

# MOUNTVIEW

120 Peckham Hill Street, London SE15 5JT  
UKPRN 10004450

## Statement of Access, Participation and Public Good

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, one of the UK’s leading drama schools, is a small specialist conservatoire which was founded in 1945 and has recently relocated to Peckham in South London from its previous home in Wood Green, North London. We currently train 450 students each year for theatre and its related industries and we have a long standing and international reputation for providing the highest quality training at an undergraduate and postgraduate level in acting, musical theatre, actor musicianship, directing, producing and technical theatre.

Our Vision						
Excellence and inclusion in dramatic training and a space for creative development						
Our Mission						
To be: A world-leading drama school A centre of creativity and opportunity for all A home for the theatre arts industry in London's cultural heart						
Our Values						
Courage	Curiosity		Community			
Our Overarching Strategies						
Excellence	Access		Innovation			
Our Specific Strategies						
Excellence						
Vocational Training	Artistic Programme	Nationally, Internationally and Locally	Conservatoire Credentials	Teaching, Learning, Assessment	Models of practice	
Access						
Foundation Level Training	Community Academy & Short Courses	Schools and Community Outreach	Scouting Programme	Apprentices	Bursaries and Hardship Funding	Accessible facilities
Innovation						
Commissioning New Work	Collaborations & Partnerships	Professional Development	New Model Drama School	Creating new work	Home for emerging companies, practitioners and industry	

Mountview’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2017 states that Mountview is wholly committed to:

- Widening participation across all programmes to currently underrepresented groups in the Theatre and related arts (primarily through the ‘Mountview Outreach Scouting Audition Scheme’ – see page 3)

- Effectively monitoring data and reflecting upon all aspects of equality and diversity (internally and externally)
- Representing Mountview's equality and diversity in all internal and external communications and promotions
- Ensuring that all managers and staff understand their responsibility to equality, diversity and inclusion and, where necessary undergo appropriate training for their role
- Building upon our current International profile and recruitment of international students

This is not an exhaustive list, nor can one policy or person be responsible for 'Equality, Diversity & Inclusion'. It is a collective responsibility and is embedded across all Mountview policies, procedures and working practices. In pursuing legitimate aims as a vocational drama school, Mountview is committed to open and fair casting, staffing and opportunity. Applicants to Mountview are auditioned/interviewed and are offered a place to study purely on their natural talent, individual merits and potential to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen profession.

We know that our environment will be enriched by embracing local, national and international students from a cross-section of backgrounds, experience, ethnicities, cultures and learning needs. Working together with our students we are pro-active in fostering changes that will make our training accessible and achievable to groups and individuals who might otherwise have been excluded due to their life circumstances.

In 2018, Mountview was one of five drama schools which entered into a landmark partnership with the Diversity School Initiative (DSI). The Initiative, founded in 2017, is a non-profit, student-founded campaign which aims to address the issue of underrepresentation and diversity in UK drama schools. The partnership involves a three-year contract where partners commit to improving diversity in their institution.

Mountview's Principal, Stephen Jameson, says: *"Improving access to training has always been at the heart of our ethos. This partnership confirms our commitment to building on this foundation: we are open to the experience and challenge that Diversity School are bringing to the table. Together we are at the forefront of positive change for the UK arts industry. We can't wait to get started."*

Both Mountview and the DSI believe that everyone should be given a fair and equal opportunity to train, learn, experiment and fulfil their potential, regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, social status, nationality, faith, sexuality or sexual orientation. This will be achieved through developing a more inclusive curriculum, faculty and student body, and the Initiative will support students through a mentoring scheme. Mountview plans to share information on best practice, and allow the DSI to audit progress on diversity and to speak to students. There will also be a programme of workshops for students and staff as well as outreach into schools and colleges. The DSI will also go to 'cold spots' in the UK and speak to young people who consider drama school to be culturally or financially beyond their reach, and promote Mountview. This, ultimately, should encourage an increase in applications from more diverse backgrounds.

This statement is designed to reflect our serious commitment to access, participation and contribution to the public good. We are committed to careful monitoring, identification of further progress that is needed and careful planning of action to achieve success, measured against our goals.

This statement reflects on the three key areas highlighted by the Office for Students (OfS): Access, Success and Progression.

This statement also serves as our Public Good Statement, as required by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

### **Access**

We audition or interview every applicant to our courses which demonstrates our commitment to open inclusion. Our current students act as ambassadors for auditions, welcoming applicants and answering questions. Mountview is creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, and equality of opportunity is embedded for all students and staff. In joining the Diversity School Initiative, we are helping to get the message of accessible high quality drama training across to talent all over the UK and around the world.

We are opening a Community Academy at our new facilities in Peckham which will operate outside of core teaching hours. Mountview will become a thriving resource for the community, offering weekend and evening classes, volunteering and adult community programmes as well as an apprenticeship programme in set construction, scenic arts, wardrobe and marketing. We will offer affordable skills, fitness and wellbeing classes year-round. The new facility in Peckham is also expected to enhance engagement on the 'Engage' Young People's Programme, as the short courses and workshops extend to include 400 young people a week compared to the current 240.

All of this presents further opportunities to strengthen our focus on widening participation amongst underrepresented groups and creating access for them. Our alumni will continue to act as community ambassadors for us and this will be a key initiative to help us connect with prospective students living in areas of low higher education participation, and who may otherwise not consider higher education or conservatoire training.

The facility will be more accessible to disabled students including wheelchair users as it is 100% Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant, this includes the theatres, studios, all front and back of house areas as well as all other training and public facilities. As a result of this we will engage more confidently in the inclusion of disabled students and freelance staff who are wheelchair users. Tailored support is offered to all students who require it through the Specific Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) system. For example, large print scripts, extended deadlines on written work, BSL interpreters for hard of hearing students and many other adjustments and support.

In order to increase applications from a wider background demographic, Mountview has created a Scouting Outreach Programme in collaboration with 37 partnership theatres, youth theatres and art centres. These partners work with Mountview in order to identify young talent from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and young people who will consider a three year vocational drama training to be culturally or financially unattainable. The scheme offers free auditions and helps with travel to audition centres as required for nominated candidates.

In 2017, 6% of BA Performance (Acting) applicants from the outreach scheme were offered places, all of whom were male. This low intake could be due to the lack of prior attainment of these prospective students when in competition for limited places. Consequently, the current provision for Foundation

level training courses at Mountview has expanded this year to include a one year full-time Acting course and a part-time Musical Theatre course. These new offers will support and widen opportunities for prospective students without prior attainment and enable them to train in the Mountview environment whilst deciding if the school is right for them.

We provide opportunities for students to apply for scholarships and bursaries in addition to the Mountview Hardship fund. Scholarships and bursaries that require an audition, such as the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Scholarship, are open to an equal number of male and female candidates in order to ensure fairness. Information about all scholarships and bursaries, as well as other awards, is publicly available on Mountview's website. Now that we have moved into our new facilities in Peckham we are placing a renewed focus on developing access to more bursaries and work on substantially increasing funds for our Student Hardship Fund.

The budget for widening participation is integrated into a range of areas including admissions, student support, touring, outreach workshops and short courses. This helps to support Mountview's visits to schools, colleges and arts centres across the UK, leading workshops, holding auditions, touring productions and networking with communities. Across these areas of activity, our estimated total spend on widening participation in 2017/8 is at least £75,000, which represents around 1.5% of total student fee income for the year.

The BA Performance programme which has three pathways: Acting, Actor Musician and Musical Theatre will be revalidated in 2019/2020 academic year. This is an opportunity for Mountview to continue its innovative stance on ensuring a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum that reflects society and the current industry that our students are training to join. In 2018, 12% of applications for all BA Performance pathways were from BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) students. This revalidation opportunity will play a key role in aligning our access aims more closely with our validated content and increasing our reach to BAME applicants in the process. An example of a shift that has already been embraced is the teaching of Multicultural London English (MLE), a sociolect of English spoken authentically by working class young people in London which is now covered in speech classes. Many BAME students identify this to be their natural accent and it will be a casting expectation for many students when they graduate.

Mountview is committed to ensuring that training is accessible to all genders. There are, however, significantly more female applications, compared to male, across all courses and pathways. In 2018, 237% more applications for BA Performance (Musical Theatre) were from female applicants compared to male, and 86% more applications for BA Performance (Acting) came from female applicants. The divide was less between genders of applicants for BA Theatre Production Arts, with only 60% more female applicants to male. 100% of BAME students who applied for BA Theatre Production Arts were female.

### **Success**

100% BA Performance (Actor Musician) students from the 2014/15 intake graduated, as did 105% (includes intercalated students) of BA Performance (Acting) and 93% (includes intercalated students) of BA Performance (Musical Theatre). Continuation rates at Mountview are extremely high with a maximum of 1% of students withdrawing from their studies annually. There is no trend of withdrawal decisions being made amongst underrepresented groups. Each year there are an average of two students that may choose to interrupt their studies, these are almost exclusively for medical

reasons and 100% of these students return and complete their studies. The intensive nature of the training that Mountview provides places a significant focus on collective learning as an ensemble, this very supportive method of delivery contributes to our extremely high student retention rates.

Mountview employs 'gender blind casting' and 'colour blind casting' and selects materials for performers that will offer a balance of opportunities from writers of all ethnicities and backgrounds. This ensures fairness and equality for assessment and opportunities for all enabling students to achieve success.

All students are encouraged to make use of additional academic support where needed (used in particular by students with no prior attainment or poor educational experience). Additionally, the Personal Tutor Scheme supports learning progress for students throughout their course through individual and group tutorials. Mountview has both a full-time Student Welfare Manager and a School Counsellor. All staff are currently completing Mental Health First Aid training; the links between mental health wellness and its impact on educational outcomes for students is becoming much clearer across the sector.

Reasonable adjustments to learning and assessment are implemented for students with a Specific Learning Disability and additional 1-1 support is provided where this is necessary. Students working in English as a second language are also given support which will be formalised over the next year to include 1-1 support. Mountview staff are skilled at working with students to create adaptations for learning and assessment and in using a wide range of learning styles in their teaching. Staff also attend training sessions on Specific Learning and Educational Needs (SEND) and share best practice at teaching and learning sessions.

In 2017, 24% of graduates from the BA Performance (Acting) cohort had a Specific Learning Disability and therefore had reasonable adjustments to their learning and assessment. 63% of these graduates went on to achieve a 2:1. In the BA Performance (Musical Theatre) cohort 19% of these graduates had a Specific Learning Disability and 57% of these graduates achieved a 2:1. The remaining 43% achieved a 2:2. Of the BA Performance (Actor Musician) graduates, 27% had a Specific Learning Disability and 50% of these achieved a 2:1 and 50% achieved a 2:2. There were no First Class undergraduate degrees awarded to BAME graduates or graduates with a registered Specific Learning Disability.

These statistics show that whilst students with Specific Learning Disabilities are not disadvantaged at Mountview, there is room to develop students at the higher levels of achievement. All students with a Specific Learning Disability on all BA courses graduated with an Honours degree.

In 2017, 12% of all BA Performance graduates across all pathways were BAME students, a majority of whom were on the Acting pathway. 68% of BA Performance (Acting) students achieved a 2:1, 13% of which were BAME students. 38% of BA Performance (Acting) students who achieved a 2:2 were BAME students and one student in the cohort achieved a Third class degree, this student was also BAME. 100% of BAME graduates of BA Performance (Musical Theatre) in 2017 achieved a 2:2. In 2017, 7% of MA Performance (Acting) graduates were BAME students and 100% of these graduates achieved a Merit.

These statistics suggest that whilst our BAME students are achieving success across all pathways, they currently require more support than their counterparts. This is highlighted by the fact that no First Class undergraduate degrees were awarded to BAME graduates. In part this is due to the intersection of BAME students that come from low income households, those living in areas of low higher education participation and those with Specific Learning Disabilities. 50% of graduates with a Specific Learning Disability on BA Performance (Acting) were also BAME students. However, this said, our BAME student retention is excellent and our graduation achievements amongst this group are currently good. Improved support is planned for the 2018/2019 academic year in order to help release the full potential of all of our students at a higher level.

### **Progression**

Given the vocational nature of the training, Mountview students are intensively prepared for employment throughout their training and in their final year they actively seek agent representation and employment. All of this activity is supported by Mountview's Industry Liaison Manager. It is unusual in this environment for students to choose to go on to further study immediately. This tends to be an option explored by alumni after an average of five years out and working in the industry. Our alumni continue to be supported by us throughout their careers, using Mountview library resources, booking studios, meeting with staff and receiving ongoing careers advice.

82% of BA Performance (Acting) graduates from 2017 are signed with an agent. 75% of BAME students from this course are signed with an agent and 88% are in paid employment. A larger percentage of male graduates from this course are also employed compared to females with 94% of male graduates employed compared to 75% of females. In BA Performance (Musical Theatre), 100% of BAME graduates and 100% of male graduates are signed and in paid employment. Furthermore, 100% of BA Theatre Production Arts graduates from 2017 are in employment.

It is important to recognise therefore that given the very specific nature of the industry, there is often little correlation between agent representation and employment gain and indeed there is rarely any correlation between degree classification and employment or agent representation. We simply encourage our students to achieve excellent results across all three of these measures: grades, agent representation and employment and ensure that they have the skills to do so. Whilst some students are not always in paid employment in their industry of choice, all students have transferrable skills due to the high level of communication skills taught on all courses. The nature of the employment that Mountview students seek is short term freelance contracts, typically ranging between a two-day filming contract to a one-year contract in a West End Musical.

### **What next?**

The statistics on Mountview's results and graduate destinations speak for themselves regarding the quality of training offered at the school, but it is also clear that a majority of BAME students tend to have lower grades than their peers and that those students with Specific Learning Disabilities do not always access the support provided.

There are several new initiatives to target these areas:

	Initiative	Action/Measure	Review
1.	Closer analysis of the educational background of each student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate how this impacts degree classifications</li> </ul>	Annual cycle
2.	Increasing availability of 1-1 support as necessary for students with no prior attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student take up</li> <li>Learning gain</li> </ul>	Annual cycle
3.	Increasing mentor support for students from different cultural backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collating current mentoring initiatives through LTAS group</li> <li>Implementing a nominating process</li> </ul>	September 2019
4.	Introducing language support (EFL) for students whose first language is not English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student take up</li> <li>Learning gain</li> </ul>	June 2020
5.	Developing more short courses for students who are not ready for full-time training to enhance their opportunities for admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application rates</li> <li>Entry to articulated course</li> </ul>	June 2020
6.	Development of a partnership with the <i>Ramps on the Moon</i> project <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidation of discussion</li> </ul>	September 2019
7.	Further encouragement of students with Specific Learning Disabilities to access the support and reasonable adjustments available to them through targeted dialogue with Personal Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student take up</li> <li>Personal Tutor feedback</li> <li>Learning gain</li> </ul>	December 2019
8.	Extending practical hardship initiatives through the Mountview Hardship Fund i.e. oyster top-up for students in financial crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review application process</li> <li>Reduction of cases we are unable to assist</li> </ul>	Annual cycle
9.	Development of funds for the Hardship Fund and more bursaries to help students financially in the short, medium and long term of their education cycle with us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New focus for the Development team</li> <li>Number of new opportunities realised</li> </ul>	Annual & ongoing

In addition, we will continue to develop our existing commitment to access and participation through:

- Working with the Diversity School Initiative (DSI) to identify new goals
- Running regional auditions and taster workshops
- Staff mental health first aid training

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<sup>1</sup> Ramps on the Moon integrate disabled and non-disabled performers and practitioners and aim to achieve a cultural step change in participating organisations, enabling accessibility to become a central part of their thinking and aesthetics

- Growing the Community Academy in the heart of Peckham
- Working closely with all students and the Students Union to reflexively provide enhanced support for students
- Offering BSL masterclasses
- Employing diverse practitioners as role models for underrepresented groups.

We will monitor our progress against these initiatives and continue to innovate strategically towards our aim of access of opportunity for all. This statement is available on our website:

<https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/life-at-mountview/access-diversity/>

### **Sources**

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