

Elmhurst Ballet School

Edgbaston, Birmingham, United Kingdom



Britain's oldest vocational ballet school, timetabling GCSEs around the barre with a direct line into Birmingham Royal Ballet.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	53/100
Academic outcomes	19/100
University placement	35/100
Prestige & heritage	66/100
Alumni network	79/100
Facilities	51/100
Transparency	61/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Elmhurst runs a dual track that few schools can match: a full academic day built around intensive vocational ballet training for pupils aged 11 to 19. That makes it a specialist proposition from the outset, not a conventional independent school with strong dance on the side. The academic offer is GCSE and A-Level, the teaching language is English, and the school operates as both day and boarding in Edgbaston, Birmingham. For families targeting professional classical ballet, that clarity matters. This is a school for children who do not merely enjoy dance, but intend to build a life in it.

What sets Elmhurst apart is the **single-minded** focus. The school states plainly that it serves students

who intend to pursue a career in professional classical ballet, and that vocational training sits alongside the academic timetable every day. Its accreditations reinforce that identity: Council for Dance Education and Training recognition, Music and Dance Scheme support, and Department for Education approval as an independent school. That combination places Elmhurst in a narrow and serious market: vocational boarding schools where artistic training is the main engine and academics must work around it without collapsing. The connection in your brief to Birmingham Royal Ballet sharpens the appeal further; parents looking for a **clear professional runway** will understand exactly why Elmhurst belongs on a shortlist.

The right student for Elmhurst is disciplined, physically resilient and **not in search of a broad-brush school experience**. A child who wants a sprawling menu of activities, a loose academic pace or a conventional teenage routine will find the model restrictive. A young dancer who wants hours at the barre, accepts that training drives the day, and still needs GCSEs and A-Levels delivered properly will find the structure **hard-edged and purposeful**. The age range, **11–19**, also matters: Elmhurst takes students deep into the final school years, when vocational intensity and academic pressure collide.

On fees, the school sits in the specialist independent bracket rather than the top end of full-fee UK boarding. The average annual day fee is **£22,716** and the average annual boarding fee is **£29,707**. That pricing, combined with Music and Dance Scheme status, gives Elmhurst a market position that is **serious without being stratospheric**. The weakness is the same as the strength: this is a narrow-fit school. If ballet is the central ambition, Elmhurst has a compelling case. If ballet is one talent among many, the specialism is too strong.

STRENGTHS

- Associate school of Birmingham Royal Ballet, giving pupils direct exposure to a professional company and performance opportunities.
- Vocational ballet school founded in 1923, one of Britain's first, now on a purpose-built Edgbaston campus opened in 2004.
- Combines a full academic curriculum (GCSE, A-Level and a Trinity-validated Level 6 Diploma) with daily vocational dance training on the same site.
- Offers both boarding and day places, drawing applicants from across the UK and internationally via audition.
- Eligible UK pupils can apply for government Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) funding, which can substantially offset fees.

TRADE-OFFS

- Entry is by competitive audition with very limited places each year, so admission is far from guaranteed even for capable dancers.
- Academic breadth is constrained by the hours committed daily to ballet training, which suits a narrow range of learners.
- Single-discipline focus on classical ballet means the school is unsuitable for children wanting broader performing arts or general schooling.
- For families who do not qualify for MDS support, fees represent a significant and sustained financial commitment.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points exist mainly at Year 7 (age 11), with further intake possible at Year 9 and sixth form, all via audition assessing physical aptitude, coordination and potential rather than existing technique alone. The school is academically non-selective, admitting pupils on their potential to become professional dancers. Auditions are held at the school and sometimes regionally or internationally. Because cohorts are small and demand is high, places are highly competitive. UK applicants may apply separately for means-tested Music and Dance Scheme funding, which affects overall affordability.

WTS RATING 

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