

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



1 February 2016

Mr Sukhbir Farar and Mr Jonathan Mortimer
Headteachers
Hamstead Hall Academy
Craythorne Avenue
Handsworth Wood
Birmingham
B20 1HL

Dear Mr Farar and Mr Mortimer

Short inspection of Hamstead Hall Academy

Following my visit to the academy on 19 January 2016 with Graham Tyrer, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school, Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre, was judged to be good in January 2011.

This academy continues to be good.

You and your senior leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the academy since the last inspection. Senior leaders and staff share your vision for the academy to provide a high standard of education for the young people in the local community. Academy leaders have led a culture of high expectations and ambition, where swift action is taken to prevent underachievement so that pupils achieve as well as they can. Leaders do not shy away from making difficult decisions regarding managing the performance of staff, fully supported by governors. Courageous financial decisions have been made to appoint additional English and mathematics teachers to plan for succession should teachers leave or if lessons need to be covered due to staff absence.

Using your experience as a support school, academy leaders understand that the best way to improve the academy is through strategies which lead to sustainable improvements in progress for all pupils rather than actions directed solely at pupils completing Key Stage 4 or Key Stage 5. As a result, academy leaders initially focused on the areas requiring improvement from your last inspection, such as making sure teachers set learning objectives in lessons and improving written feedback to pupils, but then continued to act on other findings from your accurate reviews of the academy's work.

Academy leaders correctly identified the reasons why many pupils struggled to improve their verbal responses in lessons and their explanations in their written work, resulting in lower marks in examinations, particularly in history, geography and in physical education (PE). In response, academy leaders have implemented an approach to improving language development across the academy. Following staff training and support delivered by your senior leaders, all teachers now focus on technical subject language, use of key terms and improving pupils' reasoning and explanations. Following a successful pilot in humanities and PE, where achievement improved as a result, this approach is now used by all teachers and progress is improving for all pupils currently in the academy.

Improving the sixth form was identified as an area needing further development at the time of your last inspection. New sixth form leaders were immediately appointed and progress leaders now check rigorously on the progress made by learners, intervening quickly at the first sign of progress slowing. However, initial improvements to AS and A level progress seen in 2013 and 2014 were not sustained in 2015. In response, academy leaders reviewed the effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programme and reduced the number of subjects that all learners are expected to study. Learners know they now study their chosen subjects over two years, rather than resitting examinations or having the option to 'drop out' of courses at the end of a year. Achievement in GCSE resits in English and mathematics has very recently improved because more time has been provided to study these courses and better teaching is available.

Academy leaders appointed an attendance officer in September who works closely with families to make sure pupils attend regularly and on time. Attendance continues to be above the national average and has improved further, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. You introduced a new behaviour management strategy in September and there is now a consistent approach to making sure all pupils are 'ready to learn' through regular checks on uniform, homework completion and equipment brought to lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving as seen in a fall in the number of pupils who are excluded. Pupils' conduct around the site is good. They were polite and courteous in greeting visitors and keen to share their views on how the academy places a high priority on the development of other skills, for example an understanding of enterprise and health education, teamwork and decision-making skills and the importance of making a contribution to improving the lives of others through voluntary work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have effectively developed a culture of safeguarding in the academy by making sure that all staff have a shared understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe, happy and well looked after. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. All staff have received training in how to help pupils to understand the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation and have received up-to-date child

protection training. Teachers ensure pupils understand how to keep themselves safe through the personal, social and health education course and assembly themes. The effective form-time programme includes developing an understanding of fundamental British values through discussion themes such as 'Should only Christians celebrate Christmas?'.

Inspection findings

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils completing Year 11 with five or more GCSE grades at A* to C improved sharply from that of the previous year and is now broadly average. Pupils have continued to make good progress in mathematics and much better progress is being seen in English. Overall, pupils make exceptional progress across all their subjects.
- Teachers work hard to remove the negative impact on learning of deprivation. Disadvantaged pupils are very well supported in their lessons and because of this they make similar progress to that seen by other pupils nationally in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive exceptionally high-quality support through the resource base. Pupils are provided with a timetable tailored to their individual needs which provides the opportunity to improve their basic skills and to gain a range of awards.
- Academy leaders, including governors, know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy exceptionally well as a result of rigorous monitoring systems for pupils' progress and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment through external and internal reviews.
- The academy works closely with other schools to improve teaching and to share the best practice with other schools. Two teachers are trained in delivery of the improving teaching and outstanding teaching accredited programmes in which teachers in the academy enthusiastically take part.
- Where leaders have identified that teaching is not yet good enough, teachers are helped to improve their skills through a support programme in which precise objectives are set, reviewed every six weeks and support amended to meet individual teachers' needs. Teachers on support programmes are successfully improving their skills, leading to their pupils making better progress.
- Through the multi-academy trust, teachers at Hamstead Hall Academy support teaching in Grestone Academy, the primary school in the trust. Teachers from the primary academy also support teaching in Year 7, which improves transition arrangements for pupils and makes sure teachers build on what pupils have already learnt from their primary school.
- Governors are highly experienced, skilled and knowledgeable due partly to the good-quality training they receive. They know the academy well, because they receive accurate information from academy leaders and make regular visits to the academy to find out about pupils' work for themselves. This includes short visits to lessons and attendance at parents' evenings to gather parents' views.

- The newly appointed leader of mathematics has a clear vision for how mathematics teaching and learning will be improved in the academy. The mathematics department have recently started working in partnership with a group of five schools through the Central Maths Hub, focusing on developing pupils' problem-solving skills.
- Sixth form learners benefit from a highly effective 16 to 19 study programme which includes a rich variety of activities to enrich their learning. This includes work experience, opportunities to act as an academic mentor for younger pupils, such as in mathematics, work with primary children through the trust, voluntary work leading to accreditation in 'V-inspired' awards, and taking part in fundraising activities to maintain, and visit, a school in the Gambia.
- Some middle leaders have only recently been appointed, such as in mathematics and science, and support is also being provided to improve leadership in information, communication and technology. It is too soon to see the impact of these leaders' work in driving improvements to teaching or outcomes.
- Monitoring of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is currently overseen by a senior leader due to a vacancy for a new coordinator of special educational needs. Although attendance and behaviour of these pupils are monitored well, there is less rigour in the monitoring of their progress.

Next steps for the academy

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the same rigour seen in the monitoring of attendance and behaviour information for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is applied to tracking progress with swift intervention to address weaknesses
- middle leaders continue to be monitored closely to make sure their work has an impact on improving teaching and learning for all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we met you and other senior leaders, the Chair and two other representatives of the local governing body who are also directors of the Trust and

spoke with the academy's improvement partner in a telephone conversation. Pupils gave inspectors their views on the academy when they spoke to us in lessons and around the site at break and lunchtime. We joined senior leaders in short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their work in books, on computers and in practical activities. An inspector visited the resource base, which provides additional support for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, to look at the quality of provision for these pupils. The views of parents were considered through the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of 24 staff who completed the online questionnaire were taken into consideration. No pupils completed their online survey. Inspectors evaluated recent information on pupils' progress and scrutinised other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance, punctuality and their behaviour.