

Information for Prospective Applicants

About Our School

The Vision:

Elmhurst Ballet School in Association with Birmingham Royal Ballet is a world renowned centre of excellence for the training and education of ballet dancers. Students are equipped with the skills, resilience and creativity to succeed and make a difference in the professional dance world and beyond.

Our philosophy is Live, Dance, Learn; supporting excellence in dance, excellence in health and wellbeing and excellence in academic study. Our aim is to train and educate students in classical ballet and other dance styles to such a high standard that graduates go on to dance for Birmingham Royal Ballet and other national and international dance companies.

The History of the School:

Founded in 1923 Elmhurst is the oldest vocational dance school in the UK. The school relocated to Edgbaston, Birmingham from Surrey in 2004 when it became the Associate School to Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) and at the same time the Company's Director, David Bintley CBE, became the school's Artistic Advisor.

The school has been specifically designed to meet the requirements of professional dance training, with all facilities on one 5½ acre campus. This move constituted a £20 million investment in the future of dance education in the UK and Elmhurst now fills what was a conspicuous void in vocational dance training in the Midlands. In October 2004, the school was officially opened by Dame Merle Park, a former student, and Sir Peter Wright, ballet star and former Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet.

In November 2014, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, Patron, visited the school to mark the beginning of the 10th anniversary celebration of being based in Birmingham. HRH toured the school, including the student allotment and heard plans for our new, state of the art Health and Wellbeing Centre, which officially opened in January 2016.

The Artistic Faculty:

Elmhurst prepares students for professional careers in ballet and allied dance genres. Students benefit greatly from the school's association with Birmingham Royal Ballet, Europe's leading touring classical company. During the course, there are opportunities for Graduate Year students to join Company class and learn about life as a professional dancer. Many students have the opportunity to perform with the Company in the UK and overseas. Many Company members visit the school to teach and judge competitions and there is active involvement from the technical team to support the School's annual performances.

Through the annual auditions process, students are selected from the age of eleven, for their physical facility, perceived potential and their commitment to dance. Through the training programme, students gain the necessary technical and artistic skill to a professional level of proficiency to prepare them for a career with a classical ballet company or a major dance company with an extended repertoire of classical and contemporary works.

The Dance curriculum is geared to the future requirements of ballet companies worldwide and is taught by an international faculty of dance teachers with outstanding professional reputations. The three year Sixth Form course in "Classical Ballet & Related Dance Styles" is open to students who wish to enter full-time vocational training at 16+ years. This course leads to the award of the National Diploma in Professional Dance, a Level 6 qualification awarded by Trinity College London and equivalent to a vocational Honours degree.

Teaching by a faculty of distinguished teachers and professional artists is enhanced by celebrated visiting artists, choreographers and teachers. Students gain experience of working with choreographers of international standing, both in the studio and in rehearsal for the school's large-scale productions. They also have the opportunity to compete in ballet competitions in the UK and abroad. On site, there are seven "state of the art" ballet studios and a well-equipped theatre which seats an audience of 250 people.

By the end of this three year programme, students should have developed the range of techniques, artistry, self-belief and maturity to accept responsibility for their own progress within a major dance company.

The Academic Faculty:

Although this is a vocational school, academic study is hugely important. The professional life of a ballet dancer is often very short; sometimes an accident, injury or other factor may make entry to the dance profession an unrealistic aim. It is therefore crucially important that our students are offered an academic curriculum that is as wide-ranging as possible and integrates successfully into the artistic programme.

The school is non-selective in terms of academic ability. Within the academic team the aim is to provide students with a broad, balanced and appropriate education where they can at least match and often exceed their potential. SEN and EAL students are supported through in class support and specialist tuition. Owing to dance commitments there is not enough time to cover the spectrum of subjects offered in non-vocational schools within our timetable, yet we are proud of how much we do pack into the curriculum.

The classes are mixed ability in Y7 and Y8. In Y9 there are two sets in Maths, and from Y10 that is the case in Maths, Science and English. In Y10 students also make three GCSE option choices between: History or Art; Geography, French or Music; and Drama, Economics or RE. English language, English literature, Maths, double award Science and Dance are compulsory. A choice of two from six A Levels is also offered in addition to the dance curriculum and students in the Sixth Form are, after careful consideration, sometimes allowed to self-study a particular subject.

The results of public examinations are consistently high with 95% of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade A* - C (including Maths and English) in 2016.

Enrichment:

The school offers a wide range of enrichment programmes and activities; these are mainly delivered on Friday afternoon's and weekends. The programme includes sports such as tennis, netball, swimming, gymnastics as well as yoga, fitness work, Dalcroze Eurythmics and plyometrics. Other activities include debating, arts and craft, history, Italian club and cookery master classes. The school organises enrichment trips which include local trips to theatres, galleries and museums as well as fun activities at the weekends such as to Waterworld, the cinema and bowling.

The Boarding Experience:

Elmhurst's experienced boarding staff are sympathetic to the needs of young people training for careers as professional performers. Our aim is to provide a safe, friendly, professional and supportive environment in which they will live and flourish.

The team of highly dedicated boarding staff meet regularly with artistic and academic staff and forge strong links with home to provide the best holistic care for each child in their House.

Elmhurst has four boarding houses on site which accommodate the Lower School. A new, bespoke, Sixth Form Accommodation Block; The Elms is a short walk from School. The Graduate Year students live in privately rented accommodation close by. Each boarding house has two or more residential members of staff.

The resident Boarding Staff have accommodation within the Boarding Houses which is modern, light, airy and comfortable. Whilst the apartments are able to

accommodate partners, unfortunately, they are not suitable to accommodate families. Residential staff may keep a pet on site at the discretion of the Principal. Elmhurst is a non-smoking campus.

Health & Wellbeing:

Our new Health & Wellbeing Centre, opened in January 2016, and is staffed by four professional Nurses and a Health and Wellbeing Centre Administrator. Medical support is provided by Bellevue Medical Centre located on the Bristol Road; a doctor visits the school to hold two weekly surgeries. We have our own physiotherapy suite and Gym. The Nurses liaise closely with relevant agencies and parents regarding all health issues.

Provided by Holroyd Howe an external catering company who are specialists in providing freshly prepared, nutritious food exclusively to independent schools and colleges; the Bistro is vibrant and welcoming. Healthy eating promotes healthy dancers and there is an excellent choice of food with vegetarian and non-dairy options available. Any food allergy can be catered for.

Working at Elmhurst:

It is essential that Staff establish a good rapport with young people and are able to work effectively as part of a team. We also encourage candidates to consider whether they have any skills or hobbies which could be used to benefit staff and students alike reaching beyond their day to day duties.

Elmhurst is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its care and expect all staff to share this commitment.

Staff are able to eat in the Bistro free of charge during their working day, and access to the gym and free on-site car parking is also available.

Jessica Wheeler
Principal of Elmhurst Ballet School

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