

Why EMPAS?

We believe there are numerous things to consider whilst choosing a dance school for your child, even if it is for fun; it is important to learn the proper technique from the very beginning. Very few parents expect their child to become professional dancers when they start classes aged 3 (or younger) but it's important that you do consider how they will prove their expertise if they do decide to take dance to the next level and train at college or university.

Alumni and older students

Look at the technique of their older students, even if you do not know a lot about ballet, the older students within a dance school can show you the progression your child is likely to make within their time at a dance school. It is important to look at the establishment of the school also, has it been established a long time? Does the school continue to progress? Where have their previous alumni trained professionally? Are previous alumni having a successful career?

EMPAS has been established since 1980, beginning as a small dance school a few nights a week in one studio room to now 6 days a week within 4 studio rooms and growing! Previous alumni have trained full time at English National Ballet School, Bird College of Dance, Tring Park School for Performing Arts, Laine Theatre Arts and Phil Winston's Theatreworks. Past students have worked professionally for P&O Cruises, Royal Caribbean Cruises, Thomson Cruises, Thursford Big Christmas Spectacular and Disneyland Paris.

Qualifications of the teachers

Check on the school's website and review where the teachers have studied. Look at the exam board the school is under and their position within the exam board, how long have they been a member? Are they well known within the association? You can search for qualified dance schools and teachers via any dance teachers association. Even if a dance teacher is registered with an association they may not enter children for examinations so double check before you enrol your child into any school.

Elaine Milbourne has been a member of the International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA) for over 40 years and is a lifetime member, she is also the current treasurer of the IDTA Tyneside area. EMPAS is established within the IDTA with previous students winning the International Theatre Dance Awards in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2020 and home to the winner of IDTA Miss Dance of Great Britain 2011. We hold at least 3 IDTA examination sessions every year from Preparatory level to Advanced 2 and students have received IDTA Theatre Award nominations for well over 10 years.

Location and studio space

Are the dance classes held in purpose built dance studios? Does the dance school look professional? Sprung flooring is very important, dance can put stress on bones, especially with elevation work, sprung flooring is designed to absorb the shock of the landing. A concrete or regular floor can be very dangerous whilst dancing. There should be mirrors and ballet barres of differing heights to support your child.

EMPAS is situated in the recently renovated and purpose built Old Town Hall in Newburn. It is a beautiful Grade 2 Listed building which is home to 4 state of the art dance studios, all containing the highest quality wooden sprung flooring, ballet barres and floor to ceiling mirrors.

How do they place children in a class?

This would normally be by 'experience' or by 'age'. Most recreational schools place children based on age, which means socially your child will be with children of their age but it can mean a very experienced 10 year old dancer could be training with non-experienced 10 year old. If your child is placed based on experience they will be challenged by their surroundings and in a class with fellow dancers with the same expertise.

EMPAS will always place children by experience to ensure they are receiving the correct training for their standard. If your child is older and new to the dance world, we often assess them in a suitable class and adjust if necessary. We offer private lessons to help students catch up if needed.

What opportunities are available?

Look to see if the dance school offers guest artists and workshops, extra training days or intensives. If the studio is up-to-date with their dance training efforts they will feel it is important to bring artists and trainers in from all different fields to expand your child's knowledge. Will they perform? Performing is important for developing confidence and team work, it is important to see if the school offers an annual performance opportunity and to see if they get involved in other shows, festivals and competitions.

EMPAS always has a flurry of activities happening within the school, from guest artists holding workshops, professionals providing extra training days and intensives and guest choreographers. We are invited to perform in various activities across the region and we partake in many competitions throughout the year. We have an annual Spring Dance Festival in May and we also produce a showcase performance every year.