

# The Hammond

Inspection of colleges participating in the Dance and Drama Award scheme

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**Unique reference number:** 54859

**Name of lead inspector:** Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 19 October 2011

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## Information about the school

1. The Hammond is a private performing arts school that trains students for employment in the musical theatre and dance industries. The school runs a three-year course in musical theatre and dance and students study for either the diploma in professional musical theatre or the diploma in professional dance, awarded by Trinity College, London. The school is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training.
2. The Hammond is based on a single site in Hoole Bank Chester and the campus includes both teaching spaces and a theatre. The school has boarding house accommodation in Chester. The school enrolls students from across the country and a few international students. Students studying the diploma courses in the upper school are mostly of White British ethnicity but the lower school is more ethnically diverse. Currently 92 students are enrolled in the upper school, of whom 63 are in receipt of dance and drama awards (DaDA) funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>
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<b>Grade 1</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>
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<b>Grade 1</b>
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## Overall effectiveness

3. The Principal has set out clearly her vision and high expectations for the school. Staff feel valued and highly respected by leaders and as a result are highly committed to the vision and to the development of the school. Staff receive excellent support for their professional development which in turn enriches the student experience. The culture of determinism and a drive to provide outstanding training for students permeates the staff team. They are passionate, insightful and wholly committed to developing teaching and learning to enable students to prosper in their chosen careers. Such vibrancy is well captured by student comments noting the school as having 'a great vibe'; this 'vibe' characterises the welcoming and ambitious work ethic at the school.
4. Over the last three years retention has risen and is very high. The pass rate of 100% for the diploma in professional musical theatre of professional dance remains impressive. Most students secure work as dancers or as 'triple threat' musical theatre performers within six months of completing their training. Much improved monitoring of graduate

destinations shows that many progress quickly from ensemble work to swing cover then to first cover roles within 12 to 14 months of graduation. Graduates continue to build up a strong portfolio of contracts, reflecting improved standards and highly versatile graduate students.

5. Most students make good progress as a result of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. Teachers create inspiring and energetic learning environments where students relish the chance to work together, often problem solving and critiquing their own and others' work and this quickly secures a better quality of performance. Inspectors judge this as a key strength in the teaching and learning at The Hammond, enabling students to evaluate how they are learning and ably give feedback to each other in a sensitive but equally ambitious manner. The integration of theory and practical work is excellent. Students have sound contextual knowledge which ensures they come to lessons well prepared and can understand how the work of key practitioners and different styles of acting or dance have evolved in the United Kingdom and internationally. Teachers probe this knowledge well, encouraging students to think about how to interpret characters, songs or dance sequences true to the original style or how to be creative and take risks with interpretations. The curriculum is outstanding, giving students a balanced yet intensive training. Revised schemes of work for dance disciplines as well as a restructured programme of singing showcase, musical theatre jazz, acting technique and modules such as acting accents, have driven up standards in musical theatre.
6. Students possess the personal resilience needed for the demands of the audition circuit and have the industry acumen to sustain knock backs and continue to promote their skills to secure work in a highly competitive field. The third year experience as a performer with 'The Hammond Performing Company' is invaluable, giving students intensive exposure to real life rehearsal schedules, suitcase living and touring to the different venues which necessitate flexibility and team work to literally make sure that the show goes on.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What students like:**

- fantastic facilities including the theatre, a new seminar room, expanded library resources, several brand new dance studios, enhanced provision for information communication and technology (ICT) and new music rooms
- the outstanding curriculum to contextualise and integrate professional studies, with excellent connections across disciplines for dance and musical theatre
- the clear and transparent assessment system with well defined criteria for each exam or assignment,

- very good guidance from all tutors about strengths and targets for improvement, reviewed regularly
- inspiring lessons which combine high levels of challenge with good support, and highly effective use of self and peer criticism
- the breadth of knowledge imparted by teachers whose previous and current industry experience is used to inspire
- a warm, friendly and ambitious community that is fully inclusive
- outstanding levels of guidance for nutrition, fitness and injury prevention and treatment.

**What students would like to see improved:**

- there were no recommendations from students and there was agreement that action taken by leaders in the last two years has significantly improved the training course.

**Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

**What employers like:**

- high standards achieved in dancing with strong partner work and technical skills, and much improved standards in singing and acting, complemented by good stage experience within the training
- good communication and relationships with a range of agents and employers
- high levels of professionalism and an excellent work ethic.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- there were no recommendations from employers.

**Main inspection report**

***Capacity to make and sustain improvement***

***Grade 1***

7. Leadership and management are outstanding. Since the last inspection the restructuring of management has clarified roles and responsibilities. In particular the appointment of two new vice principals, as heads of dance and of musical theatre coupled with the appointment of an assessment coordinator, have improved significantly the quality assurance processes and their effectiveness in raising standards. The principal, deputy principal and these new leaders work extremely well together and have driven forward many improvements. The impact of much more strategic and tightly focused quality assurance at all layers of leadership has contributed to an outstanding quality of provision and led to outstanding outcomes for students.
8. Action planning is more precise and sets out measurable and insightful targets, although the observations of teaching are not always as consistent in judging why teaching and learning are outstanding.

Leaders and teaching staff monitor students' progress carefully through the rigorous assessment system and analyse outcomes data by gender, ethnicity and by students who have learning difficulties and /or disabilities to determine trends over time. The collation and analysis of graduate destinations is considerably improved, with more systematic monitoring of destinations and follow up letters to sustain contact with former students.

## ***Outcomes for learners***

## ***Grade 1***

9. The Hammond students achieve good and an occasionally outstanding levels of work by the time they graduate from their three year courses. Leaders have focused intently upon raising retention, making certain that students have every opportunity to stay on the course, despite financial difficulties or personal issues. As a result retention of students in receipt of dance and drama awards has risen markedly and almost all students now complete their courses. Targeted personalised support coupled with excellent team work means that students are well known by staff and their progress is monitored closely so any issues are quickly identified and remedied.
10. The very large majority of students achieve employment as dancers, actors or as triple threat musical theatre performers within six months of graduating. Graduates go on to secure contracts which show rapid progression in their career from ensemble performers to first cover and occasionally lead roles. The Hammond School has continued to develop its relationship with agents across the country and increasingly with agents and casting directors from London. The new Year 3 performance showcase held at the Shaw Theatre in London helps showcase talents of graduating students giving them wider exposure to key agencies who target West End recruitment. Typical jobs include regional and national tours, cabaret work, cruise-ship contracts and dance company work.
11. The 100% pass rate over the last three years for the diploma in professional dance and musical theatre, along with reports by Trinity College London show how much the quality of training has improved, especially in singing and acting. Reports by Trinity College identify students who perform at a very good and increasingly outstanding level, a credit to leaders and teaching staff who have successfully reviewed the course and established good cross disciplinary links. Performers are described as acting with very good timing and characterisation, some superb mime and partnering work, and with some good and outstanding vocal work that is polished, technically sound and achieves subtlety in style. Traditional strengths in the dance curriculum at Hammond continue with good and outstanding achievement in ballet, jazz and tap work across all three year groups, with a recent performance of 42nd

Street being noted for high levels of performance in three disciplines of acting, singing and dancing including superb tap dancing.

12. Students work in a focused manner with their class journals, recording key teaching points, technical and stylistic features and annotating of scripts and scores to help them retain a detailed account of their learning. In lessons where students were observing because of injury or illness, they were actively engaged because teachers directed questions to them, helping them appraise and give feedback to the performers. Students are highly articulate and show excellent reflective ability to judge their own progress and that of their peers. Weekly reflective logs combined with assessment records for summative assignments are well documented. Student refer back to goals they have set and how well they achieve their targets. Students are confident, show good levels of initiative and supportive collaborative working. Giving constructive feedback to each other is inherent in their learning and is maturely and sensitively given and received by students.
13. High expectations for attendance, punctuality, personal presentation and commitment to study, help students develop the necessary rigour and personal management skills to succeed. The outstanding preparation for future well-being is a result of high levels of performance training with excellent attention to developing literacy and ICT skills and helping students prepare curriculum vitae, photographs and covering letters deemed appropriate for marketing to agents.
14. An outstanding performer's wellness programme successfully monitors students' physical development and ensures the excellent personalised Pilates programme supports injury prevention and treatment. Inclusion of physiotherapists in observing lessons and very good joint working with teaching staff enables a cohesive and shared knowledge of how to meet the needs of students from enrolment through to graduation. The annual screening programme, excellent data collection and subsequent analysis means that any trends in sites of injury and patterns across year groups are quickly identified. Students understand the dangers of an unbalanced diet and their written work and confident discussion of the relationship between diet and training, confirms that they receive thorough guidance about nutrition. Support for vocal wellness is well managed with good use of experts in the medical profession.
15. Students feel very safe and well cared for. They regularly receive guidance about personal safety both on site at the school campus, in their boarding accommodation and in the locality. Students learn and apply very safe working practices in studios and the attention given to physical and vocal warm up and cool down is second nature to students.

16. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding. In an outstanding tap dance lesson, the pace of learning was very challenging, pushing students to repeat and refine tapping skills to capture subtle differences in the sequence. Questioning of observers checked their learning both through observation and listening to sounds of the tappers to pick out who was achieving the desired crescendo effect. Through individual feedback, praise and challenge given by the class teacher and the observers, students made good progress. In contemporary dance lessons students successfully use anatomical knowledge to analyse how to improve their use of weight shift to get better momentum in floor work and how to optimise a torso in tilting sideways to off balance and recover. Teachers successfully develop students understanding of their craft through very good use of technical vocabulary and reinforcing critical teaching points relating to performing on stage. In a musical theatre class students successfully sustained good vocal range and clear diction at the early stages of learning new repertoire.
17. The missing link inhibiting all students from making outstanding progress is the lack of clarity in identifying and providing for the different needs of students. Teachers understand students' targets because of detailed student profiles but referring to differentiation by outcome misses opportunity to use good assessment information to plan learning for each student. Leaders rightly acknowledge that the current lesson planning model is onerous and needs refining to bring about a sharper focus on how to accelerate students' progress in every lesson.
18. The assessment structure, with detailed criteria for each practical and written assignment ensures that students understand how they are being marked and can quickly determine aspects they need to improve. Formal feedback to students after summative assessments is mostly detailed and usefully documented in student profiles. Students take ownership of the feedback and monitor their own short- and longer-term targets with each teacher. This accurate, composite picture of students' attainment and progress helps everyone monitor progress very well. Standardisation of marking through a panel, often of three markers, is secure and helps teachers see students work across disciplines.
19. The outstanding curriculum is designed around sound integration of disciplines in dance and musical theatre training, well balanced across the timetable for each year group. Students remark that this has dramatically improved in the last two years, especially because leaders have listened to issues students raised and willingly refined how the timetable and overall course fit together. Students keenly describe how those on the dance course are now more confident because of increased vocal coaching. Similarly a high proportion of musical theatre students

often show equally good execution in jazz and tap dance because the training expects all students to be as versatile and accomplished across dancing, singing and acting. Leaders accept that improvements to the quality of performance in contemporary dance were required and have begun a review of the contemporary dance curriculum. Lesson observations during inspection reveal that this is bearing fruit with students receiving a broader experience of contemporary dance styles. Students relish the chance to learn through master classes taught by leading performers from shows such as Chicago and former students are frequently invited to lead workshops.

20. Partnership work through many outreach projects is outstanding. For example, work with the local fire service supports pupils excluded from local schools. Opportunities for Hammond students to take their performance skills into the wider community enriches their performance experience and the lives and experiences of excluded pupils enormously. Students agree there are many opportunities to perform both in dance and in musical theatre. Frequently students sing at events at Chester cathedral and lead fundraising activities to generate money for events such as the third year company tour.
21. The quality of support and guidance are outstanding and provide a high level of wraparound care for students personal and professional needs. Students have excellent access to support services for medical needs and issues which may require professional counselling support. The management of injury prevention, treatment and personalised care plans is well established. Improved connections with leading agencies such as DanceUK help the school be networked into discussions about current practice and teachers have good awareness of issues arising from research by the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science.
22. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding support because of good diagnostic testing when they enter the upper school diploma, resulting in sound learning plans. Students have additional learning support for written work and the expertise at the school means that needs such as dysphasia, dyslexia or dyspraxia as well as hearing or sight impairments, are very well catered for. Good staff development has enhanced knowledge of a range of difficulties that students face. Staff teams work very well together, helping students overcome barriers to learning.

### ***Leadership and management***

### ***Grade 1***

23. Leadership and management are outstanding. The Principal sets high standards and has a strong vision that is communicated very well and



clearly understood by all staff. A culture of continuous improvement has been established. Teaching staff and leaders continually review whether the training course meets the needs of the dance and musical theatre industry, with a realistic and critical awareness that the current lack of turnover on some parts of the industry means that graduates need to be even more versatile if they are to succeed when they leave their training.

24. As part of the much improved cycle of quality assurance and evaluation, the new quality and standards team have sharpened formal lesson observations as part of staff appraisal and have required purposeful and regular evaluations at subject level by senior tutors and leaders of each discipline. The clarity in criteria used for observing and the subsequent feedback to staff is more focused than at the last inspection. The higher proportion of staff who have a formally recognised teaching qualification or who are currently enrolled on training courses, shows good investment in staff training. Staff are unanimous that teacher training courses are fully supporting how they work as a staff team. There is much willingness to work together and use an open door policy to drop in and see others teaching. The vibrancy and energy in the teaching team is impressive, enhancing the energy in studio and classroom teaching.
25. The self-assessment process is increasingly incisive and is more comprehensive in selecting evidence to justify grades awarded. However, the self-assessment document requires more precision and detail in triangulating the impact of teaching on outcomes for all students. The grading of teaching and learning is generous compared to findings by inspectors. Whilst there is some outstanding practice there is not a precise enough focus on planning lessons that consistently enable students to make outstanding progress. Subject-based evaluations are coherent and better aligned to the overall development plan. These are shared amongst staff and frequently reviewed team meetings. As part of quality assurance work, leaders place more emphasis on regularly seeking student views both formally and informally, through completion of questionnaires about the quality of teaching and learning by each class teacher, through the student representative lunch with the principal and through group tutorials. Students feel that their voice is heard.
26. The board of directors fully support leaders' action plans and vision. Recent appointments have rejuvenated the breadth of experience and leaders are planning to utilise the new representation from the University of Chester faculty of education to support further developments in teaching and learning.
27. Arrangements to keep students safe and uphold statutory requirements for the safeguarding are outstanding. Staff receive regular updating of their child protection training and are highly knowledgeable about best practice in using, as appropriate, physical correction in lessons. Students

say this is explained clearly so they understand the purpose of hands on correction.

28. The school's promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Leaders monitor the progress of students by minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure equality of opportunity and achievement which is comparable to their peers. The number of students from minority ethnic groups remains relatively small despite good promotion of diversity and inclusivity both in marketing strategies and in widening participation projects. Students say there is good transparency and fairness in the auditioning and selection process for performance projects.
29. The school provides outstanding value for money. Recent investment in new studios and learning resources is valued by students who recognise how well equipped Hammond is for their dance and musical theatre training.

### ***What does The Hammond need to do to improve further?***

- Increase proportion of students who make outstanding progress in lessons and over time by ensuring that all teachers use the very good assessment information to plan lessons that meet the different needs and potential of all students. Include extension tasks, different levels of support and variation in pace. Make reference to individual learning goals when feeding back.
- Develop consistency amongst all staff in judging what constitutes outstanding learning, through a deeper pedagogical understanding of how to observe and judge the progress of students in lessons.
- Seek ways to establish links with a leading industry figurehead to further promote and celebrate the outstanding training taking place at Hammond and inform the strategic direction of the school.

### **Information about the inspection**

30. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the assessment leader and deputy principal as nominees, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the school's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the qualification awarding body, Trinity London, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors observed lessons including several joint observations. The lead inspector met with groups of students from each year group to gain their views and also met with staff in leadership roles and a group of

teachers. Inspectors considered the views of employers and views expressed in recent student feedback questionnaires.

Record of main findings			
<b>Provider name</b>	<b>The Hammond School</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>	<b>385314</b>
<b>Learning types: 16-18 learner responsive:</b> FE full-time.			

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection</b> Full-time learners.	92
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	1
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>1</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	1 1
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1
How safe do learners feel?	1
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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