's checking of staff, and its single central register of appointments, systematically enough to ensure that all checks required by statutory guidance have been completed, but more robust systems have now been implemented. The director nominated to co-ordinate safeguarding reviews the school's other procedures thoroughly and with due seriousness in preparation for discussion by the full board in a suitable annual review.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is good.
- 5.6 Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school's vocational and academic education which ensures the students' excellent overall achievement. Their work promotes strong care for students and their personal development, ensuring that the school's aims are met successfully. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been secured by management in developing the use of assessment data in academic teaching but this is not currently matched by consistent approaches to marking. The move to a new school building has enabled purpose-built performance studios to be put to excellent use in supporting the students' exceptional levels of achievement in dance, drama and music. Highly effective pastoral care has been enhanced by the successful development of systems to organise and monitor provision for those students who stay in lodgings. Overall, monitoring by senior managers is effective and well informed. It ensures that the students' progress in

the different educational activities promoted by the school is viewed as a whole. As yet opportunities for vocational and academic staff to share their experiences of students' strengths as learners are less developed. This results in varied levels of expectation in some teaching.

- 5.7 Senior managers evaluate the success and the needs of the school successfully through an annual strategic development plan. Planning identifies many fruitful areas for development and the document is used well as a tool for self-evaluation at the end of each year. Focus is occasionally deflected from key targets when short-term practical needs are included. The document plans for pastoral care, but specific planning to ensure continued development of support for the students' welfare, health and safety is limited. Policies reflect the school's needs and are implemented generally well. Very effective financial support from the directors ensures that all areas of school life receive good human and material resources.
- 5.8 The school appoints good quality staff. Annual appraisal of academic staff and informal appraisal of vocational staff give good pointers for future improvement and training. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and directors to work with children are now more robust, although some inconsistencies have occurred in the past; recording is now comprehensive. In some recent appointments, statutory guidance has not been followed as staff have begun work before references and medical declarations have been received. All staff are trained in their responsibilities in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.9 Non-teaching staff fulfil varied roles with equal success throughout the school day. They interact regularly with students and provide a significant source of additional pastoral care as well as showing a keen interest in the students' work.
- 5.10 The school maintains a close and constructive relationship with parents. Communication is consistently strong, for example with the regard to those students in lodgings, students' welfare and their achievement. Parents receive half-termly newsletters and they are encouraged to email teachers should the need arise. The school has a suitable complaints policy which operates effectively and parents acknowledge that their concerns are dealt with efficiently. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show extremely high levels of satisfaction; this is particularly clear in areas such as leadership and management and the students' safety and well-being. Almost every parent who responded said they would recommend the school to another parent.
- 5.11 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school through attending the annual cheese and wine evening, open days and activity afternoons. There is an induction day for new parents and pupils at the beginning of each academic year. The student and parent handbook provides all necessary information for parents of current students and information is available on the website for prospective parents.
- 5.12 Each academic year, parents receive an interim and a full report electronically. These contain a good level of information pertaining to their child's progress and include a written report from both the head teacher and the principal. Parents are invited to one academic parents' meeting each year as well as to open vocational days. The Friends of the school organise fundraising and social events such as the Christmas Draw and Karaoke Night. They are encouraged to actively support the school in providing tea and coffee for school events.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**