

# **Dance Network Association: Primary and Secondary School Research**

**Evaluated by Louisa Petts, March 2021**

This evaluation document focuses on understanding the impact of dance programmes run by The Dance Network Association for primary, secondary and sixth form schools. The current provision of dance in schools nationally is argued to be in decline due to funding cuts and a focus on ‘more academic’ subjects.

The purpose of this evaluation is to explore how the dance programmes the Dance Network Association offer can be tailored to suit the educational needs of schools in Essex and the surrounding areas. This evaluation report builds a body of empirical evidence to support the continued provision of dance activity in schools.



The Dance Network Association's Mass Dance Programme 2018  
Photo by Nigel Brown

## Acknowledgements

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The Dance Network Association also wishes to extend sincere thanks to the teachers who partook in this research, giving up their time to offer honest feedback.

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The Dance Network Association images by Nigel Brown and Rachel Cherry

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## About the Dance Network Association

The Dance Network Association is a dance organisation dedicated to delivering dance in the community to increase the health and wellbeing of the people it serves in the East of England. The Dance Network Association offers a plethora of dance programmes for primary and secondary schools as well as alternative education settings in the community. For example, the mass dance programmes offer as many as 1000 dancers of all ages and abilities a creative dance experience not usually available in school or community settings. Namely, in 2021, the Dance Network Association is set to launch 'Let's Go, TOKYO!' funded by Arts Council England, The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Active Essex and Essex County Council. These programmes include but are not limited to the mass dance programmes previously mentioned but also workshops, bespoke school dance programmes and dance training for teachers and artists.



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## The Context of Dance Provision for Schools in England

The current landscape of dance in the national curriculum in the United Kingdom is varied. Music, art and design, drama and dance are included in the statutory national curricula and is compulsory in all schools from the age of 5 to 14 (The Cultural Learning Alliance, 2018). Yet, multiple reports suggest that schools are pulling focus from creative subject provisions, including dance. This is in response to budget cuts and a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, otherwise known as STEM subjects, which form part of the English Baccalaureate (EBACC) curriculum (Jasper, 2015; Fred Longworth High School, 2018). In secondary education, EBACC subjects include English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography, history and a language. These subjects are considered ‘...essential to many degrees and open up lots of doors’ (Department of Education, 2019). This crucially denies the inclusion and validity of the arts in schools, restricting the physical, social and psychological benefits as well as transferable skills dance can provide. The arts exclusion from the EBACC may also be contributory to the significant reductions in dance provision for young people in England due to decreased support and funding (Jasper, 2015; Vincent, et al., 2020). According to GCSE, AS and A Level dance statistics provided by AQA for the academic year 2018/19, there has been a 58% decrease in AS Level dance candidates and a 16% decrease in A Level candidates (One Dance UK, 2019). This push towards ‘more academic’ subjects reportedly illustrates the potential impact on GCSE uptake of dance now and in the future (Vincent, et al., 2020). Arguably, dance is different from other school subjects where pupils may not have had the chance to previously experience it. Giving pupils the opportunity to experience dance in schools is imperative.

The impact of funding cuts not only affects the uptake for qualifications in the UK, but also means that activities like youth dance clubs, performance school trips to theatres and summer art projects are less likely to be afforded (The Cultural Learning Alliance, 2018). The influence of performance theatre trips is illustrated by Smith-Autard’s Midway model (2002), which incorporates performing, creating and appreciating dance as strands of an educational model. When used as a lens to assess quality dance education, the Midway model advocates the use of professional dance to assist children viewing dance performance, creating their own dance work and appreciating dance as an art form (Vincent, et al., 2020). This pedagogical model stresses the importance of understanding the process as well as the product of dance. Here, the opportunity to experience professional dance performance coupled with creating choreographic work themselves provides children with an expressive balance in learning.

In response to the reduced funding to the arts, the landscape of dance provision in schools may need to adapt to continue dance access in educational institutions. Dance can be imbedded into schools as a way of improving the public health of pupils by tackling obesity and supporting psychological wellbeing like self-esteem. Since dance can be considered contributory to both arts and physical education statutory curriculum requirements, it is appropriate and necessary to consider promoting dance in young people as both an active and

creative and outlet (Jasper, 2015). It is evidenced that dance is popular amongst pupils, since dance as a mode of physical activity is favoured by girls in secondary school education (Sebire, et al., 2013).

Yet, Sebire (2013) illustrates that all of the 10 secondary school teachers interviewed in their study exhibited a lack of expertise and confidence in delivering dance. This finding is further corroborated in a report by the Department of Education (2017), regarding timetable provision in secondary schools. In some schools, pupils request dance clubs but no qualified member of staff are able to deliver the activity (Bertram, et al., 2017). Similarly, in Irish primary schools, dance provision is commonly sourced externally due to teachers lacking confidence which leads to active avoidance in teaching dance (Mangione, et al., 2020). Here, there is a need for qualified, specialist dance facilitators in schools to inspire and engage youth in dance. This emphasises the vital significance of collaboration between arts sector organisations and schools in order to provide dance provision in schools (Jasper, 2015).

To aid facilitation of dance collaboration between arts organisations like the Dance Network Association and schools, this evaluation report aims to uncover what primary and secondary schools in Essex and the surrounding areas want, in order to provide pupils with access to specialist dance provision.

## **Scope of Dance Provision in Schools**

In order to effectively deliver, promote and encourage dance in schools, One Dance UK suggest that dance provision should,

- provide additional capacity to help schools offer a greater range and frequency of dance opportunities for their pupils
- assist teachers develop and improve their knowledge of dance teaching to aid pupils physical dance skills, creative and compositional proficiency and expressive ability
- promote lifelong dance participation
- aid dance provision to help organise deliver dance clubs and develop links with local dance activities and organisations

(One Dance UK, 2016)

With these qualities in mind, this evaluation outlines a number of dance companies and organisations offering dance provision to schools in England.

## **Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance**

Located in the East of London, Trinity Laban offers a number of opportunities for teachers and schools. They offer in-school workshops, bespoke programmes and professional development courses for teaching staff. Trinity Laban offers one-off and long-term creative residency packages for both primary and secondary schools. They provide project-based work to suit the needs and interests of school pupils as well as more curriculum focused programmes. Trinity Laban offers both dance and music provision.

For secondary schools, Trinity Laban aims to promote youth dance and progression opportunities to pupils, namely the chance to sign up for the dance Centre of Advanced Training (CAT) programmes. These programmes offer young people the potential to access high quality dance training. In primary schools, Trinity Laban aims to support dance in the curriculum as being a component of PE. The focus here appears to be supporting curriculum, promoting physical activity and continuing professional development for teachers.

Trinity Laban also offers U.Dance, a performance platform for youth dance groups and schools to showcase their choreographic work. For teachers and professional development, flexible training opportunities are offered for dance artists, teachers and community practitioners. Informed by research and practice, these programmes include subject matter like dance for health, training in different dance genres or styles, inclusive practice and dance science. These training days do not offer accreditation, with full days costing schools or employers paying for a practitioner to attend £135, or £98 for an individual attendee. Twilight sessions, taking place in the evenings, cost £40 or £30 respectively.

## **The Place**

The Place is described as an innovative dance space, home to the London Contemporary Dance School in the centre of London. Schools and colleges are able to access tailor-made and cross-curricular dance projects. They aim to introduce lesson or topic material and work closely with teachers to design bespoke dance provision. For both primary and secondary schools, The Place offers the opportunity to create performance work if appropriate for the school.

For primary schools, a six-week project, for two classes taught for an hour each in the same afternoon is priced at £900. A standalone day of dance is £300.

The opportunity to become a Partner School in The Places' home borough of Camden is an option. This package offers learners and teachers a discounted package for dance provision. The schools are able to use PE and Sport Premium funding to fund the package. Costing £950, the package includes:

- A half-day welcome or introductory tour for two class groups at The Place

- 16 hours of creative dance sessions for the two classes, led by their skilled dance artists and educators to create performance work
- A day of performance at The Place as part of the Camden Schools Dance Festival
- A 1-hour performance and Q&A in school with students from London Contemporary Dance School
- 50% off tickets to mid-week matinees at The Place Theatre
- 1.5 to 3 hours of bespoke teacher CPD, designed to suit the needs of either the whole staff group or specific class teachers.

(The Place, 2019)

The charge is reduced by £50 per consecutive year the school continues with the programme. This programme is advertised as capable of fulfilling Artsmark criteria. Artsmark is an award accredited to schools that measures the quality of their creative arts provision. Artsmark is open to primary, secondary and sixth form colleges and is awarded at three levels Silver, Gold and Platinum. It can also allow for schools to meet Ofsted's requirements for Quality of Education by '...using Artsmark's flexible framework to maintain a broad and ambitious curriculum that connects learning across all subjects' (Artsmark, 2019, p. 4).

For secondary schools, bespoke workshops and projects are on offer, with sessions focusing on technique, contact work, choreography, or the creation of piece of performance. Full or half day workshops as well as longer residencies are also available.

The Places professional development include courses, workshops in the school's setting. Sessions last for one and a half hours and upwards, starting at £350 for up to 20 members of staff. Subject matter contains an introduction to dance for primary schools, refresher courses to initiate creative dance ideas and creating cross-curricular dance lesson content. They also provide printed and digital resources for non-dance specialists in educational settings.

## **Royal Opera House**

The Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, central London offers primary school children across the country the ability to engage with ballet. Currently, information is limited regarding Royal Opera House dance programmes since their creative education programmes have been suspended due to Covid-19. Currently, the Royal Opera House are offering Create and Learn resources. These are free to access, providing 12 weeks' worth of dance activity to learn from home. Free lesson plans to help deliver the national curriculum for dance, music and art are available upon registration.

There are teacher training opportunities available with a number of workshops for primary and secondary schools. Student/Teacher Training Workshops are offered, where for a half-day workshop (2 hours) at £250 or a full-day workshops (4 hours) at £350, participants are able to explore choreographic tasks and are taught key phrases from Wayne McGregor's

dance work Infra. This programme is designed to have clear links to the AQA Dance GCSE Level specifications.

Further professional development workshops are CPD Certified and offer creative activities based on dance, singing and design. They provide digital resources, and are provided as two-, five- or ten-week schemes of work that are directly aligned with the National Curriculum.

## **New Adventures**

For young people and schools, New Adventures offers dance provision for children in early years to A-Level levels of education. They offer one-off workshops and residencies and online resources.

Classes, exercises and online resources are provided via the New Adventures website. One initiative called Deep Dive offers online resources for teachers and students with general dance experience. The resources are based on works by Matthew Bourne, namely Cinderella, Romeo and Juliet, Swan Lake and The Red Shoes. The resources consist of warmups, repertoire exercises, creative tasks and further resources all free to access for Primary School level, GCSE, A Level and BTEC students to use from home. Another programme named Dip In provides tasks aimed at all ages and abilities which guides students to devise their own choreography inspired by a number of shows.

Little Splashes allows primary school children and young children to follow show-inspired online workshops and learn movement from New Adventure shows. These include creative tasks and repertoire teaching through YouTube videos.

New Adventures provide residences for dance provision in the curriculum. Workshops can be tailored to suit early years and Key Stages 1-5 themed around Swan Lake, Nutcracker! and The Red Shoes. The cost of a workshop for a full day is £650 (6 hours) and £450 for a half day (3 hours), plus expenses. This rate becomes subsidised for state primary and secondary schools to £400 for a full day and £250 for a half day, plus expenses. Online zoom sessions are priced at £150 for an hour, £175 for an hour and a half, £200 for 2 hours and £250 for 3-hour classes. The movement taught in these workshops is stated not to be used to create choreography for exams or shows.

They also provide teacher development workshops for Primary and Secondary teachers to develop their confidence and skills. They provide guidance for structuring classes, example teaching plans and strategies for inspiring creative movement.



The Dance Network Association's Annual Dance Conference 2019  
Photo by Rachel Cherry

## **Research Aims**

The Dance Network Association devised the following focused research questions in collaboration with the lead evaluator:

- To explore what the Dance Network Association can create, adapt or offer for primary and secondary schools
- To ask if time, resources and money are barriers to accessing Dance Network Association dance programmes
- To uncover what the Dance Network Association can do to support primary and secondary schools with their dance provision
- To lay the foundations for developing such dance provision in schools.

## **Evaluation Methods**

Understanding the dance needs of schools in the East of England area is broad in its research scope. The research was conducted by the lead evaluator external to the organisation, to uncover what teachers may want to see in dance programmes from the Dance Network Association objectively. The research was approached both quantitatively and qualitatively,



using survey and interview methods with the aim of providing a holistic understanding of teacher responses.

## **Participants**

A set of pre-determined criteria were used to assess whether participants were eligible to take part in the study. Participants were required to be teaching in early years, primary or secondary schools, sixth form or alternative education settings in Essex and the surrounding areas. No participants have been named in this report in order to protect anonymity.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection took place between November 2020 and February 2021. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to recruit Essex-based teacher participants for interviews and gathering survey data. Informed consent was given by all participants. The respondents were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were under no obligation to answer questions. They were told they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Teachers were invited to partake in one semi-structured interview to understand their experiences of dance programmes offered by the Dance Network Association in more depth. Three volunteer participants partook in one audio recorded interview via phone and Zoom video communications software. One participant answered questions through email response. Prior to interviews, participants were sent a participant information sheet detailing the scope of research and what to expect from the interview process. Interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes, with length dependent on detail of participant response. Dance teachers were asked what dance programmes they participated in provided by the Dance Network Association, what their experiences of programmes was like, and what the Dance Network Association could offer in terms of dance activity that schools would be interested in investing in.

Audio recordings, interview transcripts and informed consent forms were password protected and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. After the interviews, participants were sent debrief information and the opportunity to review anonymised interview transcripts to maintain rigour in the evaluative research process.

Thematic analysis was then used as a qualitative research method that identifies, organises, analyses and reports themes found within data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The lead evaluator familiarised themselves with interview data, by reading transcripts multiple times. Initial codes were searched, reviewed and defined for key themes. This process, as well as participants checking transcripts and including thick quote descriptions, contributes to establishing trustworthiness in data analysis.

Survey data was anonymous with no personal data collected. All 23 survey responses collected and included in analysis were entirely confidential. Participants were invited to complete a self-report survey containing 20 questions. The first part of the questionnaire contained 5 questions concerning the current state of dance delivery at the school, asking how often dance is taught, if the school offers a dance qualification, how dance is staffed at their school, and how funding is used to support dance activity. The second part had 10 questions asking what the teachers felt they need from dance delivery programmes. The questions asked when dance activity would fit into the school day, what style or type of dance they would like, how often the programmes should be delivered for, and how long the dance classes should last. Questions also concerned how much schools would be willing to pay for dance programmes per hour, and what the programmes should include. The third section included 5 questions about teacher professional development in schools, what time delivery of professional development would be appropriate for teachers, what would be helpful for teachers to learn. Lastly, questions concerned if teachers were aware of the Dance Network Association dance programmes.



The Dance Network Association's Mass Dance Programme 2018  
Photo by Nigel Brown

# Findings

## Interviews

### Descriptive Statistics

Four volunteer participants took part in interviews. The participants all had experience teaching in secondary and primary school settings. Three of the participants were female, and one was male. Two of the participants were based in specifically in Barking and Dagenham areas. Personal data was not collected from survey data to ensure protection of participant anonymity.

### Mass Dance Programmes

Mass Dance programmes funded by Arts Council England aim for over 1000 dancers to perform together. These dynamic programmes build confidence in students and provide them with a chance to perform dance.

The Mass Dance programmes links schools to a bigger dance network allowing them to work together in the wider Essex community. The number of students and schools that can be provided with dance provision at one time was acknowledged as a strength of the programmes as, 'it's hit such a big age range from year, from age 7 right through to 16. So that's been the value, the numbers, the age range...' Further, the final performance in the Mass programme was seen as an opportunity to connect young people, teachers and parents, where '...getting together and having the opportunity to perform with other schools is a big thing.' The Mass programmes connects schools to a wider, communal network. The programme involving such a large number of children was described by respondents to be a, '...very powerful thing' and '...very inspiring...the kids love it, that's why we always do the Mass Dance.' The teachers perceive the Mass programmes to be valuable for the school pupils, where the connection to a wider network is seen as a supportive environment for dance learning and performance.

The support, skills and professional development opportunities that are offered alongside the Mass Dance programmes were highly valued amongst 3 of the 4 interview respondents. The Mass Dance programme was described as '...a really good, supportive package...' that has '...worked well with schools.' Another participant reported that the package designed was '...top class, it's had everything, it's had teacher training face to face, it's had good quality resource, it's had a video and it's had the music. Yes, it's had everything.' This holistic approach, including consideration of teacher and student needs, seemed key in the Mass Dance programme success in delivering dance provision in schools.

Multiple respondents from the Barking and Dagenham area stated that, ‘...we’ve done every Mass Dance programme’ illustrating a sustained commitment to these programmes. The importance of the Dance Network Association specifically providing this dance provision was illustrated by multiple participants as, ‘...I think that’s where it’s really important...it’s impossible for us to do mass programme alone. But it’s brilliant for them to do a mass programme because people know it’s them.’ Here, the participant describes how the Dance Network Association has the infrastructure to effectively provide mass dance provision to schools, where the participant illustrates schools do not always have the time, resources or dance expertise to deliver these opportunities themselves. The participant also outlines how the Mass Dance programmes are directly associated with the Dance Network Association, potentially acting as further marketing for other programmes offered by the organisation. Another participant reiterates the novel dance provision provided by the Mass Dance Programmes since, ‘...no one else is offering a Mass programme, apart from the 2012 Olympics which was now 8 years ago.’ This statement, echoed by the majority of interview respondents, illustrates how the Dance Network Association supports both primary and secondary schools in offering unique and significant dance provision informed by their expertise and infrastructure. The mass programmes appear to offer the pupils with performance and social opportunities and supports teachers in their ability to deliver dance.

## **Resource Packs**

The dance resource packs were unanimously seen as a prized part of what the Dance Network Association offers schools. Participants described the quality of the resource packs as ‘beautiful’, ‘high quality’ and ‘outstanding.’ One participant said that the resource packs ‘went the extra mile’ to ensure that the school can continue to teach dance to the pupils after programmes. The video provided with the resource packs was noted to break down the choreography into sections, allowing for teachers who may not have a large amount of dance experience to effectively deliver dance to pupils. This provision by the Dance Network Association was described as ‘enormously helpful’ for teachers.

Similarly, the resource packs were also noted to leave a ‘legacy’ of the Dance Network Association in schools. The resource pack stays within the school, allowing for a sustained provision of dance activity even after the dance programme may have finished.

## **Continuing Professional Development and Teaching Staff**

The continuing professional development (CPD) provision offered to schools by the Dance Network Association was noted to provide great facilities for non-dancers. Schools often rely heavily on existing staff to deliver dance provision. Therefore, offering high quality teacher training allows teachers to develop and enhance their dance skills. All respondents wanted further CPD opportunities for both secondary and primary schools.

## ***Primary Schools***

Respondents suggested that CPD opportunities provided should look different for primary and secondary schools. For primary schools, any CPD should be offered to schools with far more notice due to timetabling logistics as,

...if a programme comes up and you're thinking it's a great opportunity and it's January, but they've already written down work for the whole year, it's harder for them to take them out of the curriculum for one hour a week. It's harder for us, a lot of the time, for the schools to do that in Primary...

Respondents also suggested that there is a higher turnover of staff in primary schools. This is supported by recent literature, where popular staff leaving is noted to have a detrimental effect on clubs and activities (Bertram, et al., 2017). Absence of teachers can also affect pupil interest and subsequent participation in such provision. Primary school teachers were also noted to, '...always find dance difficult.' Here, the participant noted a clear need for CPD in primary schools; the Dance Network Association providing CPD allows for further support in sustaining delivery of dance to pupils.

## ***Secondary Schools***

Existing secondary school dance CPD provision was stated to be 'poor' by one participant. They stressed that teachers in schools may not always have effective teaching skills as,

...you can be a great dance artist but that doesn't mean you can teach very well. And that's the difference, that's the big difference and knowing your exam. So, I think there's a definite possibility that they [the Dance Network Association] could get an arm going in secondary development...

Two participants acknowledged that CPD being delivered alongside theme-based projects would appeal most to secondary schools. The opportunity the Dance Network Association provides to come into schools and do 'little boosters' of activity after a project was stated to be 'really, really supportive.' The structure of CPD provision in secondary schools was requested to include working with professional companies on repertoire and workshops in schools and ensuring CPD was related to examination dance material. Dance in after school clubs was also described as being well received due to limited staffing. Here, the Dance Network Association is able to provide dance provision to schools if staffing is not available, or instead ensure the existing teachers have experience and confidence in dance delivery. CPD was also noted to be a place where teachers can share their dance practices with each other, where teachers are able to build 'a community of learners who have an interest in dance.'

In contrast to primary schools, secondary school timetables were acknowledged to be more flexible, where CPD can potentially be offered more freely.



The Dance Network Association's Annual Dance Conference 2019

Photo by Rachel Cherry

## Performance Opportunities

Respondents said more dance performance opportunities could be offered and was acknowledged to be 'key' in dance provision for students. One participant asserted that schools typically do not have the time, capacity or expertise to provide performance opportunities, and that the Dance Network Association have '...done brilliantly giving us opportunities to perform which, again, we have trouble within schools, so that's what they are brilliant at, performance opportunities...' Here, it is clear that the provision the Dance Network Association currently provides is considered of high quality by teachers, but these performance opportunities could be provided more frequently. More performance opportunities were also said to allow for schools to 'link' together, promoting school collaboration through dancing.

Performance skills training was also seen as beneficial not only for primary and secondary school pupils, but for the teachers as well. This training allows teachers to prepare the students with what's important in performance. Short performance opportunities were also considered as necessary at the end of dance projects in schools as, '...I think sometimes you go to your school as a one-off project for 6 weeks and then at the end of those 6 weeks the teacher can somehow, or somebody pops in occasionally to continue it, to develop it for what

they've done after the 6 weeks, so it's not just left.' When given the opportunity to showcase their work the commitment and interest towards dance in students can alter greatly (One Dance UK, 2021). This outlook also appears to be held amongst the attitudes of teachers in this study.

The benefits students can derive from performing dance was explained by one respondent, where students were 'excited' by the variation of learning in the curriculum, '...it's not just going to school to do curriculum...they have opportunities to do performances as well as which is stimulating them, which is good.' Working towards dance performance opportunities is seen by teachers in this report to support cross-curriculum learning. Likewise, according to a report by Youth Dance England, dance is in an excellent position to support the cross-curriculum dimensions through its unique combination of skills (Siddall, 2010).

## **Dance for Health and Wellbeing**

The existing strengths of the Dance Network Association's dance provision in schools was stated by one participant to be through their health and wellbeing approach. According to Claire Somerville from One Dance UK for Artsmark, schools should look out for organisations who offer highly relevant dance expertise that, '...will support whole school improvement plans, the health and wellbeing of your pupils and connect with other curriculum areas. By combining all these elements with bespoke approaches to schools, the dance sector has a lot to offer' (Artsmark, 2018). This approach was noted as a 'priority' by one participant, particularly for securing funding from the relevant bodies.

## **Marketing**

One participant suggested that the Dance Network Association could start an advisory board of volunteers that could support the drive and vision of Dance Network Association offering a breadth of dance opportunities and activity to all. This advisory board was recommended to be voluntary, where the board consisted of people who are, '...prepared to put in for the good of the community and the education community.'

Testimonials were also said to be potentially beneficial in marketing dance programmes to schools. Whether these be through word of mouth or video format, multiple participants suggested that hearing about the dance programmes from fellow headteachers, teachers and ambassadors was 'very inspiring.' Testimonials were reported to have the potential to motivate involvement and participation from schools in the Dance Network Association dance programmes. Attending conferences and promotion through sector support organisations like One Dance UK were also advised as marketing strategies.

Teachers also said that communication of dance programmes to schools may be more effective through different mediums other than email. The majority of respondents noted that

marketing may reach more schools if communicated through text messages, phone calls or hard copy leaflets; the teachers stated they were often too busy teaching to check emails. One participant detailed, ‘...there’s so many emails coming that everybody is getting sick of emails, sometimes you’re thinking oh what’s the best way of doing this?’ Nonetheless, communication from the Dance Network Association was recognised to be very organised by all respondents. One noted, ‘...everyone knows exactly what they’re doing, and you feel oh, you’re arriving into something, thinking this is really good, this is brilliant...’ with another stating that the Dance Network Association, ‘...have always been very organised, been very clear what we’re getting, what we have to provide. So, it’s very clear what we’re buying from them and what her expectations are of us.’

## Survey

Of the 23 responses, 12 respondents identified as secondary school teachers, 8 being primary school teachers and 3 stating they taught sixth form or college students. The following survey data has been divided by school taught level where appropriate to clearly illustrate their dance provision needs.

### Section 1: Scoping Questions

The first five questions asked the respondents how often dance is taught in their school, does the school provide pupils with the opportunity to gain a dance qualification, how dance is staffed at the school, and how funding might be used at the school.

#### *How frequently was dance taught in schools?*

Responses to how frequently dance should be taught in schools varied considerably, with the most popular response being every half-term across 8 respondents. However, due to the variability of school scheduling identified by interview participants, division of this data by school level was deemed necessary.

Among the 8 primary school respondents, dance was delivered between every half-term for 4 schools, every term for 3 and, for one school, once a year.

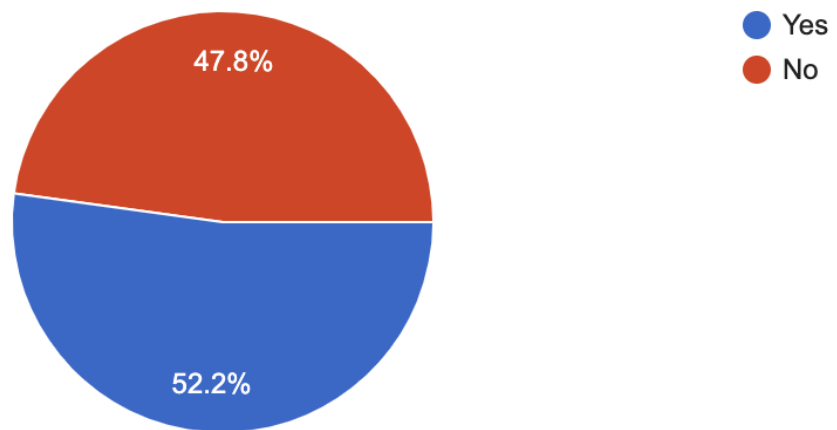
For the 12 secondary school respondents, dance was most frequently delivered every half-term for 6 schools, 2 schools detailed dance being delivered every 2 weeks, 1 stating they deliver dance every term and 2 schools answered once a year. This illustrates a high irregularity within school dance provision, with some schools omitting dance provision almost entirely.



For the 3 sixth form or college educational institutions, dance provision depended on whether students had opted to take a dance qualification at either GCSE or A Level, where they would partake in 2-4 hours of dance per week.

### ***Does your school provide the pupils with the opportunity to gain a dance qualification?***

For the 8 primary schools, none offered a dance qualification. The remaining 3 of the 11 respondents that did not offer a dance qualification were secondary schools. The 12 respondents that do offer the pupils a dance qualification were secondary schools or teaching college or sixth form.



**Figure 1:** A pie chart illustrating whether schools provide pupils with the opportunity to gain a dance qualification.

### ***How is dance staffed in your school?***

Of the 8 primary school teachers, only 3 had a specialist dance teacher, with the remaining 5 using a PE or class teacher to teach dance.

In secondary school and sixth form or college teacher respondents, 7 used a specialist dance teacher, 3 using a PE teacher, one using a classroom teacher, and one stated dance was not staffed. The 3 respondents who stated their school did not offer dance qualifications also did not have specialist dance staffing. 2 secondary school teacher respondents who do offer dance qualifications detailed they did not have specialist dance teachers delivering dance to pupils. This illustrates a potential need where teacher professional development could be especially valuable, where the Dance Network Association could provide added expertise to existing that staff.

### ***How might funding be used to support dance at your school?***

This question was open-ended, allowing teachers to explain their experiences in more detail.

Of the 8 primary school respondents, 3 stated they used funding to pay for the specialist dance teacher on staff, with 2 stating they used funding to support sports coaches who teach dance material. 1 did not respond, and the remaining 2 stated they used their funding to pay for programmes run by the Dance Network Association, namely the 1 Day, 1000 dancers Mass Dance and Keeping Dance Alive programmes. Spending also included transport to dance performance opportunities.

The 12 secondary school respondents were asked more specifically if they used any additional grants to support dance activity. 7 of these teachers stated they do not have any access to additional grants, with one stating ‘We don't have access to grants but would like them!!’ Another stated they were not aware of additional grants but, ‘If this was something I was offered, I would look at workshops for my key stage 4 students to support their BTEC programme.’ 3 others stated that they had used the funding to partake in Step into Dance run by the Royal Academy of Dance and funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation, a dance programme for secondary schools in London and Essex. One school also named the funding to spent on programmes provided by the Dance Network Association.

### **Section 2: What do schools need from dance delivery programmes?**

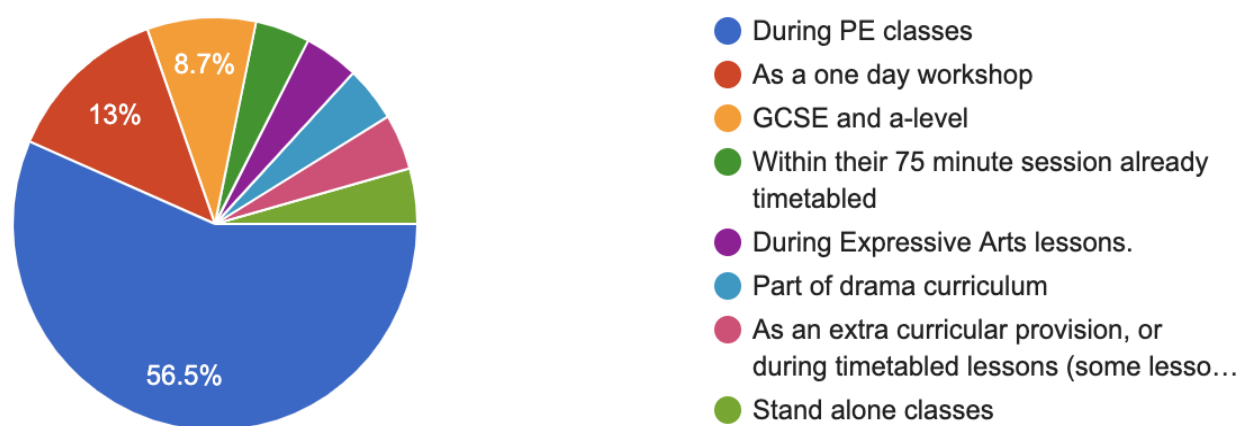
The following questions asked the teachers what they felt they needed from dance delivery programmes in terms of dance style, when the dance provision would be delivered, how long this dance provision would last for, and what they hoped dance would do for the pupils.

#### ***How often should the dance programmes be delivered?***

8 respondents stated that dance programmes should be delivered weekly and 6 respondents stated they should be delivered once every term. 3 respondents stated every 2 weeks, and another 2 replied once a month. The remaining responses detailed that the regularity of dance programmes was dependent on year group, with one suggesting that dance should be delivered once a month for GCSE pupils and as often as possible for KS3 students. There was no general consensus amongst level of education.

### ***When would dance activity best fit into the school day?***

Over half of responses from all 23 teachers stated that dance activity would best fit as part of PE classes. These 13 responses included all primary schools and 5 secondary schools. 3 secondary schools opted for dance to be delivered as a one-day workshop, with 6 other secondary schools and college or sixth form teachers suggesting they are slotted into existing timetabled lessons, namely within drama curriculum, GCSE and A Level classes, for example. Only one secondary school suggested the dance be delivered as individually timetabled classes.



**Figure 2:** A pie chart showing when dance activity would best fit into the school day.

### ***What style or type of dance might be useful to deliver to your pupils?***

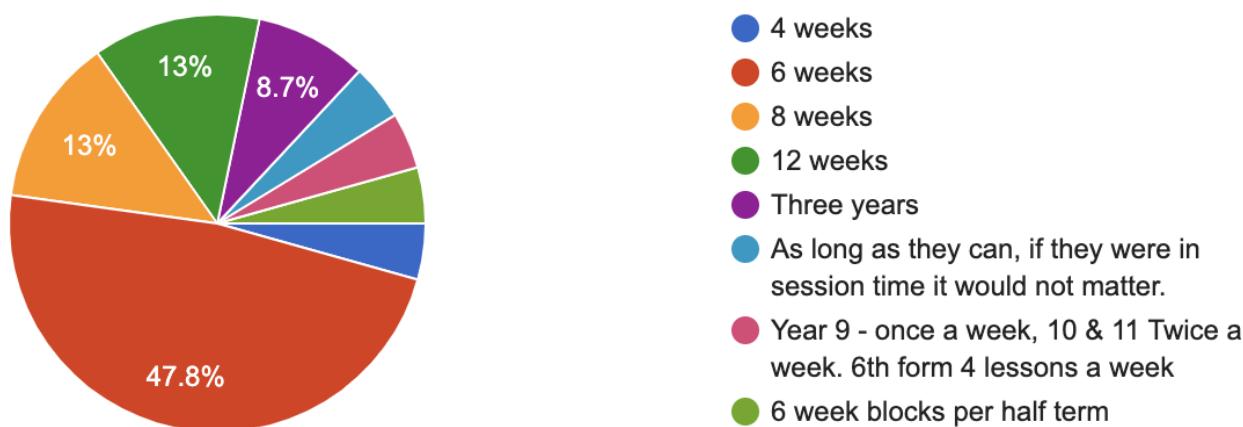
Dance style preference varied considerably amongst responses, with one participant stating that any dance style or set work would be useful for the students. The most popular dance style was street or hip-hop styles.

Dance style	Number of respondents
Street and hip-hop	10
Contemporary	6
Jazz	4
Curriculum assisted dance	4
Modern	3
Bollywood	2
Ballet	2
Tap	1

**Figure 3:** A table detailing the number of respondents opting for particularly useful dance styles for pupils.

### ***How long would weekly dance programmes run for to be committed to by your school?***

18 teachers here illustrate that classes were likely to be committed to if they last 6-12 weeks long. This also echoes a response from an interview participant in this study, who also stated that schools are able to focus on, ‘...a 6 month or a 3 month, but they can’t do the year. So, it’s that little intensity. So, I think their school programmes should be project driven really.’



**Figure 4:** A pie chart demonstrating how long weekly dance programmes should run for according to participants.

### ***Do you have an after school or breakfast dance club?***

The majority of participant teachers, 17 in total, stated they currently run an after school or breakfast dance club. 3 teachers stated that normally they would, but currently are not running due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Of the 3 teachers who answered that they did not offer extra curricula dance programmes, 2 taught at secondary schools and 1 at a primary school.

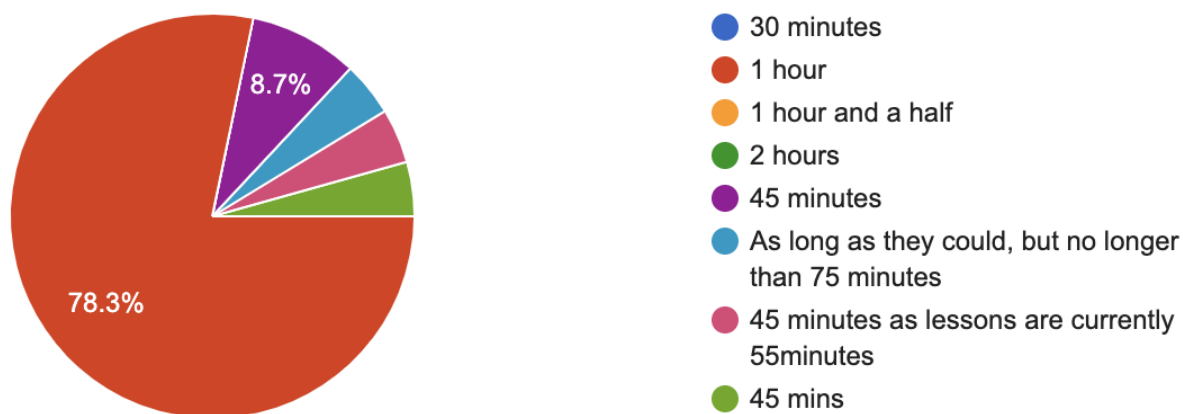
### ***Would you be interested in offering after school or breakfast dance clubs?***

As illustrated by the prior question, the majority of participants already run after school or breakfast dance clubs. 10 respondents stated they would not be interested, or that they already ran clubs. However, 10 teachers stated that they would be interested in clubs, and 1 stated maybe.

Of the 10 teachers who answered they would be interested, 7 taught at secondary schools, and 3 taught at primary schools.

### ***How long would you expect those classes to last for?***

The majority of participants stated that classes should be 1 hour long. Of the remaining 5 respondents, 4 teachers stated they should be 45 minutes long, 3 of whom were primary schoolteachers. 1 participant maintained that dance classes should be no longer than 75 minutes.



**Figure 5:** A pie chart showing how long participants thought dance classes for schools should run for.

### ***How much would the school be willing to pay for dance programmes per hour?***

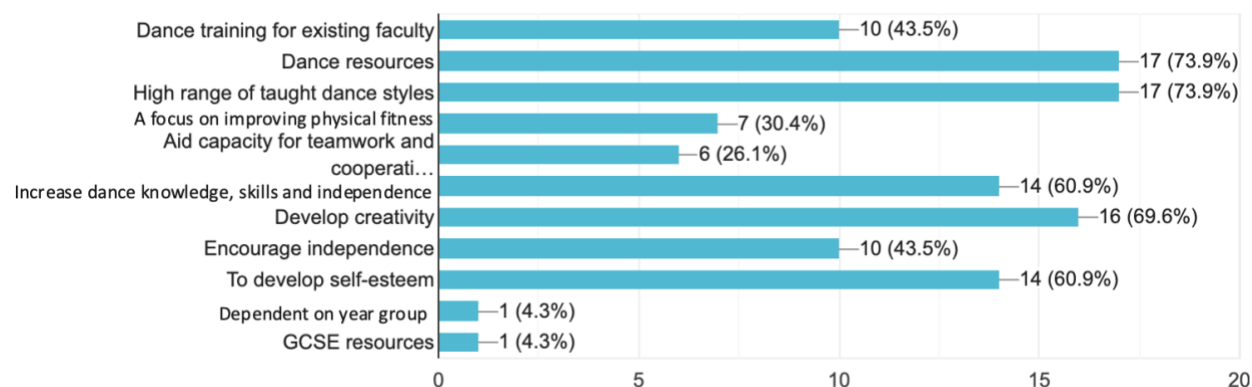
Participant responses regarding costing of dance programmes per hour were highly diverse. This aligns with previous research, where funding is suggested as a major enabler and barrier to activity provision in schools (Bertram, et al., 2017).

7 participant teachers suggested that they would be willing to pay £25.00 per hour for dance programmes. 9 respondents stated that the programmes would have to be funded or free due to the schools having limited money. This is also supported by existing research, where the additional costs for expressive arts put further strain on schools that were already confronting budget cuts (Vincent, et al., 2020).

Existing research suggests that where provision is not free, parents could be charged on a session basis. However, schools have stated being generally reluctant to pass these costs on as it could be divisive for those who may not be able to afford an extra cost. On the other hand, charging parents could also be viewed positively by raising the status of extended activities amongst pupils and parents to ensure attendance (Bertram, et al., 2017; Sebire, et al., 2013). 2 teachers stated that payment would depend on the provision, and 2 others stated that an existing member of staff already delivers dance.

### ***What would you expect dance programmes to provide?***

Participant teachers illustrated that they valued dance resources, dance programmes including a high range of dance styles and programmes that develop creativity and increase dance knowledge and skills as well as student independence.



**Figure 6:** A column chart illustrating what teachers would like the dance programmes to provide for their students.

### **Section 3: State of dance Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in schools**

The final section asked questions concerning the status of continuing professional development in schools for dance, how much they would be willing to pay for CPD courses and what the content of these courses might be.

#### ***Do staff at your school take part in CPD?***

Of the 23 participants, 18 responded that they do take part in CPD, 3 answered no and 1 specified that they do not take part in dance CPD specifically.

#### ***What do the CPD courses teach about dance? How might this be shared back to your school?***

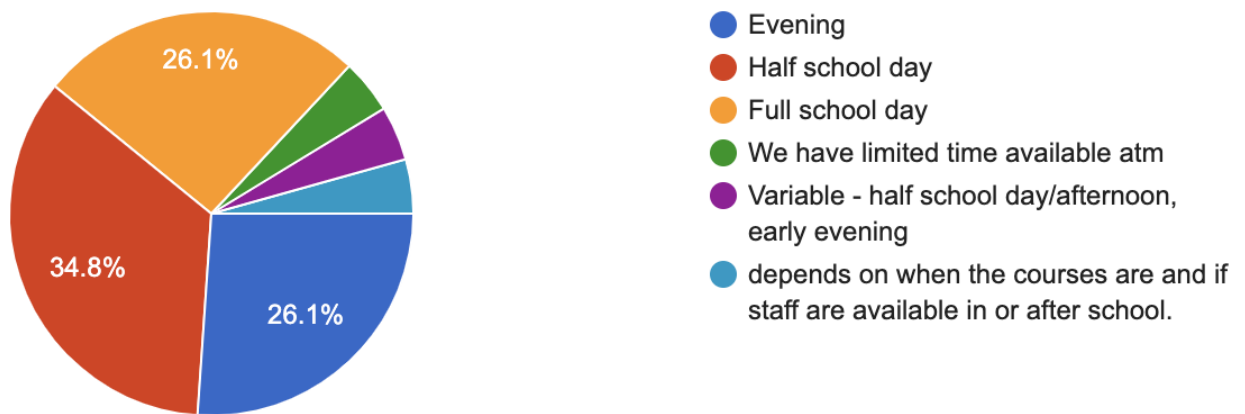
Respondents detailed that CPD courses in dance taught the following:

- a) Supported the requirements for existing examinations, and are largely linked to GCSE criteria and aims,
- b) Developed dance technique and choreographic tasks,
- c) Taught repertoire from professional works
- d) Develop teacher confidence in teaching dance

Two participants took part in CPD training from the Royal Opera House, the Dance Network Association CPD courses were named by 2 participants, and 2 participants stated that they are yet to partake in dance specified CPD.

***What is a good time for sending staff on dance CPD courses?***

Responses were disparate regarding when was best to send teachers on dance CPD courses. 6 participants suggested evening, 8 suggested a half school day, and 6 suggested a full school day.



**Figure 7:** A pie chart showing when teachers thought dance CPD courses should be offered.

However, when divided by school level, 5 of the 8 primary school respondents stated that CPD courses should be delivered during a half school day. The 6 full school day respondents came from secondary schools or sixth form colleges exclusively. The 6 respondents suggesting evenings came from a mix of all primary, secondary and sixth form colleges.

***How much would you be willing to pay to send staff on CPD course?***

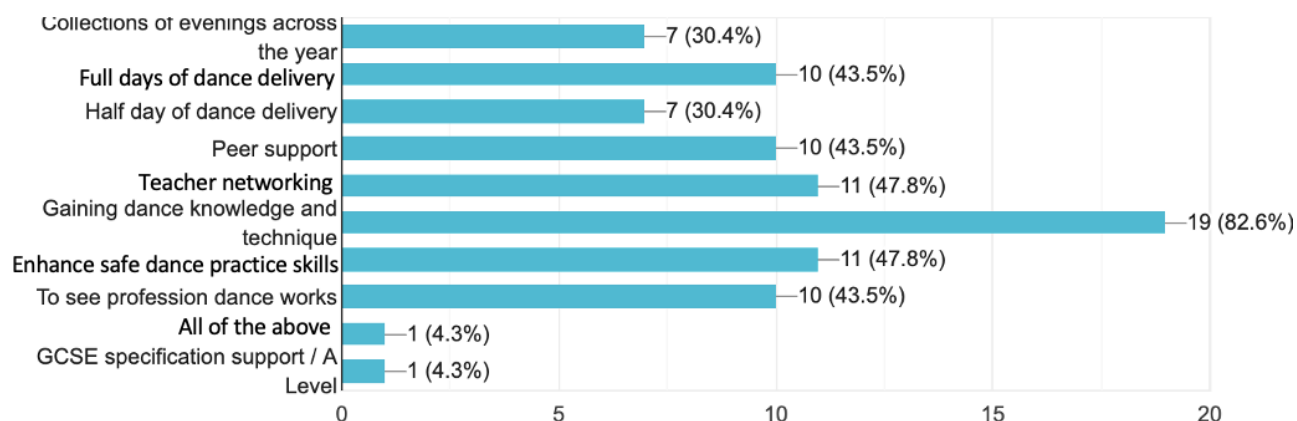
The costs teachers were willing to pay for CPD courses varied between £50 to £300.

2 respondents stated that the course would have to be free due to limited funding.

The general consensus amongst the remaining participants was that it would depend on the course content and the reputation of the course provider. Here, testimonials as part of a marketing strategy may be particularly helpful in appealing to teachers at schools.

### *What would an amazing CPD programme provide?*

82.6% of participants stated that gaining dance knowledge and technique would be the most useful part of a CPD programme, with similarly popular options including enhancing safe dance practice skills and teaching networking opportunities.

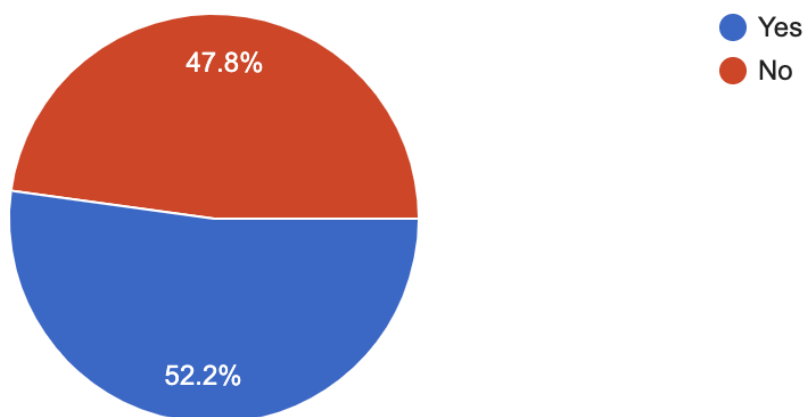


**Figure 8:** A column chart illustrating what teachers would like dance CPD courses to provide.

### *Are you aware of the Dance Network Association dance programmes?*

The final question concerned whether teachers were aware of the programmes offered by Dance Network Association. 12 teachers responded yes, with 11 stating they had not. Those stating they had not heard of the Dance Network Association programmes were a mix of both primary and secondary schools.

When asked how those who had heard of the Dance Network Association programmes, 2 participants stated word of mouth, 2 stated through contact with the school, 1 said through CPD programmes, and 5 said they had been part of Dance Network Association programmes for a ‘long time.’



**Figure 9:** A pie chart showing if teachers were aware of the Dance Network Association dance programmes



## Limitations

The World Health Organisation declared that COVID-19 be characterised as a pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, due to a rising number of infections around the globe (World Health Organisation, 2020). This affected educational institutions worldwide.

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with data collection taking place between November 2020 and February 2021. At this time, the United Kingdom was in lockdown, an emergency protocol implemented to stop the spread of the virus. These lockdowns spanned from the 5<sup>th</sup> of November to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2020 and from the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, where all primary and secondary schools were forced to suddenly close. According to Kim and Asbury (2020), sudden lockdowns necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic caused many primary and secondary school teachers to experience high levels of stress, described by teachers to feel as if a ‘rug had been pulled from under you’ (Kim & Asbury, 2020, p. 1070). Resultantly, recruitment of participants for data collection was limited; the potential participants of this project efforts and time were likely focused on adapting to remote, online teaching.

Headteachers are previously identified in this report to be crucial in ensuring the provision of dance in schools. Thus, future study should be conducted to specifically explore headteachers views of dance provision in schools in particular.



The Dance Network Association adapted to delivering dance online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic 2020-2021

## Conclusions

It is difficult to draw a general consensus on what schools want from dance programme provision, partly due to each school being individual in their needs. Despite this, an increased need for continual professional development is expressed in both interviews and survey responses for primary and secondary schools. Based on using the majority of responses from the survey, the data indicates that schools are more likely to commit to dance programmes if they are run during PE classes, for 6-12 weeks, where dance classes last for around 1 hour. Teachers suggested that these programmes could provide dance resources, provide a high range of dance styles that develop creativity and student independence.

CPD dance courses for teachers could be run for a half school day for primary school respondents, and for a full school day for secondary schools or sixth form colleges. CPD courses could also be run in evenings for primary, secondary and sixth form colleges. Gaining dance knowledge and technique was considered as the most useful element of CPD programmes, with similarly popular options including enhancing safe dance practice skills and teaching networking opportunities.

Interview participants maintained that dance performance opportunities and performance skills training were particularly valuable to schools, with the opportunity provided by the Mass Dance programmes being especially valued. Developments to the organisation's provision would be particularly beneficial for better targeting and appealing to schools. Teachers wanted more performance opportunities for their pupils, and more CPD opportunities for teachers themselves. Marketing of the Dance Network Association's programmes was also suggested to be broadened to better appeal to schools through promoting testimonials, communicating with schools in ways other than emails and incorporating an advisory board to aid the vision of the Dance Network Association as an Essex-based organisation.

This project not only illustrates the effectiveness of Dance Network Association programmes, but also evidences the current scope of dance within some primary and secondary schools and, colleges and sixth forms in Essex. By drawing on existing research by Bertram and colleagues (2017), Mangione and associates (2020) and Vincent and colleagues (2020) along with responses from the teachers participating in this evaluative project, we can demonstrate that dance provision in Essex schools is largely similar to the current national landscape. Access to high quality dance provision is often affected by funding, or lack thereof, subsequently affecting the ability of schools to provide pupils with access to dance. This is clearly illustrated in the survey responses of this project. Further, dance provision is highly variable across schools often affected by staff enthusiasm and interest in dance and creative subjects. Thus, this research contributes and supports some of the current and relevant conversations surrounding dance provision in schools in the United Kingdom.

The aims of the Dance Network Association’s dance provision in schools are to develop young people’s self-confidence and self-worth, to increase dance skills, support teachers in their dance delivery and design dance programme tailored to schools, amongst other provisions. Across a total of 27 teachers participating in this research, it is clear that the existing provision provided by the Dance Network Association is valued. Above all, the variety of dance programmes on offer was highly esteemed by teachers because ‘all the schools are different’ and all have different dancing needs. One participant admitted that external dance provision was often outsourced from London-based dance companies and organisations, but that ‘...it would be nice to have some expertise that was more local.’ This illustrates that the teachers in this study value having dance provision available from a local, Essex-based dance network. It appears that these teachers value dance provision that not only connects pupils and teachers to dance, but also promotes a community culture across schools in Essex and the surrounding areas.



Dance Network Association’s teacher training days 2020  
Photo by the Dance Network Association Team

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