

The Telegraph

Leading drama school starts misconduct inquiry into ‘sexualised’ dance classes

Principal of ArtsEd school in London stands down while probe launched into allegations of ‘serious misconduct’

By [Katherine Rushton](#) and [Claire Newell](#) 7 June 2021 • 9:00pm

A leading drama school that boasts [Andrew Lloyd Webber](#) as its president has launched an independent investigation into “serious historic claims of misconduct”.

ArtsEd school in London has appointed a QC to oversee the probe, and the school’s principal, Chris Hocking, has temporarily stepped down.

Although the school has not disclosed the full details of the allegations, The Telegraph can reveal that a former teacher has been accused of seriously sexually assaulting a student in 2013.

Other students who attended the school in 2014 have claimed that they felt pressured into giving each other “lap dances” in a highly sexualised dance class, and said that a student allegedly had her breasts touched.

The dance class – which was known to some students as “sexy dance” – was overseen by Mr Hocking, while he was director of musical theatre, who allegedly put a towel over the window.

ArtsEd caters to children as young as 11 years old, but all of the allegations are about its Higher Education institution and concern students over the age of 18, the school said in a statement.

The allegations against ArtsEd are likely to fuel calls for reform in the industry, which has come under scrutiny after concerns were raised about the [behaviour of actor Noel Clarke](#).

Mr Clarke, who was accused of bullying and sexually harassing women, “vehemently” denied sexual misconduct or criminal behaviour but apologised for some of his actions which he

recognised "have affected people in ways I did not intend or realise".

Since then, an investigation by The Telegraph has found widespread allegations of bullying and sexual harassment at some of the country's [most prestigious drama schools](#).



The Guildford School of Acting (whose alumni include Best Exotic Marigold Hotel actress Celia Imrie) is one of a number of drama schools caught up in accusations of serious sexual misconduct CREDIT: Dean Whiting

The allegations against ArtsEd were initially reported to the school in November last year, by one of its former employees. However, instead of carrying out an independent inquiry, the school – which has charitable status – is understood to have entrusted the job to its chairman, a trustee, and its head of HR.

The school said in May this year in an email to a former teacher that that inquiry was “impeded” due to the “passage of time” and “lack of contemporaneous evidence”, and that the "main allegations" related to staff who were no longer working at the school.

It admitted that "some practices in relation to a couple of dance classes" were "not regarded as acceptable" but said they had "long since stopped".

In a move that has angered the alleged victims, it also expressed "regret" that it put staff through an investigation in the midst of the pandemic.

"We also wish to convey our deep concern at the impact this investigation has had on the leadership of ArtsEd," it said in the email.

It is understood that since then, new information has come to light, prompting action by the school.

On Monday night, ArtsEd said in a statement that it has appointed a QC to investigate allegations because it takes them "extremely seriously".

"Nothing is more important than the welfare of students at ArtsEd [and] these allegations are serious and deeply saddening. They go against everything we stand for at ArtsEd. They will be fully and independently investigated," a spokesman said.

It said that Mr Hocking has agreed "that it is appropriate for him to temporarily stand down" to ensure that the new investigation is as "rigorous and independent as possible", and that it has set up an email address for people to report misconduct of any kind "in a secure environment".