



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

TRING PARK SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Tring Park School for the Performing Arts

Full Name of School	Tring Park School for the Performing Arts			
DfE Number	919/6041			
Registered Charity Number	1040330			
Address	Tring Park School for the Performing Arts Tring Park Tring Hertfordshire HP23 5LX			
Telephone Number	01442 824 255			
Fax Number	01442 891 069			
Email Address	info@tringpark.com			
Principal	Mr Stefan Anderson			
Chair of Governors	Mr Michael Geddes			
Age Range	8 to 18			
Total Number of Pupils	313			
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (87 boys; 226 girls)			
Numbers by Age	8-11:	16	11-19	297
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	98		
Number of Boarders	Total:	215		
	Full:	215	Weekly	0
Inspection dates	15 Mar 2011 to 16 Mar 2011			

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, an inspection of boarding was carried out at the same time by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The report of this inspection is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
3 ACTION POINTS	5
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	5
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	5
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	6

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 This co-educational boarding and day school is set in a Rothschild mansion surrounded by seventeen acres of parkland in Tring, Hertfordshire. Founded in 1945, it is for pupils aged 8 to 19 who are considered to have a particular talent in one or more of dance, drama, musical theatre and music. A three-phased building programme is underway. The first stage was recently completed. As a result, five new performing studios opened for use in November 2010.
- 1.2 The school is a charitable trust governed by a group of educational and business professionals. It aims to produce creative, dedicated and educated performers with well-rounded personalities. It also aims to teach pupils to work and play hard and to take pride in what they do; to pay attention to detail; to have good manners; to consider other people's feelings and to grow into self-disciplined, responsible adults who will contribute to the community. It aims to develop the whole personality: the spiritual, social, imaginative, practical and physical as well as the academic.
- 1.3 Entry is through audition, non-selective assessment and references. Currently, 313 pupils are on roll. Analysis of the school's entry data shows that the ability profile is above the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. English is an additional language for fourteen pupils. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified 52 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.4 An academic education is provided alongside tuition in the performing arts. For pupils in the prep department (Years 4, 5 and 6) both strands are integrated and the sixteen pupils are taught in one class. In the senior school, for Years 7 to 9, the academic curriculum runs during the afternoons and the vocational curriculum during the morning. For Years 10 to 13, this pattern is reversed. Year 14 is comprised largely of dance students, who are day pupils, completing their vocational training.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Preparatory Department

School	NC name
Prep1	Year 4
Prep 2	Year 5
Prep 3	Year 6

Senior School.

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 7
Form 2	Year 8
Form 3	Year 9
Form 4	Year 10
Form 5	Year 11
Lower 6th	Year 12
Upper 6th	Year 13
3 rd year 6th	Year 14

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent and demonstrates the school's significant success in meeting its aim to produce creative, dedicated and educated performers and to develop the whole personality: the spiritual, social, imaginative, practical and physical as well as the academic. Pupils' successful acquisition of professional standard speaking and listening, physical and creative skills is confirmed by their notable success in auditions for the performing arts industry. Through the broad, vibrant vocational and academic curriculum, the pupils develop excellent analytical and independent thinking skills. The recent development of a Year 14 for dance students enables extension of the range of courses. Academically, pupils' literacy skills are very well developed. Pupils have a good grasp of mathematical, scientific and technological concepts. They apply these skills well, using information and communication technology proficiently to support their learning. They leave the school to move directly and successfully into performing professions, or gain places at specialist vocational institutions, or at university for academic study.
- 2.2 Vocational attainment throughout the school is exceptional in national dance, drama and music examinations, reflecting first class teaching and an excellent curriculum. Academic attainment is high. In the prep department, pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests, but on the evidence available it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectation. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. In the senior school, results in GCSE and at A level have been good in relation to the national averages for maintained schools, although they dipped in 2010. In GCSE more than four-fifths of pupils achieve five or more A* - C grades. An above average proportion of pupils achieve the top A* or A grades.
- 2.3 The level of attainment shows that pupils' progress from their starting points, verified by standardised measures, is good in academic subjects. It is exceptional in vocational pursuits. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They enjoy co-operating; they are fully motivated by their passion for vocational excellence and this enthusiasm spills over into their academic work. They respond well to the good academic curriculum. Their sense of purpose is encouraged by the comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education and the school's excellent attention to vocational careers education
- 2.4 The quality of teaching overall is excellent, especially in vocational pursuits. Teachers are knowledgeable and committed to getting the best from their pupils. They plan their lessons well. Marking and assessment are excellent in the vocational elements and in some academic subjects. However, there is a lack of consistency in the frequency and quality of assessment and records. The excellent elements of the teaching nurture the pupils' gifts and talents whether vocational or academic. The pupils who need special help with their learning, and those who speak English as an additional language, make equivalent progress to their peers because they are well supported.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 The pupils' personal development is excellent, underpinned by the very high quality of pastoral care. Excellent spiritual development is reflected in pupils' responses to a wide range of class and whole-school activities, including art displays, drama, dance and music. Pupils are friendly to each other and to visitors, and are notably confident. Their moral development is excellent. Pupils observe a natural sense of right and wrong, showing great care and concern for each other, qualities reflected across all parts of the school. As one said, 'We have a common aim in performing together.' Pupils actively support local and national causes, and the school maintains a proud record of helping others in the community.
- 2.6 The pupils' social development is excellent. Teamwork and co-operation are highly valued by pupils, who very overtly respect the values and beliefs of others, while keen to develop their own personalities. Pupils spoke eloquently of the positive effect that good manners and friendship bring to the school community. Throughout the school, pupils' cultural development is excellent, promoted through the outstanding and frequent high quality musical, dramatic and dance performances. There are many examples where pupils enthusiastically embrace opportunities to understand their own and others' cultures. For instance, in the senior school, pupils recently devised a play on the Holocaust using historical detail and performed it in Venice at a festival to celebrate world peace.
- 2.7 The outstanding levels of personal development are due in no small part to the excellent daily care, guidance and support pupils receive from staff. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures support the care given to the welfare, health and safety of pupils overall. All the required risk assessments and training are carried out, including for visits, fire, safeguarding and first aid. Anti-bullying arrangements are effective. The registration and admission registers are accurate.
- 2.8 Boarding is satisfactory overall. Relationships are excellent between the boarders, demonstrating their very well-honed personal skills. Relationships vary between pupils and boarding staff because in each boarding house rules are different, and this affects the extent to which boarders feel trusted and supported. In the pupils' questionnaire, a majority of pupils reported this dissatisfaction, some indicating that they do not feel fairly treated by boarding staff. Inspectors found that inconsistencies have developed because of a lack of regular checks on consistency of practice by senior managers until very recently. This is now being addressed. Accommodation in the seven boarding houses is satisfactory. The boarders benefit from a good range of activities which enrich their overall excellent achievement.
- 2.9 In general, other responses to the pupils' questionnaire were positive, reflecting satisfaction, especially in enjoyment of being at the school, in the progress pupils feel they are making, and in the encouragement they receive to develop independence.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.10 Governance is satisfactory overall. Governors' strong support encourages pupils' success and helps the school fulfil its aim to develop pupils' whole personality: the spiritual, social, imaginative, practical and physical as well as the academic. The governing body shows strong commitment to the school's strategic development and effective oversight of budget and estate matters. This has led to the successful implementation of the first tranche of new building.
- 2.11 Thorough checks on the suitability of governors and staff have led to well qualified, suitable appointments. The maintenance of the centralised register is robust. A new governing structure since the last inspection has begun to provide well-targeted support to different aspects of the school through several committees, but this work is at an early stage of development. In consequence, a lack of rigour in monitoring the work of the school and especially the boarding experience has led to inconsistency in the implementation of related policies and procedures. The governing body takes seriously its responsibilities for checking health and safety, risk assessments and safeguarding procedures and carries out satisfactory checks in these respects.
- 2.12 Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Staff who lead the various vocational, academic, health and boarding areas work in separate teams and each has promoted pupils' success, sometimes exceptionally well. However, the school is aware that there is a sense of detachment between the teams that restricts the overall effectiveness of leadership and management. Restructuring has led to new responsibilities for pastoral aspects and boarding that has begun to unite practice and improve monitoring checks, but this work is at an early stage.
- 2.13 Staff are well deployed. The ethos and values of the school are supported by appropriate management responsibilities, policies and procedures, but their review and checks on required coverage are not rigorous. The very best practice in teaching is not shared widely enough. Some inconsistency of practice has developed that has reduced the quality of the boarding experience since the last inspection. The effective appraisal system links with the development plan so that staff targets are in the interests of pupils' successful outcomes and related to whole school plans. Self evaluation reflects an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The historical setting in parkland forms a spectacular backdrop for learning. While older areas of the school are satisfactory, the new studios are an excellent resource significantly enhancing pupils' vocational experience.
- 2.14 Links with parents are good overall. In their responses to questionnaires, parents indicated great satisfaction with the availability of information about the school. This is thorough, and conveyed through publications, attractive newsletters and an informative website, although some of the policies on the website at the time of the inspection were not up to date. Written reports for parents on their children's progress are regular, positive and detailed.
- 2.15 Most parents who responded to the questionnaire were supportive. They value the high standard of behaviour achieved, and the worthwhile attitudes and views promoted. However, a significant proportion said they did not think the school handled concerns well. Inspectors judged that day-to-day concerns are handled efficiently. The formal complaints policy is suitable and records show it is followed when invoked.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Strengthen the role of governors, leaders and managers by ensuring that they monitor the work of the school effectively.
 2. Take steps to ensure consistency and cohesiveness of practice across the school in teaching, assessment and boarding.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools were inspected by a team of two Ofsted inspectors over three days.

Inspectors

Mrs Ruth McFarlane

Miss Jenny Butler

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Reporting Inspector

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