

Peploe Williams ACADEMY of Theatre and Performing Arts

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How to choose the right dance school for your child

Choosing the right school to nurture, grow and develop your child's talent is so important. You want a school that will take them all the way from a fledgling dancer to an accomplished performer. You want them to learn from the best, and for them to have the best chance of success in the next stage.

So how do you begin to choose from the dozens of options available? Here are some of the most important things to think about when choosing a school for your child.

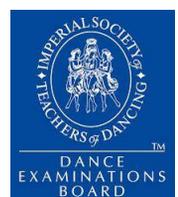
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LAMDA

CDMT

Recognised Awards Scheme: Recognised School



What's the school's focus?

Some schools exist chiefly to provide recreational dance opportunities. They still teach the basics of certain styles, but there's no requirement to commit to other classes, or even to make it to classes every week – and the focus is on enjoyment rather than technique.

If your child has a talent that needs to be developed, these are not the schools for you.

If the school you're looking at offers a range of dance disciplines, technical classes, and clear development pathways, you can be more reassured that its focus is on developing talent for future professional success. A school that is shaping its student for careers in the performing arts will require them to take a range of disciplines, as well as suppleness and physical classes, to train them to be the best dancers they can be.



They will also learn, from an early age, what's required of them in the dance studio – respect for their teachers, the proper attire and personal presentation for each style of dance, how to behave in the classroom and professional environments.

Do they follow the best syllabi?

If you want your child to have the best opportunities possible, their school must use the ISTD & RAD dance examination syllabi. Other dance bodies or exam boards are not recognised by the elite colleges, and if your child follows any other path, it will hold up their training and future chances. They will be competing for opportunities against children who have done RAD and ISTD; and those children who have trained in those standards will be given preference over those who haven't.

What are the teachers and the environment like?

The experience, background and performance pedigree of the teachers used by the school is critical, as this will tell you much about how your child will be developed, physically and emotionally. If they've got experience in many different performance types (stage, film, TV) they will be able to offer a broad and deep education, support and advice.

When you've found some schools that might fit the bill, it's time to narrow them down.

Look at their Alumni

Find out where their graduates have moved onto. The best dance schools will have connections to the top performing arts colleges around the country, as well as the West End, TV and film industries.

Seeing where their typical students' natural progression flows to will speak volumes about the quality of teaching.

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Previous Performances

See if you can find out about the performances the school has put on. If there's one you are able to attend before signing up, see if you can go along – it will tell you so much about the standard of talent there, and what you can expect for your own child's development. It will also reveal the amount of time and commitment they put into the whole package – costumes, makeup, lighting, staging – to prepare students for professional performances in the future.

Review the Feedback

You can leave reviews for establishments in all sorts of places these days – Facebook, Google, Yell – so have a good look around, and see what previous parents and students have had to say about the school. There will probably be some quotes on the website, but these will of course be some of the best things their customers have said – so it's worth having a dig around to get a balanced view from the inside.

If you know someone whose child has attended, even better.

Try a Class

There's nothing like a visit in person to get the best feel for the place. Book a trial class and see what you and your child both think of how it goes.

You should both feel comfortable and in good hands as soon as you walk through the door. Go armed with plenty of questions about what is expected from your child, and what's expected from you, as well – class range, frequency and cost can sometimes come as a surprise later if you haven't asked and been told at the outset.

Ask yourself a few questions about the feel of the school, too – can you see yourself returning on a regular basis, and leaving your child there? Are you happy to spend time and money with this school? Are the facilities everything you hoped they would be - do they have sprung dance floors for the safety of their young dancers? Do they offer their teachers continuous professional development? What are the performance opportunities like? Are they giving the service you want?

If you are unhappy about any of this, it's probably going to be a mismatch of expectations, and you would be better looking elsewhere.

In the right setting, your child's talent will be nourished and cultivated, and the love and enjoyment they have for what they do will turn into passion and professional commitment. The right school will encourage and care for them as a person and give them skills and abilities that will benefit them in all aspects of their lives.

Book a trial class with Peplow Williams Academy today, and see if we're the right school for you.

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