Music and Dance Scheme

Funding Policy

The Music and Dance Scheme is funded by the Department for Education, and is designed to ensure that access to excellent training may be given to talented young dancers regardless of their background or financial circumstances. These are means-tested funded places 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 examinations, vocational uniform costs and private medical insurance and, in some instances, travel costs and academic uniform costs. It is normal practice for the school to offer the Music and Dance Scheme funding to the most talented candidates aged 11, but in some cases an MDS funded place may be offered to those in Year 8 and above.

The funding is offered for one year and is renewable each year depending on progress and achievement and physical suitability for a professional dance career, primarily, but not limited to, classical ballet. Additional information from academic and pastoral areas also forms a part of all decision-making. Please note that eligibility for funding is reviewed every year through completion of the DFE MD1 form and declarations/verification of household income with supporting documentation.

In many cases the MDS ends at age 16 when Year 11 is completed but occasionally the award may be extended for the duration of the Sixth Form. This is decided on a case-by-case basis using evidence from assessments and faculty consultation with the Principal.

The school has the discretion to give MDS placements from the Department for Education to the most appropriate 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 primarily on their physique, and secondly on their technical ability. During this audition the panel make an assessment as to whether the child should be recalled for the second, placement 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 forms an important part of evidence gathering 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 previous history of injury or illness will not necessarily preclude an award, but form part of an understanding of the physical and mental demands of dance training.

Stage 3:

At this stage of the audition process the panel consists of the Principal, the Director of the Dance Course, Artistic Director, 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 meet with the physiotherapists to assess every screen individually and discuss the suitability for training, matched with 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 other than a generalised top, middle or lower end of the ranking. This is in line with all other MDS schools that offer the Music and Dance Scheme.

Removing MDS Placement Funding

The MDS placements are allocated on a yearly basis and parents are written to each year, by October half term, to inform them if there is concern about a child's continued placement for the following academic year. This may be because, as a child grows, it could become evident that their physique has changed during growth and that the potential for a career in classical ballet is unlikely. It may be that assessment marks are below the expected level for someone on this award; the work ethic or performance levels, fall short of what is required for this funding; or there is a lack of natural resilience for the demands of training. The removal of an MDS funded place is discussed by the entire dance faculty based on evidence from teachers, assessments and reports on effort from all areas of the school. Recommendations are made to the Principal and the School will send a letter to the parents inviting them in for a discussion. Parents may have already been alerted about concerns from teachers' feedback in consultations and in reports. Parents will meet with the Director of the Dance Course, The Artistic Director and the Director of Studies who will outline those areas for concern and a date by which time the final decisions will be made. This is normally at the end of the Autumn term. This is to ensure that parents have sufficient time to make alternative arrangements for future training and education.

Removal of MDS funded place does not mean that the child is not suited for a professional dance career, only that a classical ballet career may be unlikely.

Removal of MDS funded place 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.

MDS funding placements normally end at the end of Year 11, as mentioned earlier. All dance students will then be encouraged to audition for a Dance and Drama Award which are available for 6th form dance students. These are also means-tested but they do not offer additional support for music lessons, medical insurance and uniform costs.

In all matters related to the awarding and removing of placement funding, the Principal makes the final decisions, after consultation with relevant staff.