



Dance: a guide for governing boards

Providing high quality
dance education in schools



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Acknowledgements

This guide has been developed through collaboration between the National Governance Association, Arts Council England and One Dance UK.

Arts Council England

We are the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.

National Governance Association

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and clerks of state schools in England.

We are an independent, not-for-profit charity that aims to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning.

We represent the views of governors, trustees and clerks at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies.

One Dance UK

One Dance UK is the sector support organisation leading the way to a stronger, more vibrant and diverse dance sector.

As the subject association for dance in schools, One Dance UK advocates for the value and place of dance in education due to its unique position as a curriculum activity that combines creativity with physicality.

Foreword

Those of us who govern champion the right of children and young people to a high quality and wide-ranging education, ensuring their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The value of creative education in the lives of our young people – and the important role that subjects such as art and design, dance, drama and music have to play alongside English, maths and science – has never been more apparent as we begin to recover from the educational, social and health impacts of Covid-19.

Throughout lockdown, pupils faced huge upheavals in their day to day lives. But we also saw the positive power of creativity in supporting their learning, mental health and resilience. Now, as we begin to consider post-pandemic life, we need to ensure that high quality cultural education opportunities are available to every child, no matter what their background. These opportunities should be both formal and informal, in the classroom as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and outside the classroom too. This is a matter of fairness and opportunity for all children.

As school governors and trustees, we have the chance to advocate for the right of all young people to benefit from high quality cultural education and to be creative through their study of subjects such as art and design, dance, drama and music. We know that this isn't always the case and it's why we encourage governors and trustees to champion cultural education in their schools, so that we can do

our best to ensure quality arts education for all. Literacy, numeracy and creativity are the three pillars of a strong educational offer.

These cultural education subjects encourage pupils to express themselves, to build confidence and to develop creative thinking skills, unlocking young people's potential and preparing them to succeed in life. Schools remain the single most important place where children can access great cultural experiences, which is why we've worked in collaboration with the NGA and subject specialists to refresh our guides for school governors. We hope these resources will inspire you to develop your understanding of how cultural education subjects can change the lives of children and young people and that they will support you in your role.

Dr Darren Henley OBE

Chief Executive, Arts Council England



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This guide is part of a collection developed to support governing boards. The collection covers art and design, music and dance and includes an introductory guide to arts, culture and creativity.

The collection is available via the [National Governance Association](#) and [Arts Council England](#) websites.

Introduction

Dance is a unique subject that blends creativity with physical activity. It offers enriching experiences and builds skills that benefit pupils during their education and in adult life. All pupils can engage and succeed in dance, taking on the roles of creator, performer, audience, critic and leader.

Dance is a compulsory activity within the national curriculum for physical education and is one of the most popular art forms amongst young people, supporting pupils' health and wellbeing.

The current Ofsted inspection framework places an emphasis on pupils receiving a broad and ambitious curriculum that connects learning across all subjects.

Dance makes a positive contribution to ensuring pupils receive this entitlement whilst equipping them with the diverse cultural experiences they need to thrive.

Governing boards can be influential in promoting access to high quality dance for all children and young people in their school or trust. Where schools make a strategic decision to develop and embed high quality dance provision, they can expect to see a positive impact on the life and culture of the whole school.



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The benefits of dance education

1. Whole school improvement

High quality dance promotes whole school improvement through positively influencing the culture of the school, raising aspirations and enhancing the profile of the school in its community.

2. Building skills for life

Dance enables young people to gain artistic skills and discipline, as well as developing their ability in physical interaction, team working, problem solving, observing, evaluating, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

3. Mental and emotional wellbeing

Helping pupils build the skills and resilience to develop and maintain good mental health should be a priority for all schools. Dance can improve self-esteem, raise confidence and support a positive outlook.

4. Improving physical health

Dance in school provides young people with a positive, lifelong relationship with the arts and physical activity, particularly those who may be resistant to participating in competitive or traditional sport.

5. Enriching cultural experiences

Dance exposes young people of all learning abilities to a cultural form through which they can express their own identity and culture as well as experience cultures from around the world.

The characteristics of high quality dance provision

Effective teaching and learning

Dance is a compulsory element of the curriculum in key stage 1-3. High quality dance education should be coherent, purposeful and progressive, allowing pupils to explore their own creativity.

The dance curriculum should include a balance of:

- performance (skills building and presenting to an audience)
- choreography (creating)
- appreciation (feedback and analysis)

Pupils should be able to talk about dance using the correct terminology and subject-specific vocabulary to enable them to develop analytical responses and express their beliefs and opinions articulately. High quality dance appreciation can be achieved through discussion, question and answer, and verbal responses.

Dance education should offer a wide variety of dance experiences to all pupils and feature within the school's curriculum across the academic year.

Dance can be embedded across the school curriculum – within physical education or expressive arts, for example – or can be taught as standalone lessons.

Available and accessible to all

All children and young people can participate in dance, regardless of starting point, background, ability or disability. Creating dance develops awareness of individual capabilities and strengths, allowing pupils to design movement to suit their own style. Inclusive provision inspires all pupils through a broad range of styles and music and

focuses on what pupils can do, as opposed to what they can't.

A careful choice of varied and inclusive imagery, film clips and display materials will help to challenge any stereotypes about who can or should participate in dance.

Opportunities to be creative

Pupils should have the opportunity to explore ideas and respond creatively through their own choreography. In practice this means pupils:

- work independently of the teacher
- show physical expressions in response to a given task
- collaborate with other pupils
- experiment, evaluate and refine their ideas

Opportunities to watch and participate in dance performance

Pupils should have regular opportunities to build and showcase their performance skills. Live performance can be on a small scale, such as one-to-one demonstration between pupils within lessons, as well as larger scale events which provide an opportunity to engage parents, carers and the wider community.

Participating in dance performance provides life-enhancing and memorable learning experiences for pupils.

Opportunities to watch high quality professional dance work, both live and recorded, helps to raise pupils' aspirations and connect their learning to the wider dance sector.

Supporting career development

Dance helps pupils develop transferable life and employability skills, including collaboration, creativity, problem-solving and resilience. The study of dance can support career development, both within the dance sector and more widely. This should be made explicit to pupils and parents/carers, as well as the wider school community.

Jobs in the dance sector stretch far beyond the familiar roles of dancer, teacher and choreographer to include health care practitioners, researchers, dance scientists, writers, producers, programme managers, costume designers and many more.

Key stage 3 study should facilitate pupil progress onto key stage 4 dance qualifications. Secondary schools should consider GCSE Dance, AS/A level dance or vocational and technical qualifications in performing arts, which can have a specialist route through dance at both levels 2 and 3. Examples of these include Pearson BTEC qualifications in performing arts, UAL qualifications in performing and production arts, and RSL qualifications in creative and performing arts.

There are also a variety of dance routes post key stage 5 including conservatoires, university dance degrees and vocational training.

[Creative careers](#) bring together careers information and opportunities from creative organisations in one explorable directory.



Photo © Brian Slater

How to influence dance education in your school

There are many ways in which governing boards can work strategically to raise the status of dance education and increase its impact.

The following enablers of high quality dance provision are intended to prompt discussion at governing board meetings and with senior executive leaders in your school or trust.

The enablers of high quality dance provision

Developing skills, knowledge and confidence

High quality dance provision relies upon teachers having the skills and knowledge to deliver dance confidently. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should be a focus for any school developing their provision and must be facilitated with long term goals in mind.

Schools should explore cost effective and sustainable approaches to CPD. It may be better for dance specialists to deliver training that enables teachers to deliver their own dance curriculum, rather than buying in resources. One-off events and specialist interventions can be beneficial, but may not deliver sustained improvement.

Utilising partnerships

Establishing links with partners can help schools expand dance provision and access expertise.

Dance partnerships may be developed between your school and:

- professional dance organisations, companies and artists
- community organisations
- other schools, FE and HE organisations

All partnerships must have a clear focus, with both parties agreeing on aims, roles and responsibilities.

Access to CPD

The following organisations provide high quality CPD and support for schools developing their dance provision:

- [One Dance UK](#)
- [AQA \(GCSE & A level Dance\)](#)
- [Pearson \(BTEC\)](#)
- [Royal Opera House](#)
- [RSL](#)
- [UAL](#)
- [BBC step-by-step dance resource](#) for planning, supporting and delivering dance to pupils aged 7-11

How to find partners

Visit the [One Dance UK website](#) for information on finding dance organisations and artists. You can also read case studies about successful partnerships.

Arts Council England fund a network of bridge organisations to connect schools and the cultural sector. Each Bridge has a database of organisations that schools can use to search for partners to work with. Visit [Bridge Organisations | Arts Council England](#) to find your local Bridge and access their database.

Using sports premium to build skills

All maintained and state-funded primary schools receive additional PE and sport premium funding. Schools must use this funding to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE, sport and physical activity they offer.

Schools may choose to use their PE and sport premium to help deliver dance. For example:

- upskilling teachers to be able to confidently deliver dance activity
- bringing in dance specialists to deliver additional sessions under the supervision of the teacher, to expand and deepen the delivery of existing core PE sessions
- to add new breakfast and after-school dance clubs
- to develop dance performance platforms with other local schools

One Dance UK provide further [guidance on using PE and sport premium](#) as well as offering [CPD programmes](#). The [U.Dance Local](#) network supports community dance events featuring pupils from more than one school.

Embedding creativity across the curriculum

Artsmark is the only creative quality standard for schools and education settings, accredited by Arts Council England. Artsmark helps schools develop and celebrate their commitment to arts and cultural education.

Embed creativity across your whole curriculum and address school improvement priorities using Artsmark's flexible framework.

Find out more at artsmark.org.uk



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Spaces and resources for dance to be delivered safely and effectively

Some schools will have access to a dedicated dance space – this is particularly appropriate and beneficial for secondary schools who offer dance qualifications. However, shared facilities such as school halls or gyms can be more than adequate spaces to teach dance lessons, provided they are made safe for dance.

Access to shared spaces can be challenging due to competing demands and busy school life but this can be overcome through effective booking systems and long-term planning.

Dance as an activity does not require large amounts of specialist equipment but teachers and pupils should have access to:

- a clean floor, free of any obstacles
- a space with adequate ventilation and temperature control
- accessible changing facilities
- a bank of appropriate music
- a good quality sound system
- facilities to playback sound and video for teaching
- a stimulating environment which may include displays and opportunities to watch professional dance
- an effective warm-up and cool down in every dance lesson
- appropriate clothing

How to monitor progress, impact and outcomes

Governing boards are responsible for ensuring that pupils receive an inclusive dance experience that makes a meaningful contribution towards building skills and knowledge for the next stage of education and adult life.

Some of the most important outcomes of dance education – such as pupils’ physical and mental health and wellbeing – do not lend themselves to simple quantitative measurement. Where schools have chosen to make dance a strategic priority, governors and trustees will need to think carefully about what information they need to receive from school leaders to build a comprehensive picture that is relevant to their intended outcomes and strategic objectives.

See the table below for sources of information.

| Source | Description |
|--|--|
| Governance monitoring visits | Visits allows governing boards to monitor relevant activity and key milestones linked to strategic priorities. This may include watching a dance performance or observing CPD, for example. Monitoring visits are also an opportunity to have focused discussions with subject leaders and other key staff members. |
| Headteacher and senior leader reports | Headteacher reports provide an overview of progress made towards strategic priorities. This may include details of dance events, performances and partnerships if these are relevant to your strategy. |
| Case studies | Case studies provide an opportunity for school leaders to highlight the impact of dance on individual pupils or small groups that may not be readily visible in statistical data. |
| Presentations from subject leads | Presentations during governing board or committee meetings may be a helpful way for teachers to demonstrate the development of teaching and learning practice and the dance curriculum. |

Pupil and parent voice

Listening to stakeholders is an essential element of measuring progress.

Feedback from pupils could come from established methods (such as school councils) or through conversations during monitoring visits.

Data

Data can be a useful and consistent measure of progress, particularly when combined with other sources. Examples of data include: attendance, progress measures, participation in extra-curricular activity, take up rate of relevant qualifications and attainment.

Boards may benefit from looking at data from a range of cohorts and pupil types (such as disadvantaged pupils).

Questions that governing boards can ask:

The following are examples of the type of questions that governors and trustees might ask about dance education in their school or trust. Consider how you might use these examples to construct your own questions, specific to your context and the issue you are discussing.

- What are the relative strengths of our dance curriculum: what are the areas we need to develop?
- Have we achieved an inclusive dance curriculum? Are there any pupils who are not engaged in dance?
- What are the barriers to pupils engaging in dance education and how can these be overcome?
- Are pupils with special educational needs and disabilities given the same opportunities for learning in and through dance?
- In what ways do we engage with partners and networks to build our capacity for teaching dance?
- How effective are our partnerships and who monitors them?
- How are we supporting our staff to build the skills need to embed our approach to teaching dance?
- Do pupils receive current and accurate advice about careers in dance and dance qualifications?
- What facilities do we have to support a safe, high quality dance experience?



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Further information and support

National Governance Association

- [Cultural education guides for governing boards](#) including dance, art and music
- Learning Link [Arts and cultural education e-learning module](#)
- [Guide to Being Strategic](#) for governing boards and school leaders
- Guidance and tools to support [governance monitoring visits](#).

One Dance UK

- [Dance education articles](#)
- [Careers guide](#)
- [Education bulletins](#)
- [Dance in and Beyond School](#)
- [Shaping Practice](#)



Photo © Camilla Greenwell / Candoco Dance Company – Cando2 performance



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