

Key messages for parents

Developing illustrations for the network, but also works as a simple factsheet as an alternative to all the detail in Resource 2

Normal is lots of different things when it comes to puberty and adolescence!

Remind them that being different to their peers is completely normal and that everyone grows at their own rate and in their own time

Be aware of how physical change may affect them psychologically

Be sensitive to how physical change may impact on young people and avoid comments (however well intended! e.g. 'you've grown!') – young people are highly sensitive at this stage and this could be interpreted negatively.

Remind them that it's temporary!!

Changes in flexibility, balance and co-ordination are all temporary and will settle once the most rapid period of growth is complete

Perseverance is key

During the growth spurt dancers may feel like they're going backwards or not progressing as much as you would like but things will settle and return to 'normal' eventually so don't lose heart.

Encourage realistic goals and expectations

Avoid unrealistic expectations for progress during this period. Dancers should change/adapt their workload and expectations to accommodate the changing body, ensure adequate rest and focus (where possible) on maintaining flexibility rather than increasing it.

Encourage a shift in the focus of training during this time (don't push for exams)

Focusing on development of musicality and artistry as well as working to maintain technique. This will enable progress in aspects of training where it is realistic to make progress at this time.

Avoid any form of comparison with others, encourage self-referenced evaluation

The timing of puberty and associated growth spurts can differ by up to 5 years between same age peers – so encourage them to avoid comparing things such as flexibility or body type especially at this time.

Be proactive in supporting them to negotiate changes

More visible changes can be tricky to negotiate, aspects of puberty such as breast development can be especially challenging when you have to wear leotard and tights and use the mirror, these are all normal changes and while they can seem 'alien' in a dance environment. Be aware that attire may be an especially sensitive issue at this time, remind them changes are normal and support them to find what they are comfortable with e.g. speaking to the teacher about options for dancewear.