



LONDON VOCATIONAL
BALLET SCHOOL

**Performing Arts Training
Appropriate Verbal Correction and Language Policy**

Introduction

This policy is written in conjunction with KCSIE 2024 and the school's staff handbook including code of conduct, Managing Allegations and Whistleblowing and Low level concerns policies.

Ballet is a specific and skillful art form, and requires hard work and discipline. Teachers are experts who are extremely experienced and it is necessary to correct students' technique and presentation for the benefit of their learning.

All adults in the school have a responsibility to use appropriate language when speaking to students and to other adults. This contributes in a big way to the overall health and wellbeing of the LVBS community, which is the school's priority.

Adults will speak to and about students with due sensitivity and care, and will always follow the rules set out in this policy and in the Safeguarding Policy, which are there to protect everyone.

Parents and Students are given this policy through the Parent Handbook and via the website. Students are encouraged to speak to their teacher or a Director they feel comfortable with, if for any reason they are uncomfortable with the way they are spoken to. In PSHE students are taught how to raise a concern if they have one.

Purpose

This policy has been created to clearly set out the expectations and principles regarding Verbal Correction and Language at LVBS, and exists to protect all students and staff from harm.

An essential thing for all staff to consider when talking to ballet students is their feelings around their bodies and how our words have the possibility to impact these feelings. The students at LVBS are growing and experiencing puberty, and are looking at themselves in the mirror in ballet uniform for extended parts of the day. We must not shy away from ballet's long and problematic history around body image, and the negative consequences this can have on young dancers, such as body dysmorphia leading to disordered eating. Please refer to the 'Healthy Eating and Concerns Policy' for more information on this subject.

Staff awareness of these issues is essential in creating a safe and nurturing environment in which young people can thrive, and this policy sets out guidelines that all vocational and academic teachers will follow when working with the students of LVBS. These guidelines will also be shared with all external practitioners working with LVBS students, as part of our engagement with and encouragement of cultural change across the wider dance community.

As adults we have a responsibility to maintain a respectful and safe culture in the school. All staff must remain mindful of their language, including when students are not present. Humour is encouraged but never at the expense of a student. This policy will set out the expectations of staff language both inside and outside of the studio.

Verbal Correction in dance classes, and general use of language at LVBS

All verbal correction should be for the sole benefit of the student's learning, and be made with caution, care and an awareness of the impact of one's words. Students should feel safe and empowered to question a verbal correction and to speak up if a verbal correction has made them uncomfortable.

- Verbal corrections will be clearly explained in language that is appropriate to the age of the student
- Teachers will engage in positive reinforcement and stay away from using negative language. Teachers' corrections will highlight the possibilities, not make the student feel they did something wrong.
- Teachers will focus on what the body can do rather than what it looks like
- Teachers will take care that any verbal corrections cannot be misinterpreted as comments on the student's body, intellect, background or identity. Examples of this can include 'I want you to be light' or 'make your leg really long'.
- Teachers will not compliment students for losing weight or being thin
- Teachers will not use the phrases 'in shape' or 'out of shape', as these are non-specific and are likely to be interpreted as negative comments on students' bodies.
- Teachers will take care not to self-deprecate in a way that can ignite certain thoughts in students' minds. For example 'I didn't have the body for it'.
- Staff will be mindful of students' adopting negative or pejorative language about their own bodies, their peers or other members of the dance community, including on social media - offering supportive reframing and reporting any concerns as necessary.
- Teachers will take great care with their language if referring to food or eating.
- Teachers will not disclose or imply any personal information about a student in front of other students.
- If a teacher needs to address a student on their behaviour, this will always be done with the interests of the student at heart. The teacher will explain why this is happening and what they would like the student to learn from it.
- A sense of humour is absolutely encouraged and is a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment, but it is essential that teachers take several factors into account. Some students process information differently and may not receive a joke in the same way as another student, for example there may be neurodivergent students, who take things literally that other students may take as a joke. Students also have different backgrounds and experiences, and something that may seem outlandish to a member of staff might be a reality for them. Humour should never bring up subjects that may be distressing for students. Lastly, humour should never exist at the expense of any student or member of staff.
- Staff will take care to also follow these guidelines when no students are present, for example in the office or green room. Creating and maintaining a culture of safety and respect extends beyond our direct work with the students. Staff will take care not to 'normalise' inappropriate language in staff-only spaces, and to maintain respect and kindness towards each other.

- If members of staff or students have any concerns, they should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and logged on MyConcern / Confide.

Empowering students

It is our responsibility as trusted adults to create an environment in which young dancers feel safe and empowered. Members of staff should reiterate wherever possible that students have agency and that they are encouraged to clearly articulate their boundaries. Open and nuanced discussion will be encouraged, recognising that we are preparing students to become part of an ongoing cultural conversation across the ballet world.

Staff will remind students whenever possible that it is important that they use their voices and feel confident to 'speak out', if they are ever uncomfortable when being spoken to. Students should be regularly reminded that they must come forward and tell a teacher/Director or someone they trust, if they feel uncomfortable. Students are aware of the processes to raise a concern anonymously - via the student correspondent box, which is regularly checked by the SMT, or the 'post box' to trustees.

This policy is written with the following supporting policies: KCSIE 2024, LVBS Safer Recruitment Policy, Healthy Eating and Concerns Policy, and Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour.

Policy written by Louise Bennett - Artistic Director
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