



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspecting post-16

dance

with guidance on self-evaluation

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The post-16 subject guidance published in 2001 comprised: art and design; business education; classics; design and technology; drama and theatre studies; engineering and manufacturing; English; geography; government and politics; health and social care; history; information and communication technology; law; mathematics; media education; modern foreign languages; music; physical education; religious studies; science; sociology.

Further booklets published in 2002: agriculture; basic skills in literacy and numeracy; construction; dance; English as a second or other language; hairdressing and beauty therapy; hospitality and catering; leisure and tourism; psychology.

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Introduction

This booklet aims to help inspectors and staff in schools and colleges to evaluate standards and quality in dance education for students post-16. It complements the *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools* (1999), the supplement *Inspecting School Sixth Forms* (2001) and the *Handbook for Inspecting Colleges* (2002).

This guidance concentrates on issues specific to dance. General guidance is in the *Handbooks*. Use both to get a complete picture of the inspection or evaluation process.

This booklet focuses on evaluating standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and other factors that affect what is achieved. It outlines how to use students' work and question them, the subject-specific points to look for in lessons, and how to draw evaluations together to form a coherent view of the subject.

Examples are provided of evidence and evaluations from college and school sixth-form inspections, with commentaries to give further explanation. These examples are included without any reference to context, and will not necessarily illustrate all of the features that inspectors will need to consider. The booklets in the series show different ways of recording and reporting evidence and findings; they do not prescribe or endorse any particular method or approach.

Inspectors and senior staff in schools and colleges may need to evaluate several subjects and refer to more than one booklet. You can download any of the subject guidance booklets from OFSTED's web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Our Inspection Helpline team, on 020 7421 6680 for schools and 020 7421 6703 for colleges, will respond to your questions. Alternatively, you can e-mail collegeinspection@ofsted.gov.uk or schoolinspection@ofsted.gov.uk.

OFSTED's remit for this sector is the inspection of education for students aged 16–19, other than work-based education. In schools, this is the sixth-form provision. In colleges, the 16–19 age group will not be so clearly identifiable; classes are likely to include older students and, in some cases, they will have a majority of older students. In practice, inspectors and college staff will evaluate the standards and quality in these classes regardless of the age of the students.

This booklet concentrates on the most commonly found courses in or related to dance for students 16–19. However, the principles illustrated in this guidance can be applied more widely. We hope this publication is helpful to you.

The courses you are most likely to encounter are:

- | General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced-level (A-level) dance;
- | intermediate and foundation General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in performing arts;
- | in vocational training schools, National Diploma in dance;
- | university access courses.

Common requirements

All inspectors share the responsibility for determining whether a school or college is effective for all its students, whatever their educational needs or personal circumstances. As an inspector, ensure that you have a good understanding of the key characteristics of the institution and its students. Evaluate the achievement of different groups of students and judge how effectively their needs and aspirations are met by any initiatives or courses aimed specifically at these groups of students. Take account of recruitment patterns, retention rates and attendance patterns for programmes and courses for different groups of students. Consider the individual goals and targets set for students within different groups and the progress they make towards achieving them.

You should be aware of the responsibilities and duties of schools and colleges regarding equal opportunities, in particular those defined in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. These Acts and related codes of practice underpin national policies on inclusion, on raising achievement and on the important role schools and colleges have in fostering better personal, community and race relations, and in addressing and preventing racism.

As well as being thoroughly familiar with subject-specific requirements, be alert to the unique contribution that each subject makes to the wider educational development of students. Assess how well the curriculum and teaching in dance enable all students to develop key skills, and how successfully the subject contributes to the students' personal, social, health and citizenship education, and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Judge how effectively the subject helps prepare students aged 16–19 for adult life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

1 Standards and achievement

1.1 Evaluating standards and achievement

From the previous inspection report, find out what you can about standards and achievement at that time. This will give you a point of comparison with the latest position, but do not forget that there is a trail of performance data, year by year. Analyse and interpret the performance data available for students who have recently completed the course(s). Draw on the school's *Performance and Assessment* (PANDA) report or, in the case of a college, the *College Performance Report*. Also analyse the most recent results provided by the school or college and any value-added information available. When numbers are small, exercise caution in making comparisons with national data or, for example, evaluating trends. For further guidance on interpreting performance data and analysing value added, refer to *Inspecting School Sixth Forms*, the *Handbook for Inspecting Colleges* and the *National Summary Data Report for Secondary Schools*.

Where you can, form a view about the standards achieved by different groups of students. For example, there may be data which enable you to compare how male and female students or different ethnic groups are doing, or how well 16–19-year-old students achieve in relation to older students.

Make full use of other information which has a bearing on standards and achievement, including success in completing courses, targets and their achievement, and other measures of success.

You should interpret, in particular:

- | trends in results;
- | comparisons with other subjects and courses;
- | distributions of grades, particularly the occurrence of high grades;
- | value-added information;
- | the relative performance of male and female students;
- | the performance of minorities and different ethnic groups;
- | trends in the popularity of courses;
- | drop-out or retention rates;
- | students' destinations, where data are available.

You should note carefully the differences in levels of experience between students entering AS or A level, those studying dance as part of a vocational course in performing arts, and those within the professional training sector. Find out the skills and experiences that students bring with them on entry to the course. Some may not have studied General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) dance and so will not have had many opportunities to study the subject in any great depth or to experience its technical or theoretical aspects. Some students are accepted on to courses because of potential rather than previous experience. Their main understanding of dance may be through youth groups and 'street' dance or 'hip-hop'. Others may have had extensive dance experience through independent external classes or they may have taken external dance examinations, which generally cover ballet, tap and modern dance, and are primarily focused on technique rather than background or theory. For these students, there may be gaps in their knowledge at the outset of the course, particularly regarding such aspects as analysis of performance and principles of training. The extent of this previous experience may be very limited. You should find out what the school or college knows about students' previous experiences and how it organises its initial work in response to these experiences.

On the basis of the performance data, other pre-inspection evidence and a review of the students' previous experiences, form hypotheses about the standards achieved, whether they are as high as they should be and possible explanations. Follow up your hypotheses through observation and analysis of students' work and by talking with them. Direct inspection evidence tells you about the standards at which the current students are working and whether they are being sufficiently stretched to achieve as well as they should. If the current standards are at odds with what the performance data suggest, you must find out why and explain the differences carefully.

As you observe students in lessons, look at their work and talk with them, consider the extent to which they can:

- | communicate ideas in choreography through movement;
- | interpret and express mood, meaning and emotion through movement;
- | improvise movement sequences;
- | make connections between their own work and other choreographers past and present;
- | evaluate their own and others' work, drawing on a suitable technical and critical vocabulary;
- | give a well-focused analysis of the impact of a piece of dance they have seen;
- | take increasing responsibility for their own learning;
- | demonstrate a sound understanding of technical and design elements of theatre and performance technology (such as lighting and sound);
- | articulate a personal view of the subject;
- | show some understanding of dance and the performing arts in their current and historical context;
- | understand the relationship between the arts, for example, between dance and music;
- | move effectively from rehearsal to performance;
- | work effectively and responsibly as a member of a group;
- | plan and deliver a production, or elements of a production;
- | perform convincingly and with confidence;
- | demonstrate an appropriate standard of dance technique skills;
- | demonstrate an understanding of safe dance practice.

1.2 Analysis of students' work

An analysis of students' written, practical and performance work provides an important source of evidence about standards and achievement. You should be able to judge whether students are making progress in knowledge, understanding and skill and what demands the teaching places on them. In addition, you will be able to form a view of the structure and balance of the curriculum in dance, the regularity and helpfulness of assessment, the opportunities open to students to practise techniques and improve their skill and the extent of thoughtful or original approaches to the work in hand.

Some student performances, often presented on video, can contain large amounts of work from many students at one time. Do not try to look at this in relation to each individual student, but as a sense of overall achievement of the course and the levels and standards which all the students reach. Care needs to be taken to ensure that all students are given opportunities to perform, and that the college is not 'showcasing' a few more highly skilled students. In dance technique classes, students are sometimes taught in groups of mixed skills. Whenever possible, make sure you get to know the different skill levels of the students, so that you are able to judge their relative achievement.

Example 1: evidence from observation of students in the second year of the national diploma in dance in an FE college

The performance is devised and choreographed by the students and deals with issues surrounding their own experiences of living in a multicultural inner-city environment

Five of the students joined the course without any previous experience in dance except for 'hip-hop' or 'street'. Two of the students attained only one GCSE. This is the second performance of three, in front of an open audience, which includes peers and teachers. As part of the module, the students have designed the publicity, chosen the music and devised the choreography, with some guidance from their teachers. The performance starts with a group piece based on a 'street' style, initially supporting stereotypes of a group of young, primarily black students. This develops into a work looking at competition, fear, relationship and trust, within the lives of these students.

The work demonstrates the students' understanding of issues surrounding them in society, including those relating to social inclusion, and how these are dealt with. The choreographic styles used throughout the piece illustrate the students' understanding of a range of different dance styles, ranging from 'street' and 'contemporary' to Afro-Caribbean and South East Asian forms. Within the piece, the students also demonstrate an excellent understanding of

the fusion of styles. Compositionally, the work is creative and inventive, demonstrating an understanding of a range of choreographic devices and the effect they have on the audience. This includes solo, duet and group work. The students perform with integrity and commitment. The performance runs smoothly and the performers manage to win over and enthuse what could be a difficult audience with their commitment to the piece. The students demonstrate an excellent use of partnering of all types.

[Attainment outstanding (1)]

Commentary

All of the students show commitment to the performance and an excellent understanding of performance skills. They hold the audience throughout the piece, working with concentration and integrity through some difficult dance pieces dealing with challenging material. Technical skills are overall very good: the students execute some complex lifts and jumps with technical accuracy and precision. Performance skills are outstanding: the students use focus and expression particularly well, and are fully engaged in their own and each other's performance throughout the piece. The subject matter of the choreography shows an understanding of socio-political and social inclusion issues expressed clearly through the medium of dance. Students work sensitively together on stage, showing an awareness of staging and working as a group. Technical mistakes by a few students are covered well in the performance context. This is mature and confident dance work that shows an unusual degree of self-awareness and cultural sophistication. This performance is evidence towards a judgement of outstanding achievement for these students.

Example 2: evidence from six files of AS-level dance students in a general further education (FE) college

Range of work in files common to all: critical essays on set works, reviews of a theatre visit and notebooks from solo choreography lessons

Good evidence of developing skills of writing clear critical responses to a demanding work (Macmillan's Winter Dreams) from three of the files. Two others are more descriptive but still show a careful assimilation of class work, and some individual research. One file has plenty of graphic material, photographs and material from the Internet, but the quality of the writing is poor. It contains grammatical errors, the expression is too simple for the complexity of the material, and there are inappropriately personal comments – for example, 'I thought Kolygin's strange jerky movements just looked silly.' One detailed and thoughtful response is to a visit to see Madame Butterfly by Northern Ballet Theatre. The essay comments on what was gained and what was lost by dancing rather than singing the story; it also deals with cultural and moral issues in the ballet. There is some thoughtful consideration of the move into traditional Japanese movement and dance for the work's conclusion. The notebooks from choreography lessons vary widely. There is some constructive development of the suggestions made by the teacher: 'I must find a stronger quality contrast between wood and water. Wood: hard, sharp, splintered movements, direct and bound. Water: soft, flowing, continuous and sequential. The repetitions aren't working yet.' Some notes are more perfunctory: 'Going OK; she wants more focus and I need to start stronger.' Some students clearly have a way to go before they can write adequately for module 2, 'analysis and recording', but in general the sample shows a good rate of progress, since many of the students had little formal dance experience before starting the course. Given this inexperience, achievement seems good overall. Over half the sample show a careful, thorough approach to assignments and plenty of individual work. There are some full, helpful and clear written comments from teachers.

[Attainment average (4)]

Commentary

The students are committed to their subject and willing to work independently, in some cases putting extra effort into areas that interest them, beyond the minimum needed for the course specification. The better work shows some independent critical thinking from students who can relate dance to its cultural context, use descriptive terminology effectively and write analytically and constructively about their own choreography and dancing (three out of the six files scrutinised). The lower levels of attainment show some careful and thorough descriptions of dance and choreography (two files), but much of this work shows a more naïve, subjective

approach. Only one file shows significant weaknesses in literacy, expression and style. Overall, the balance of attainment is average.

1.3 Talking with students

Talking with students will enable you to confirm and possibly extend your evidence of what they know and understand about dance and the theatre. It will also give you some idea of the degree to which the students are able to review and analyse their work, to demonstrate their ideas and to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to new contexts. It gives you valuable insight into the content of the course, their enthusiasm for the subject, and the breadth and depth of their topic-related knowledge. It is unlikely that you will be able to do this during lesson time, and therefore you should seek a time students can come and talk with you.

Example 3: evidence from an observation of a discussion between 8 A-level dance students in a school sixth form; Year 12

Students discussing choreographers they have been studying and the influences of different traditional dance forms on contemporary choreographers. Their discussion focuses on Richard Alston and Shobana Jayasingh. They are also studying a solo choreographed by Richard Alston for the performance component of the course.

- *In discussion of choreographic style and form, the students quickly give examples of different choreographic styles used by different dance companies. They are fully aware of the collaboration and fusion work done in the past by these two choreographers. They discuss the fusion of contemporary and South East Asian techniques which Shobana used as opposed to the more traditional stylistic form of Richard Alston.*
- *The students also demonstrate in their discussion an ability to make the intellectual connection between what they choreograph within their course and how they are influenced by the styles of professional choreographers.*
- *They then discuss a solo work which has been chosen for their set performance piece. The students comment on the skill of the professional performer on the tape, and analyse the dancer's use of space and weight in the interpretation of the choreography. Most of the group are unaware of the importance of the lighting of the piece and how it influences the choreographic intent.*
- *They have an interesting and in-depth discussion about safety issues in the technical performance of the piece, which has some complex dance invention.*
- *Most students participate fully in the discussion. They are lively and energetic in their debate, discussing their own choreography in the light of the professional work that they have seen. This and their high overall levels of understanding suggest very good achievement. It is a very productive discussion.*

[Attainment very good: (2)]

Commentary

Most of the students demonstrate a wide-ranging knowledge of their subject area. They are practised in spoken debate and have a sense of how the work that they are studying relates to them and their individual coursework. They have been clearly informed how to relate professional work to their own and to use the work that they see and study to increase their own knowledge of choreography and performance. These students use their knowledge of the choreographic form to discuss different cultural issues surrounding choreography and performance. They also demonstrate that they have a good sense of the health and safety aspects of dance and are able to put these into practice. They do not fully understand the implications of lighting and how it can affect the choreography on stage. Overall, the students' in-depth knowledge of choreographers and choreographic techniques is outstanding, suggesting very good achievement. It is their lack of insight into the influence of production values which just prevents the attainment being excellent (grade 1).

1.4 Lesson observation

To get a balanced and relevant sample of observations, find out what is going on, and when, and plan your lesson observation to be representative of what the students receive. In the time available to you, choose a range of lessons, if possible with a range of teachers. For example, aim to see performance work, any work in front of an audience, dance technique classes in a dance studio, some rehearsal work, choreography and composition, including group work and discussion, together with critical approaches to dance. There may also be related classes (for example, in music or drama) that might also contribute to students' overall curriculum experience, and it would be useful to sample these.

There is likely to be a considerable range of attainment within the groups. For example, there may be some students who show a firm grasp of certain dance techniques and others who have a good understanding of creative work and choreographic devices. By contrast, there may be students who have experienced very little dance except for 'street' or 'hip-hop', and therefore will have less security within specific dance techniques and styles but more performance confidence. It will always be helpful to distinguish between the high attaining, average and low attaining students, so that you can judge their value-added achievement.

Example 4: evidence from a one-year access to dance course (level 3) at an FE college; eight students in the class, all female

Contemporary dance technique

Students have a good understanding of the material which the teacher is giving them, based on ideas from a dance sequence which they have been learning. Whole group working on warming up and developing technique within a contemporary style. The end of the session incorporates some repertory which the students have been preparing for assessments. Two students come into the class five minutes late and join in without warming up. One student joins the class 10 minutes late. The students are clothed inappropriately: they are wearing socks, which make them unable to grip the floor, and baggy trousers and T-shirts, which render it difficult for the teacher to make technical corrections.

Almost all students display a suitable understanding of technique within the first part of the session. Most students pick up the material quite quickly and reasonably accurately and have a good sense of physical articulation. They demonstrate some sense of performance and presentation throughout the warm-up period, even in the less performance-orientated exercises. Most students respond well to some complex movement invention by the teacher, but two students are unable to pick up the material and give up halfway through trying to achieve it.

The students' progress during the dance sequence is unsatisfactory. They forget the movements they are rehearsing, and at times become distracted and talk at the side of the room rather than working on improving their performance. They are not able to transfer their technical skill from the first part of the session into performing the dance sequence. Discussion about how to rehearse the sequence turns into an argument as to who is right. Movement that they achieved with accuracy earlier on, they then perform messily and with little articulation, showing an inability to remember and develop material. Their lack of commitment and associated weaknesses in performance point to unsatisfactory achievement.

[Attainment below average (5)]

Commentary

Attainment for this group is just below average. In several discrete parts of the session, most of the students work well, but they are unable to sustain this standard of work. A few students are not as technically competent as the others. The students demonstrate a good ability to follow technical directions. During the warm-up, most of them display some accuracy and concentration. However, more than half the group show a lack of commitment by their late arrival and by giving up in the middle of challenging technical work. Starting to dance without a warm-up is potentially dangerous; neither the teacher nor the students who arrive late confront this issue. The students are unable to work effectively as a group and discuss choreographic issues in a constructive manner. The higher achievers work well in the early part of the lesson. When they are asked to take more responsibility for their own learning, they are not able to sustain the concentration and skill

shown earlier on. The first part shows a higher attainment level than the second, during which the students are rehearsing previously practised work. Overall attainment is unsatisfactory in this slow-moving lesson, especially so in a course which has to progress quickly for students to reach level 3 in one year. Such a lack of progress and commitment points to unsatisfactory achievement.

Example 5: evidence from a GCE A-level course in a school sixth form; Year 12

Dance history module

Students have been asked to prepare for the session by looking up the period in the library. This is the second class on this period of dance for the students before they write an essay on Nijinski, Diaghilev and the 'Ballets Russes'. Students watch a video of 'Les Noces'(20 minutes). Teacher then leads discussion around Diaghilev and the 'Ballets Russes'.

- *Motivation poor. Several students are drawing pictures in their notebooks, and two spend the time sleeping with their heads on the desks. This underlies the generally poor level of achievement indicated by this lesson.*
- *Participation poor from majority. When the group is asked questions about the relationship of the work they are watching to other dance works they have studied, answers are consistently given by the same two students.*
- *No understanding of historical background, period or style. In the discussion, students are unable to make much use of the video. They cannot follow the connection between the costumes and the art of the period which the teacher is trying to make. Students make joking comments about the dance work and about how 'old-fashioned'it looks, without being able to judge how the work might have been seen in its time. When comparing this work with that of the romantic period, students show little grasp of the core elements of this period of ballet, and are unable to give examples of the most influential romantic ballets.*
- *Weak oral and communication skills. They are unable to engage in debate with each other and rely on the teacher to instigate all discussion.*
- *Lack of initiative/independent study. Students have not prepared for the session by reading the work recommended by the teacher. They are ill prepared to discuss the subject in hand, and do not take the opportunity of watching the video to help them to participate in the class more fully.*
- *Attainment well below average. Two students are participating well in the activity and discussion but they demonstrate little in-depth knowledge of the period being discussed and are unable to give any critical evaluation of the work. They show a lower-attainment level than some of the other students who participate at infrequent intervals. In fact, the comments made by these two students are mostly descriptive.*

[Attainment well below average (6)]

Commentary

Weaknesses in attainment are evident in the students' lack of preparation and articulation and their inability to analyse the work presented to them. They lack concentration and commitment to the work. Several students remain passive throughout. Though a few students make some appropriate comments toward the group discussion, they do not participate fully. Two lower-attaining students are fully engaged and progress well, but they demonstrate little understanding of analytical debate and are unable to make reference to work previously covered. The evidence suggests that achievement overall is poor.

2 Teaching and learning

2.1 Evaluating teaching and learning

Interpret the *Handbook* criteria with specific reference to dance, and keep in mind the characteristics of effective teaching and learning in which:

- | knowledgeable, stimulating and exciting teaching of dance motivates students to work consistently well for extended periods of time and appreciate the joy and satisfaction that can be achieved through participating in or observing high quality physical or creative activity (*expectations, inspiration*);
- | the teacher's competence, technical and creative understanding and skill enable students to gain new knowledge, increase their understanding, and develop precise, accurate and confident physical, intellectual and creative skills (*subject knowledge*);
- | the setting of clear learning objectives and the use of a range of carefully selected information, tasks and topics allow all students to understand what they are doing, how well they are doing, and what they need to do in order to improve their performance (*planning, students' understanding of what they are doing*);
- | through the teacher's high expectations, clear explanations and rigour, students are keen to learn and respond positively to challenges, striving for accuracy, clarity, control, fluency, consistency and precision in the planning, performance and evaluation of their work (*expectations, students' interest in their work*);
- | through carefully pitched questions, sensitive discussion techniques and a good balance of physical, creative, and theoretical tasks, the teacher consolidates, extends and verifies what students know and understand; the teacher is able to adapt approaches to the learning preferences of individuals and to the different demands of practical, creative and theoretical aspects of the course, thereby enabling all students to learn effectively (*methodology, use of assessment*);
- | by establishing good working relationships, valuing and respecting the contribution of all students, giving encouragement to the students who lack confidence and not allowing the more knowledgeable students to dominate, the teacher creates a positive and confident atmosphere in which intellectual and physical achievement flourishes (*management*);
- | by using a wide range of resources – including IT, Internet and video – and through structured guidance from the teacher, students are enabled to organise their ideas into coherent spoken and written arguments, and also to translate these into meaningful and expressive dance/movement sequences, as they become more familiar with the wider cultural, political, social and moral issues of dance;
- | through observing individuals' strengths, weaknesses and interests, the teacher stretches them by selecting tasks and projects which make appropriate individual physical, intellectual and creative demands, in order to inspire and motivate all members of the group and enable them to identify how they can improve and give of their very best (*use of assessment, expectations, students' understanding of how they can improve*);
- | the curriculum, independent work and extra-curricular provision allow students to spend time meaningfully on their chosen activities, in order to improve their performance skill, increase their understanding and contribute effectively to their own progress by showing initiative, determination, perseverance, good organisation and enquiry and by undertaking independent research, reading, note making and additional practice for themselves (*use of independent study, students' productivity*).

Be alert to teaching which may have superficially positive features but which lacks the rigour, depth, insights and command of good subject teaching.

Examples might be teaching in which:

- | the curriculum provides insufficient physical or intellectual challenge or practice of performance skills (*planning*);
- | lessons may seem well planned and thorough, but do not include any corrections to technique, acquisition of skill or improvement in performance or presentation (*planning, assessment*);
- | the pace of teaching is good but insufficient demands are made, particularly of the higher attaining students, the teacher's expectations are too low and not enough care is taken to relate theory to practice (*expectations, differentiation, methodology*);

- | the teacher uses text as a stimulus for discussion and writing, when a videotape or live practical performance might produce more extended and animated work (*methodology*);
- | the teacher's own ideas dominate the class so that, although standards of performance may be high, students do not have the depth of understanding to develop independence by using and applying skills for themselves (*students' understanding of what they are doing*); and
- | too much attention is given to polishing the performance as a lesson objective (what students have to do) rather than specifying what skills, knowledge and understanding have to be addressed (what students have to learn) for students to make progress (*planning and methodology*).

2.2 Lesson observation

Example 6: evidence from observation of AS-level dance lesson in Year 12 in a sixth-form college; second term; class of 9, including two male students

Three students present their pieces of individual choreography

They have not presented their work to the whole class before. Each student dances, the others watch, and some make notes and are ready to discuss the presentation in detail. Others are more worried about their own pieces, and one anxious student, with the teacher's agreement, works on her piece in an adjacent room.

One piece is strong and confident, with a varied vocabulary of movement and a strong performance focus. The teacher quietly offers suggestions and encouragement as the piece progresses. She assesses the positive characteristics of the piece and on one occasion relates them to other students' work to help them to improve: 'Look, Jeanie, that's the kind of variety we were talking about. She's using different rhythmical contrasts with the music, using a sense of counterpoint; she's developing the material in different body parts as it reflects the theme. The development of her initial movement phrase is apparent throughout and she changes level and quality to accent the change and development of material, not forgetting the strength of repetition.'

The second piece is less well danced but the choreography is varied and expressive, especially for a student with little experience. The student, however, can say little about it, and the teacher does not take the time to help her analyse and comment on her work. The teacher succeeds in drawing some comment from other students, a few of whom are not able to say much that is other than subjective and informal.

The third piece is short and clearly unfinished. The student is trying to interpret the five different Chinese elements, but the piece is too uniform to allow for any such differences. The teacher offers some comments and pointers, but does not firmly insist on the need to make timely progress. The teacher pulls the whole class together and reinforces what has been seen with a discussion on the language of critical analysis as it applies to the three pieces. Most students make notes but two are too busy packing up for the end of the lesson. This is not dealt with firmly enough by the teacher and the students' learning suffers during the last five minutes.

[Teaching and learning satisfactory (4)]

Commentary

Students are supportive of each other's efforts, and attentive. In general, they make good progress in the lesson with their ability to analyse and comment on dance. However, the students who do little note taking do not fully utilise the learning opportunities presented in the lesson for those who were not dancing, and the teacher is not firm enough about this. The teacher's guidance during and after each of the dances is clear, specific and constructive. The third student has fallen behind on a course with very little time to spare, especially for students with little previous experience of studying dance. However, the teacher does not take the time to help this student. The three pieces presented are at very different levels of attainment, from above to below average. The standard of the teaching and the rate of the learning achieved by the students in fifty minutes are in line with the average standard of attainment of the class as a whole in this lesson, although elements of students' work are good. This is sound, careful dance teaching. The teacher has also secured a generally high level of concentration and mutual support from most students, whilst also encouraging critical awareness and objective comment. It is not graded better than satisfactory because of the lack of full guidance to the lower attaining students.

Example 7: evidence from a class of entry level students with learning difficulties in a general college of FE; 19 students, two teachers and two helpers

The students are rehearsing a presentation piece for their friends and carers. The rehearsal takes place in the college theatre, on a good-sized stage, to country and western music. The piece has been devised by the teachers, incorporating students' ideas and preferences. The shape of some simple sequences can be seen in the rehearsal – for example, a circle dance, breaking into two lines moving towards each other and then apart.

Teaching	Learning
<p>The teachers do not establish the transitions between the elements of the piece sufficiently well.</p>	<p>This means that some students do not follow the pattern of the dance.</p>
<p>The teachers spend much time with a few students trying to sort out the transitions.</p>	<p>This leads other students to become bored and restless.</p>
<p>The teachers have difficulty stopping and starting the music.</p>	<p>This interrupts the flow of the lesson and disturbs the sequence of learning.</p>
<p>The rehearsal lacks focus.</p>	<p>So students know too little about what they are supposed to be learning.</p>
<p>Helpers are invaluable, despite their lack of familiarity with the sequence. They encourage students who have mastered the transition to practise other movements.</p>	<p>This helps them to enjoy their dancing, despite the noise, and enables individual students to make some progress, despite the weak teaching.</p>
<p>Lack of clear, precise and focused planning.</p>	<p>Means that after 50 minutes too little progress has been made towards mastering the complete sequence.</p>
<p>[Teaching and learning unsatisfactory (5)]</p>	

Commentary

Insufficient time has been given to planning this session in conjunction with the helpers. Most of the students enjoy themselves, although some find it too noisy. Some students make progress with the sequence and their own part in it, but the teachers do not succeed in helping students to master the sequence of movements. This is because the lesson plan does not concentrate sufficiently on what learning needs to take place to do so. The sequence itself is probably appropriate, given more thorough planning and a clear sense of objectives. During the lesson, too little progress is made, because the various elements are not yet ready to be worked on in sequence. The quality of learning is lifted by the spontaneous intervention of the helpers.

Example 8: evidence from a lesson with 12 students (two absent); six boys taking a BTEC first diploma (level 2) course in performing arts, in a general FE college (the week before half-term, term one)

Dance/movement

Students have very little dance experience and many of the group are ill at ease with the dance element of the course. The teacher is building up a choreographed, stylised fight sequence. Students have seen a video of a big sword-fighting scene from a film of 'The Three Musketeers'. The lesson begins with a review of the points made previously about the choreography that went into this apparently realistic fight sequence. The opening point is that dance and movement work lies behind more drama than sometimes seems the case, and that the students will be working in pairs and in fours to make up a stylised version of a fight, without the swords and the blood.

- The teacher motivates the students skilfully by his choice of material and his involvement of a reluctant student who has studied karate. This helps all the students to understand the basic points clearly and elicits their agreement about the worth of the project.

- | *The teacher encourages the students to take control, which enables them to decide that the style they should aim for is to be based on Chinese martial arts. A student offers to bring in a video of 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' to stimulate further ideas.*
- | *The teacher again involves the student with experience of karate by getting him to demonstrate some basic movements, and asks students for ways in which they could be developed into a piece for 14 people.*
- | *He structures the work in steps, so that ideas can be learnt and developed incrementally. He breaks the class into groups of four to work on mirroring simple karate-style movements, first in pairs then in fours. He occasionally interrupts a group to get the students to circulate, watch and comment. Some of the students' comments are not constructive or helpful, but the teacher quickly defuses the situation and insists gently but firmly that the protocols for critical comment agreed at the start of the course are to be adhered to by all. The teacher gives a lot of guidance and suggestions to each group. All of this leads to intense and concentrated work, with movement sequences becoming more fluent and polished.*
- | *He stops them all after half-an-hour and asks each group to present their work so far to the others. This plenary session not only helps students to share what they have learnt but develops their critical awareness. With his guidance, the students choose a single element from each group and set about learning it. This requires them to watch closely each other's work and to be ready to justify, however simply, their choice. After an hour, a short sequence of movements is being learnt by everyone in the group, and the teacher is adding a simple rhythmic accompaniment with a small hand-drum to keep them together.*

[Teaching excellent (1); learning very good (2)]

Commentary

By concentrating on the idea of fighting and action in a world other than dance, this highly effective and responsive teacher encourages a group of students, who by their own admission are not much interested in dance, to work out a stylised movement sequence for themselves. He stimulates their ideas and draws from them the thematic ideas for the work, allowing them to contribute materials and examples. He succeeds very well in moderating some potentially abrasive behaviour by assertively reminding them of agreed protocols, and maintaining the momentum of the session. Most of the students want to see the piece develop before the end of the class, so it does. The few more reluctant or inhibited class members learn less, but are still encouraged and urged along. In view of their attitudes, the learning that the teacher manages to promote is very good. Given the almost complete lack of dance or movement studies among the students, many are at a better than average level of attainment by the end of the lesson.

Example 9: national diploma in dance (musical theatre) at a vocational training school (level 4); at the end of the second term in Year 2

Jazz class

The teacher speaks to the class before starting the movement warm up. She finds out if any of the students have any ongoing injuries that she needs to be aware of. She takes them through the work that she is planning to do with them, and the technical aspects that she would like them to concentrate on during the session, such as focus, centering and performance quality. She also relates the work they are doing on this occasion to the performance they will be doing at the end of the year. She puts the practical session in relation to its performance and historical context. A live musician plays throughout, until the sequence at the end, when the teacher effectively transfers to using a CD player. The use of the musician is particularly effective. The teacher asks the students to repeat an exercise to different quality of music and then to discuss the way the same movements feel with different musical accompaniment. The students find this interesting, and they are able to experiment with different qualities of performance within the same movement sequences. Throughout, the teacher gives helpful and in-depth individual and group feedback. The students perform the exercises with accuracy and technical precision. Most students respond well to the teacher's feedback, but some are unable to apply the corrections that they are given by the teacher. At the end, the teacher teaches a complex dance sequence from a recent professional production. The students pick this up quickly and perform it well. However, they are unable to retain some information from the beginning which would have helped them progress more quickly in the learning of the sequence.

[Teaching excellent (1); learning very good (2)]

Commentary

Overall the lesson is outstanding. The teacher gives excellent feedback to the students, and is clear in planning the session and introducing it to the students. She uses the resources available to her very well, including the musician, to help the students to develop their understanding of musicality and rhythm in movement. Excellent references are made to professional practice, and theory is linked to practice throughout. The students' attainment level is very high: many have an excellent understanding of jazz techniques and are able to apply performance principles to all their work. A few students are unable to retain correction given to them, and many students do not retain the information given at the beginning, which would have helped them in the sequence. This reduced progress a little and prevented learning from being excellent (grade 1).

2.3 Other evidence on teaching and learning

Lesson observation is usually the most important source of evidence on the quality of teaching and learning, but the analysis of work and discussions with students can also yield valuable information. This is particularly important when the work includes a coursework component undertaken over time. Under these circumstances, the observation of individual lessons may give a very partial picture of the students' learning experience and of the support provided by teachers.

The work analysis will give you a good feel for the overall rate of progress, and therefore the pace of the teaching and learning. It will show the range and depth of the work which the students are required to do. For example, it will indicate whether students are introduced to a sufficiently wide range of different dance styles and cultures, and whether they are challenged sufficiently to develop their analytical and evaluative skills. It will show students' attainment level in dance and whether they have a sufficiently high understanding of dance techniques to support them in choreography and performance.

Discussions with students will give you a sense of their motivation and the range of their experiences. You can ask questions to show whether they understand clearly how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

3 Other factors affecting quality

You should report other factors only in so far as they affect the standards and achievement of the students and the quality of teaching and learning. Note and evaluate any significant features of the curriculum, leadership, management, staffing, accommodation or resources.

3.1 Accommodation

When judging the quality of accommodation for dance, determine how well the provision allows students to learn and make progress. Consider the following questions when judging the quality of the accommodation available for practical work.

- | Are there designated studios for dance?
- | Do they have appropriate flooring (sprung floors, or covered with flat performance flooring)?
- | Are there mirrors in the studios?
- | Is there access to an appropriate performance space for dance?
- | Does it include blackout facilities?
- | Is it large enough to accommodate performers and an audience?
- | Is there adequate sound and lighting equipment to meet the demands of the course?
- | Is the temperature suitable for dance activity?
- | Are there appropriate shower and changing facilities?

3.2 Resources

Resources or lack of them may also affect the standard of teaching and learning.

- | Do teachers have suitable access to sound equipment of acceptable quality?
- | Do the students ever experience live music in their technique classes?
- | Are there any costumes available to the students?
- | Are there sufficient resources for public performances?

The quality of the students' experiences may also be affected by other resources.

- | Does the library provide wide-ranging sources of material – theoretical, critical and historical works on dancers, choreographers, dance companies, dance history, stage craft and design?
- | Does it have relevant magazines dealing with dance, sufficient videotape stock of a variety of choreographers' works, and music to which the dancers can choreograph?
- | Do the students have access to tape/CD machines for their rehearsals and can they use studios for choreographing their own work?
- | Is there sufficient access to tape and sound editing equipment should the students wish to compile their own sound scores for choreography components?
- | Is there sufficient access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities to enable appropriate levels of research?

3.3 Curriculum and management

Consider the following questions.

- | If students come into contact with professional dancers and choreographers, how well do they learn from them?
- | Do students get sufficient and appropriate opportunities to perform in public?
- | When work experience is an element of vocational and performing arts courses, what do students gain from it?
- | How is the students' learning on placements monitored and assessed?

- | Are health and safety issues attended to and formally agreed with the placement organisation?
- | Are the students aware of safe dance practice with regard to warming up, cooling down, injury prevention and care?
- | Are there sufficient opportunities for students studying dance to improve their knowledge and understanding of other art forms such as music, drama and the visual arts?

4 Writing the report

The following is an example of a post-16 inspection report from an FE college providing a broad range of dance and performing arts courses. (It does not necessarily reflect the judgements in any or all of the examples given elsewhere in this booklet.) The summative judgements in these reports use, for schools, the seven-point scale: *excellent*; *very good*; *good*; *satisfactory*; *unsatisfactory*; *poor*; *very poor* and, for colleges, the five-point scale: *outstanding*; *good*; *satisfactory*; *unsatisfactory*; *very weak*. The summative judgements *excellent/very good* used in school reports correspond to *outstanding* in colleges; the judgements *poor/very poor* used in schools correspond to *very weak* in colleges.

Dance and performing arts

Overall the quality of provision in dance and performing arts is good.

Strengths

- | Students' standard of attainment is high in performance.
- | Retention rates are high.
- | Teachers have particularly varied subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- | There is much good teaching.
- | Assessment and feedback procedures are thorough.
- | There are excellent studios, specialist dance spaces and resources.

Areas for improvement

- | Some sessions do not provide enough in-depth individual feedback.
- | There is insufficient planning in some of the teaching.

Scope of provision

The college offers a good range of dance and performing arts courses. These include full-time courses leading to GNVQs at foundation and intermediate level, AVCEs and access to higher education courses. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in dance. The college has increased the range of courses since the last inspection. Dance and performing arts students can progress from level 1 to level 3 within the college. A distinctive feature of the college is a dance performance group, which performs regularly in small venues in the area. This opportunity is highly regarded by the students. The performance group also sustains the college's high profile in the local area for its dance provision. Students of average and more modest levels of capability are equally well provided with courses by the college.

Achievement and standards

Overall, achievement is very good and standards are good. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pass rates on the GCE A-level courses have been consistently above the national average since 1998. Pass rates on GNVQ and AVCE and degree access courses are also above average. In 2001, the pass rate for access students was 93%. Since many dance students start with little in the way of formal qualifications or training in dance, these results indicate very good achievement. By contrast, pass rates on level one foundation courses are just below the national average. This, however, is an improvement from the last inspection, although it continues to indicate that students in the lower level courses do not achieve as well as those in the higher level courses. Retention rates are good on all courses. For example, an average of 86% of intermediate GNVQ performing arts students have completed their studies in each of the last three years. Some students gain entry to highly competitive degree programmes – for example, at the universities of Surrey and Middlesex. In 2001, 66% of students gained a higher education place, most of them in dance or performing arts.

The quality of students' work is above average, especially in performance and choreography. Students demonstrate a wide range of choreographic skill, they work effectively within different cultural styles and forms and show confidence and understanding when performing and presenting.

Students on the GCE A-level and AVCE courses show a sound understanding of the current socio-political context of dance. They can analyse their work and discuss it confidently, applying a range of choreographic and theoretical principles. Students convey their views fully and effectively and engage in enlightened debate. They give each other constructive criticism on their creative work. In performance and production work, students are able to make good use of the resources available to them. They can also use computers for detailed research. On the GNVQ course, students' written work is varied. Many students show weaknesses in basic skills. In practical dance work, a few of these students lack the ability to apply their technical skills to long dance sequences.

Students on GCE AS and A-level courses demonstrate excellent attainment in their practical dance classes. They work with technical precision and accuracy and are able to sustain subtleties in their work in class as well as in rehearsal.

Quality of education and training

Dance teaching is good. The wide variety of professional experience and understanding among the teachers is well used to motivate and enthuse the students, and to link theory with practice. For example, in one class the teacher gave an account of his experience performing in front of a difficult audience to encourage and give confidence to the students in their work. Students make good progress in their practical work and are able to link theory and practice, particularly in the vocational courses. Most teachers are effective in taking into account the very varied levels of skill to be found among the students at each level. However, in a minority of practical lessons, teachers did not give sufficient individual feedback to students. They did not demand a high enough level of technical understanding and demonstration from their students. The students in these lessons do not understand what is required of them and are unable to apply the principles of basic dance technique to enable them to progress more rapidly. This is particularly evident in foundation GNVQ.

A few of the lessons are not planned sufficiently well to ensure that students work to an appropriate standard. In these lessons, teachers are not clear about the objectives for the class and the students are not sure what they need to do to make good progress.

Teachers make good use of the excellent studio spaces and a well-equipped studio theatre where the students perform their work. There is a well-organised rehearsal rota to ensure that students' use of rehearsal space is fairly distributed. Teachers and students have access to CD and tape players for classes and rehearsals. The library is well stocked with dance books and journals.

Students receive careful tutorial guidance, and their progress is effectively monitored. Assessment procedures are clear and helpful and the students find that assessment and feedback in most classes clearly help them understand how to make progress. In addition to the college's general careers education programme, delivered through tutorials, students make good use of the varied experience of specialist dance teachers to plan the next stage in their training or employment.

Leadership and management

Leadership is good. The courses are well managed. Communications between teachers are effective. Staff have regular and productive team meetings. Course leaders and teachers are highly motivated, which the students find inspiring. Issues raised from surveys of students' views have been resolved effectively, but there is little target setting for teachers or for individual students. Teachers in practical areas work effectively across courses to enrich the students' experience. The students benefit particularly from this in their performance work, which is of a very high quality.

