

Music and Dance Scheme Awards Funding Policy

These Awards, funded by the Department for Education through its Music and Dance Scheme, are designed to ensure that talented young dancers, regardless of their background or financial circumstances, have access to excellent training. These are means-tested Awards and therefore the level of funding is dependent on parental income. Families in high-income brackets may not be eligible for assistance depending on the thresholds set by the Department for Education. There is also financial support available for music lessons, RAD lessons, vocational uniform costs, private medical insurance, and, in some instances, travel costs and academic uniform costs. It is standard practice for the school to offer the Awards to the most talented candidates aged 11, but in some cases, an MDS Award may be offered to those in Year 8 and above.

The Award is offered for one year and is renewable each year depending on progress, achievement, and physical suitability for a professional dance career, primarily (but not limited to) in classical ballet. Additional information from both academic and pastoral areas also informs all decision-making.

Please note that eligibility for funding is reviewed annually through the completion of the DFE MD1 form and declarations/verification of household income, accompanied by supporting documentation.

In some cases, the Award ends at age 16 when Year 11 is completed; however, the scholarship may occasionally be extended for the duration of the Sixth Form. This decision is made on a case-by-case basis, using evidence from assessments and faculty consultation with the Principal.

The school has the discretion to Award the Department for Education's prizes to the most deserving children or young persons. This is determined by a rigorous audition procedure, outlined as follows:

Auditioning for an Award

Stage 1:

The candidate auditions for the school and passes the audition for the course based on their technical ability. During this audition, the panel assess whether the child should be recalled for the second, funding audition. The panel is composed of the Director of the Dance Course, Artistic Director and the Head of Classical Ballet.

Stage 2:

All candidates will be asked to remain for a comprehensive physical screen to assess ranges of movement, injury history and suitability for vocational training. This screen plays a crucial role in gathering evidence for the final decision. Full disclosure about any previous issues is important, as failure to report something that later becomes evident may result in an Award being removed. Any prior history of injury or illness will not necessarily preclude an Award, but will form part of an understanding of the physical and mental demands of dance training.

Stage 3:

At this stage of the audition process for funding, the panel consists of the Principal, the Director of the Dance Course, the Artistic Director, the Director of Studies and the Head of Classical Ballet.

A dance physiotherapist is often invited to be on the panel, and an invited external consultant will be present.

The panel is looking for the most physically suitable candidates for professional training, primarily in classical ballet. Candidates are scored on their technical, physical and artistic abilities. Additionally, the panel look for a sense of performance, natural musicality, and artistry.

Stage 4:

The panel meets with the physiotherapists to assess each screen individually and discuss suitability for training, taking into account the results of the dance audition. The panel rank the candidates in order of suitability, and the list is then discussed with the Principal, who makes all final decisions. Letters informing parents and candidates of the results are sent.

No disclosure will be made about the order of rankings of the candidates to parents, except for a general indication of whether they are at the top, middle, or lower end of the ranking. This aligns with the practices of all other schools that offer dance scholarships.

Removing an Award

The scholarship is awarded annually, and parents are notified each November if there are concerns about a child's continued funding for the next academic year. This may be because, as a child develops, it becomes clear that their physique has changed and that a career in classical ballet is unlikely. It could also be due to assessment marks falling below the expected level for this Award, work ethic or performance levels not meeting the scholarship requirements, or a lack of natural resilience to meet the demands of training.

The decision to withdraw an Award is discussed by the entire dance faculty, based on evidence from teachers, assessments, and effort reports from all parts of the school. Recommendations are then made to the Principal, and the school will send a letter to parents inviting them to a discussion. Parents may already have been alerted to concerns through teachers' feedback in consultations and reports. They will meet with the Director of the Dance Course, the Artistic Director, and the Director of Studies, who will explain the concerns and set a date by which final decisions will be made. This typically occurs at the end of the autumn term, allowing parents sufficient time to make alternative arrangements for future training and education.

Removal of an Award does not mean that the child is unsuited for a professional dance career; it only means that a classical ballet career may be unlikely. Removal of an Award does not mean that the child must leave the school. If alternative funding can be found, the child will retain their place at the school.

If a scholarship is removed at the end of Year 11, students will be encouraged to audition for the school's Sixth Form Dance and Drama Awards. These are also means-tested, but they do not provide additional support for music lessons, medical insurance, or uniform costs.

In all matters related to the Awarding and removal of funding, the Principal makes the final decision after consultation with relevant staff.