



ROYAL
BALLET
SCHOOL

SETTING THE STANDARD

ADMISSIONS POLICY

September 2026

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Ballet School is one of the world's leading Classical Ballet Schools. Each year we welcome, and indeed encourage, applications from young people who are at very different stages in their dance career, following different training routes and from diverse backgrounds. It is important to note that we have never seen 'the finished article' at audition; rather, we are seeking to admit students on the basis of potential and aptitude for classical ballet.

There are four distinct programmes offered at the School, our Foundation and Development programmes at White Lodge, and our Vocational and Pre-Professional programmes at Upper School. Progression from the Development to the Vocational programme is determined by audition with the decision based not only on the current ability and potential for the next programme but also on what the School believes will be in the best interests of the student.

Foundation Programme

This is the first stage of a student's journey through the School. The dance curriculum is broad, with a focus on classical ballet training.

Age: 13-14

Years: National Curriculum Years 9

Academic Level: A broad curriculum offer, based on the KS3 National Curriculum

Entry: Open audition

Likely candidates: Royal Ballet School Junior Associates, UK Scholars, Intensive Course students, UK dance school students, international students

Development Programme

A two-year programme that sees an increase in the specialised training towards classical ballet. Students accepted on to the Programme will show the potential to progress to the Upper School and other top vocational schools.

Age: 14-16

Years: National Curriculum Years 10-11

Academic Level: National Curriculum KS4 (GCSE/IGCSE)

Entry: Open audition

Likely candidates: Royal Ballet School Mid-Associates, UK vocational dance school students, Royal Ballet School International Scholars, Intensive Course students, international students

Vocational Programme

A two-year programme, based at the Upper School in Covent Garden, for the students who show the most potential to progress into a career in classical ballet at the highest level. The programme content is predominantly dance, but all students are expected to follow an academic programme which includes study for the Foundation Degree in Classical Ballet and Dance Performance as well as a range of other courses such as A-levels, the EPQ or QLS (level 3) on the non-degree programme. Students who have additional learning needs, or for whom English is not their first language, are offered bespoke support with specialist teachers.

Age: 16-18

Years: National Curriculum Years 12-13

Academic Level: Foundation Degree (plus additional post-GCSE courses)

Entry: Development Programme audition, open audition, Prix de Lausanne scholarship,

Likely candidates: White Lodge Development Programme students, Royal Ballet School Senior Associates, Royal Ballet School International Scholars, exceptional national and international students

Pre-Professional Programme

The one-year Pre-Professional Programme is the final year of training at The Royal Ballet School. The programme focuses more on professional repertoire and on the final stages of training before entry into a professional career. A key component of this Programme will be opportunities for work experience with the Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Age: 18-19

Years: Year 14

Academic Level: Top-up to full BA (Hons) Degree, (for those who have completed the Vocational Programme)

Entry: by invitation following completion of the Vocational Programme Applications

External applicants can apply for any academic year (except entry into our Pre-Professional programme) and are admitted to the School following an audition process which usually takes place in the Autumn Term for Preliminary Auditions and Spring Term for the Final Auditions with admission in the following September. The decision of the audition panel is final and there is no opportunity for an appeal to be made. However, this should not deter any student from re-auditioning in another year. Unfortunately, due to the very large number of applicants to the School, it will not be possible to provide individual feedback to external applicants.

Students who attend the School in Year 11, and who are completing the Development Programme, have to apply and audition internally for the Vocational Programme). Acceptance into the Pre-Professional programme is by invitation only.

The School is a member of, and abides by the admission conventions of, the Department for Education's (DfE) **Music and Dance Schools** and many UK applicants will be eligible (subject to means testing) for up to 100% support with School fees under this scheme. You are advised to visit The Royal Ballet School website for further details
<https://royalballetschool.org.uk/information/fees/full-time-training-fees/fees>.

Details of the Admissions process, including application forms and relevant dates, are published on the School website.

It is not possible to give preference to siblings, the children of former students, or members of staff in admitting students to the School.

International students who are not eligible for MDS funding are offered equivalent means tested funding at the discretion of the Artistic Director.

Equality Legislation

The Royal Ballet School is allowed lawfully to operate a "permitted form of selection". This exception to the usual anti-discrimination rules is found in Schedule 11, Part 3, Paragraph 8 of the Equality Act 2010: Part 3: Disability discrimination: Permitted form of selection:

8 (1) A person does not contravene section 85(1), so far as relating to disability, only by applying a permitted form of selection.

(2) In relation to England and Wales, a permitted form of selection is—

(c) in the case of an independent educational institution, arrangements which provide for some or all of its pupils to be selected by reference to general or special ability or aptitude, with a view to admitting only pupils of high ability or aptitude.

After being offered a place, students are asked to provide their most recent school report. This is only to ensure that the School can adequately prepare for each student's academic and pastoral needs.

The School also requires that parents disclose any disability and/or Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) that their child has on acceptance and is committed to dealing appropriately and supportively with these in the admissions' assessment process. The Royal Ballet School accepts students who are dyslexic, have specific learning difficulties, or for whom English is not their first language amongst other requirements. No applicant or student will be discriminated against because of their individual needs in these areas. Students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) will be asked to undertake an English Language assessment and will be expected to undertake suitable preparation (as recommended by our specialist EAL teachers) in the English Language before they begin attendance at the School. Specialist support is available to EAL students at White Lodge and Upper School.

The Royal Ballet School aims to promote diversity, tolerance and respect for individual students irrespective of their gender identification, social, racial or cultural background. Every reasonable adjustment will be made to accommodate specific dietary, religious or cultural needs.

Audition routes for External Applicants into The Royal Ballet School

Full details for each academic year are provided on the School website but, typically:

- 1) UK students for White Lodge or Upper School apply in the Autumn Term. Preliminary auditions are held at locations throughout the UK in autumn and early spring.
- 2) International students can attend preliminary auditions in the UK or select international venues from September to December.
- 3) International applicants may submit a video audition if unable to attend a preliminary audition in person. Details can be found on the website.
- 4) All students aged 14 and up who are successful at the preliminary stage are invited to the Semi Final round. This round is assessed by video. Video applicants do not need to supply any additional footage; however, students who applied in person will be asked to create a video for this round.
- 5) Final auditions for selected students from the Semi Final round are held at White Lodge and Upper School usually in late February or early March. Dates are advertised on our website.
- 6) Students who participate in Intensive Courses such as the White Lodge or Upper School Spring and Summer Schools may be invited to audition or, in exceptional circumstances, offered a place at the School. But Intensive Courses should not be used as an alternative for the Audition process.
- 7) Students who participate in our International Intensive Courses, auditions and master classes currently running in Hong Kong, Japan, Italy, and the USA (various locations), may be invited to audition.
- 8) Applicants seen at international competitions such as the Prix de Lausanne, Youth America grand Prix (YAGP) or recommended via other routes may be offered a place at the School, and/or invited to send in recorded material and/or to attend an audition.

Student Progression through The Royal Ballet School

All White Lodge students can apply and audition to enter the Vocational programme at Upper School. This audition is to identify if a student has the potential and aptitude for further training,

It is of vital importance that a student who progresses from one programme to another will be able to cope physically, mentally, artistically and technically with the significant step-up in technical and artistic demand that occurs going forward. We would again emphasise that the School will only decide not to progress a student to the next stage of training if the School believes it would not be in the best interests of the student.

Through Years, 9 & 10, we will hold personalised conversations with families if concerns arise about a student's progress as they develop through this challenging stage of training. Our aim is to collaborate with you and your child to create improvement plans and provide additional support where necessary.

If a student is not meeting the expected standards and is struggling with the progression of our System of Training, we will arrange meetings with parents to discuss the best path forward. These discussions will take place during parent meetings, and any concerns will be noted in the students' reports.

To ensure clarity, we will follow a three-step process if concerns persist:

1. We will contact you to discuss the issue and develop a plan.
2. We will follow up to review progress.
3. We will inform you by an agreed date if sufficient progress has been made and we feel confident the Royal Ballet School is the right place for the students to continue their training

If a student's progress does not fully align with expectations after this process, we will work closely with you to support a smooth and thoughtful transition to a more suitable training provider or school. Our commitment is to ensure this process is handled with care, providing guidance and encouragement to both students and parents every step of the way. This would be a last resort and only if we felt it was in the students' best interest.

Students entering Year 11 will not have their training interrupted due to academic needs. However, auditions for entry into The Royal Ballet Upper School will remain unchanged. Students entering Year 12 and the Royal Ballet Upper School will not have their training interrupted and will be supported through the Vocational and Pre-Professional Programme.

It is the fervent hope of the School that every student completes the full training programme and progresses to a career in dance. If a student meets the standard required for ongoing artistic training (i.e. they will be able to cope with the demands and requirements of the next stage of training) and it is right for them to continue that training (considering their motivation, physical capability and wishes), then we would very much wish to offer this opportunity

However, for some students, continuing training at the Royal Ballet School would not be in their best interests. The physical and psychological implications of being unable to keep up with the requirements of the training programme can lead to injury, loss of confidence and subsequent unhappiness and withdrawal.

When a student is not offered a place on the next programme, it is always very difficult news to hear. At all stages, the School, in consultation with both the students and parents, provides guidance and support. For those students wishing to continue on a vocational path, the School's artistic staff can provide advice on the best options available and the School, using the available in-house resources, will provide audition videos, photographs and references as required.

For those students wishing to move to an academic path, advice can be sought from the School's senior academic staff, including the Academic and Pastoral Principal. If a student requests specific career guidance that cannot be met by a member of the School staff an appointment with an external provider will be arranged by the School.

Responsibility and review

The Artistic Director, in consultation with the School's artistic staff, will ensure that students are admitted only in accordance with this policy, and that all statutory requirements are met. All members of staff are expected to follow this policy when advising prospective parents. The number of students on roll and the results of the auditions processes will be reported to the governing body and the information will also be incorporated into the School's annual report. The School will complete and hold an Admissions Register.