

# Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103516
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308344
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mason

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1125
6th form	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter French
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kendrick Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Craythorne Avenue Handsworth Wood Birmingham B20 1HL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01213 867 510
<b>Fax number</b>	01213 3867511

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre is a popular, larger than average school serving the culturally diverse communities of north-west Birmingham. Pupils come from a range of circumstances, many experiencing aspects of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Over two-thirds of pupils are from Indian and Black-Caribbean backgrounds. Of the 50 percent of pupils whose first language is not English, very few are at an early stage of learning English. A special needs resource base mainly caters for an above average proportion of statemented pupils with moderate learning and autistic spectrum needs, but the proportion of pupils with specific learning needs is lower than nationally. Increasing numbers of Year 11 pupils stay on for the sixth form. The school has specialisms in sport, mathematics and computing and these contribute to its extended provision. It is also a Leading Edge school, holding a range of awards including Sports Mark, National Healthy Schools, Cultural Diversity Gold Standard and Arts Mark Gold, amongst others.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre is a good school with many outstanding features. It promotes outstanding community cohesion through the very wide range of opportunity of both the formal curriculum and the extended learning programme. The school promotes a pervading sense that all pupils can achieve regardless of ethnicity or social background through the strong vision for inclusion provided by the school's leadership, shared passionately by governors and teachers alike. Pupils have strong role models in an exceptionally caring and professional staff, which reflects very well the wide ethnic mix of pupils.

Due to this high level of care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils feel part of a large and caring family. The school builds on its internationalism very well to develop good awareness of world issues, as impressively exemplified by sixth formers' commitment to the school's Gambia project. Pupils interact maturely and are keen to participate in school life and take on responsibility, a feature particularly well promoted through the sports specialism. Pupils' growing awareness of good diet and high levels of engagement in sports make for excellent awareness of healthy life choices.

Pupils achieve well. Having started in Year 7 with broadly average standards, standards are above average by Year 11. Results over several years have consistently exceeded national averages for pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs graded between A\* and C including English and mathematics. Girls' attainment is much better than boys', by a margin wider than the national.

A good number of teachers are very highly skilled and lead courses for others in the school, partner institutions and at national level. Consistent good teaching, assessment and tracking all contribute to good learning, but teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve or to take greater ownership of their learning. The learning environment is good, despite the limitations of some buildings. A key constraint has been the power supply to the new building which has been erratic for more than a year and has meant that information and communication technology (ICT) equipment has not been able to be fully used outside of discrete ICT lessons.

An outstanding curriculum in the main school caters very well for pupils' needs in Key Stage 4. The work-related and vocational dimensions are very strong, but the sixth form curriculum has too few vocational courses. Consequently, some students also seek out institutions with a wider range of options to meet their aspirations. Sixth formers also achieve well, but reach broadly average standards at the end of their courses.

Leadership and management are good. Under the enlightened and consensual leadership of the headteacher, the school has worked hard to develop excellent partnerships and mutually beneficial community links of great breadth and strength. The specialisms play a significant role in positive change. Targets for attainment are being met and there has been a big increase in participation in physical education (PE) in Key Stage 4 due to the greater choice of courses, including applied GCSE in PE. Managers have been less effective in bringing boys' standards up to those of girls or raising the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSEs. Setting arrangements and lesson planning are not flexible enough to promote the more active engagement of boys, limiting the opportunity for them to fulfil their full potential. Written marking does not always give enough guidance to help pupils take ownership of their own learning.

Most parents believe that the school offers a good education, finding it sensitive to their concerns and aspirations. The school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection and this shows its good capacity for continued improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It accepts students with a much wider range of GCSE success than most sixth forms. Students progress well and reach standards that are average. Enthusiastic subject specialists deliver good teaching which captures students' interest. Lessons are planned well, with good variety in activity, but opportunities for independent learning are sometimes missed. Students enjoy the sixth form, so the retention rates are good and attendance is high. Most students who complete Year 13 go on to higher education. Programmes and courses are good. Students participate in the school's wider provision very well and make a significant contribution to the school's ethos. A good range of enrichment activities includes more advanced work, such as further mathematics and university taster courses. However, too few alternative, vocational qualifications complement the good range of mainly traditional GCE courses. Students enthusiastically embrace responsibility, for example as sports leaders, as mentors of younger pupils, presenting assemblies and through extensive charitable work. Partnerships with external agencies and businesses are outstanding, widening students' horizons very well. The sixth form is well led and managed and numbers continue to grow.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the achievement of boys by reviewing teaching strategies and setting arrangements.
- Ensure that all marking provides pupils with clear guidance for improvement and encourages greater independent learning.
- Increase the breadth of the school curriculum in the sixth form to reflect the needs of its intake.
- Resolve the technical difficulties with the Aspiration Centre building, which are limiting access to ICT.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Standards across the range of subjects in Year 11 have improved steadily in recent years, presenting a consistent picture of above average attainment. Like previous cohorts, the current Year 11 are also progressing well and are on course to meet their challenging targets. Standards in Year 9 tests in 2007 were above average: the peak in a trend that has exceeded the national trend in recent years. Standards reached by girls are much better than those reached by boys. The difference is greater than the margin nationally. Pupils of the two main ethnic groups make gains that are in line with national averages, the slower rate of their progress in 2007 having been influenced by the greater proportion of boys in these groups. Pupils with specific learning needs make good progress. The school is particularly successful in supporting pupils to achieve B and C grades, but the proportion of pupils reaching A\* and A grades is below the national average. The targets for pupils' work in the school's specialisms were successfully met in both Years 9 and 11.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because of what parents describe as 'the strong ethos of support and working together', which is embraced by all members of this multi-ethnic school community. Pupils' very strong participation in sport, their cultural openness and racial harmony are evident in lessons and their wider commitments to the Learning Centre. They take a keen interest in religious issues, exchanging ideas and developing their cultural awareness enthusiastically in discussion. Pupils feel very safe at school, having trusting relationships with their friends and members of staff. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy their time at school very much, especially during the extended day. Behaviour is good and pupils sustain concentration well through long lessons. The school has implemented successful measures to reduce exclusions significantly. Pupils know bullying is unacceptable and say there is very little. Younger pupils settle in quickly, due to excellent links with feeder schools. Racist incidents are rare. The school council is an active, influential body. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through a wide range of activities which promote community cohesion and charitable work. Combined with good achievement in English, mathematics and ICT, and the strong development of work and social skills, pupils are prepared very well for their future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

In almost all lessons, teachers structure learning well so that pupils are guided in manageable steps to meet the objectives of the lesson. Teachers and teaching assistants support individual students well in group and individual work. Good relationships and routines ensure continuity in learning is well maintained, although pupils and parents have concerns in this regard in a few subjects where temporary teachers have been taken on. Increasingly, the vitality of the excellent teachers is being communicated to all. In many lessons, strong focus on examination preparation is a significant strength, but it can lead pupils to become too reliant on their teachers, not taking enough initiative for their own learning. The tailoring of lessons to challenge boys to adopt a less passive approach to learning or to extend learning of the more able is inconsistent. Consolidation of learning at the end of some lessons does not always do enough to reinforce what pupils have learned so that they build on this in their next lesson. Although some marking gives very clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work, teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve or to take greater ownership of their learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The main school offers a wide, flexible and innovative range of courses. Intensive collaboration with other providers secures a range of courses very well matched to pupils' aspirations.

Work-related learning is a particular strength. Higher attaining pupils are fast tracked and entered early for some GCSEs, enabling them to begin more advanced work in Year 11. 'Lesson 5' classes and Saturday provision extend opportunities to take extra optional subjects. This has led to a big increase in pupils taking Punjabi. The Year 7 SMART curriculum, where subjects are linked together, is having a very positive impact on pupils' confidence and attitudes to learning because it smooths their transition from the primary to secondary school curriculum. The very wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities makes a huge contribution to pupils' health, enjoyment, achievement, cultural awareness and community spirit. The use of the virtual learning environment of the computing specialism is still at an early stage but is already beginning to enhance opportunities for learning using ICT across the curriculum. The quality of the discrete ICT curriculum has led to high pass rates in 2007.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Systems for safeguarding pupils are robust and given high priority. The school's procedures to maintain good attendance and reduce exclusions have been very effective so that pupils can learn in a safe, supportive environment. Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a major strength and PSHE days offer opportunities for staff to work collaboratively and to address the needs of pupils, helping to prepare them very well for life outside school. High quality provision for mentoring, learning and welfare helps pupils come to terms with any difficulties they may have so they can learn much more effectively. The needs of vulnerable pupils are identified early and they and their parents benefit from good support through all stages of learning. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from very good support and are sensitively and successfully integrated into mainstream. Gifted and talented pupils are identified well and provided with a very good range of additional activities to develop their individual aptitudes. Systems for assessing pupils' academic progress are very good. They are clear and accessible so that teachers, pupils and parents are well informed about the standards reached and the demands of revised targets.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The large team of strategic directors and specialism leaders work very well together in managing the demands of both the school and an exceptionally extensive community programme. They also instigate much very constructive professional development within the wider remit of the specialist status. There is a clear vision of an inclusive and cohesive school where care of the individual and the development of key skills for economic well-being are central. Good self-evaluation is undertaken at all levels, based mainly on analysis of test results, but the lack of consistency at subject level in analysing patterns of learning, such as the differences between boys' and girls' achievement, or reviewing how marking could be more helpful, is key to why pupils' good achievement is not better. This has also contributed to school leaders having an overly positive view of some aspects of the school's performance. Nonetheless, targets have a good element of challenge and are shared effectively with pupils and parents to support improvement. The governors hold the school to account extremely well. The courageous decision

to build the 'Aspirations Centre' sixth form building has been key to expanding the vision of the school in the community, consolidating sixth form provision and securing the stability of staffing.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and value very much the help you gave us. We also received a good number of responses to our questionnaires for parents. Please pass on our thanks to them for taking the trouble to reply.

We agree you are getting a good education, and one with several points of excellence. We could see how you grow in self-confidence as you go through the school. You know that this is due very much to the high level of professionalism and commitment which teachers and other staff show towards you. Under the well- directed leadership of the headteacher and his team, the school has become the hub of a much wider community. It makes the most of its specialist subjects to present you with excellent opportunity to excel at what you are good at in your free time as well as in the daily lessons. This enables you to make friends, feel safe and be confident. It really boosts your commitment to and enjoyment of school. You make excellent development in your social and personal skills because the school cares so well for you. You enjoy excellent, trusting relationships with your teachers. You are taught well, with teachers taking great care to guide you through examinations. As a result, by the time you take GCSEs, you progress well and reach standards that are better than those of most pupils nationally. Most of you work hard to reach this level, but boys have not done as well as the girls, presenting the current and future Year 11 boys with the challenge to show that this year they can!

To help it improve further, we have asked the school to look carefully at what teachers can do in lessons to help boys to get results that are as good as the girls'. Also, to help you get more top grades, we have asked teachers to help you to develop more responsibility for thinking beyond the requirements of tests and examinations so that you can think through your learning more readily by yourselves. We have asked the school to make sure that all marking helps you with this. We also identified that the school should offer more courses in the sixth form which link in with the range of vocational courses many enjoy so much in Years 10 and 11. Finally, we have asked the school to sort out the problems over the power supply that has limited some of your access to ICT over the past year.

On behalf of all of the members of the team, we hope your results continue to rise and that you continue to make the most of the very wide opportunities provided for you at Hamstead Hall.

7 February 2008

Dear Students



**Inspection of Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre, Birmingham B20 1HL**

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Yours sincerely

John Mason, Lead inspector