

success in the making

The Learning Trust – celebrating education services in Hackney

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Autumn 2010



STUNNING RESULTS SHOW WHY HACKNEY IS SUCCESS IN THE MAKING

Buoyed by record-breaking achievements at all levels this summer, Hackney's pupils and students enter a new school year with greater confidence and expectations than at any other time in the borough's history.

Our primary schools are the most improved in England, GCSE results have continued to skyrocket beyond national and inner London averages and our A level students are consistently recording results better than the majority of their counterparts across the country.

There are now more reasons than ever before to feel confident as a parent that your child will receive high quality education in whichever Hackney school you choose and that your child will be given every opportunity to reach and even exceed his or her potential.

The results of the Key Stage 2 tests sat by primary schoolchildren in Hackney and across the country back in May demonstrate just how far our schools have come.

The percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in both English and Maths was 69 per cent, an increase of 12 percentage points from our results in 2006. Such progress has not only helped us finally shrug off the tag of the country's lowest performing authority on this measure but earned our schools the right to call themselves the most improved of all English primary schools over the past five years.

At GCSE, Hackney students move from strength to strength. For the second year running, our results were above the national average, a remarkable achievement when you consider the lowly status of our schools just eight years ago. This summer, 56 per cent of our students gained 5 or more GCSEs (including English and Maths) at A*-C, compared to 26 per cent in 2003.

Discover more success inside...

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This year will see the first cohort of GCSE candidates from Petchey Academy and in the next three years Bridge Academy, The City Academy and Skinners' Academy will come on stream.

Widening participation is a trend mirrored at post-16, where young people are increasingly choosing to stay within the borough to continue their studies and choose from 30 different A level courses at eleven different schools and colleges.

Results here are on the up too. There is a whole host of new success stories to match and exceed the achievements of their predecessors last year, with a number of students gaining the prestigious new highest A* grade. At BSix Brooke House Sixth Form College, the headlines were undeniably grabbed by one student, Allum Bokhari, who walked away with a staggering 3 A*s despite arriving at the college with no qualifications to his name at all.

CLAPTON GIRLS' CELEBRATE RECORD RESULTS



When future scholars look back on the achievements of Hackney's schools, they will surely point to 2010 as a key milestone in the 104-year history of Clapton Girls' Technology College.

Not only was building work that has expanded and transformed the school to suit the needs of 21st century students completed this year, but the school has also achieved its best ever results at GCSE and A level.

"The results are better than last year on every measure and I cannot praise the achievements of my students highly enough. We've only just moved in to our new buildings so we can expect to do even better next year!" said Cheryl Day, the school's headteacher.

Among the most successful students was Isabelle Burgess, who achieved an A* in Sociology, an A in Drama and Theatre Studies and an A in English Literature. She's off to Bangor University to study Sports Science (Outdoor Activities).

Another sixth form star is Raihana Alam, who achieved an A in Business Studies and Bs in Psychology and ICT and is off to Goldsmiths, University of London, to read Psychology.

Not to be outdone, GCSE students at Clapton also raised the bar, with results 10% above last year's national average for the first time. 60 per cent of students achieved 5 or more GCSEs including English and Maths at A*-C, compared to 47 per cent last year.

Murshida Mirzan was one of the country's highest achievers, scoring a remarkable 11 A*s in her GCSEs. Next year, she plans to stay on at Clapton Girls' and study Biology, Chemistry, Maths and History. Further down the line, her hopes lie in entering the medical profession.

"I had the motivation to do well. I knew that my parents and my teachers had faith in me and that gave me a huge amount of support," she says. "In the future I'd like to repay that faith by giving something back to other people, maybe as a doctor or a dentist."

Among a raft of other success stories is that of Halimah Akindele-Oladeinde. Just two years ago, Halimah frequently skipped school and her grades reflected this. After receiving disappointing mock exam results, Halimah decided it was time to take action, attending a Saturday school and received after school support from teacher Ms Hellewell. The hard work paid off, as she achieved an A in Sociology, 3 Bs in English Language, English Literature and History and 5 Cs. She hopes to become a midwife and will stay on at Clapton to do Psychology, Biology and Double Health and Social Care.

"In years 9 and 10 I missed a lot of school," she says. "I just stayed at home and my mum was upset. When I didn't do so well in my mock GCSEs I realised I could do better. Ms Hellewell really helped me out and made sure I did all my coursework."

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS!

Welcome to Success in the Making, The Learning Trust's update for Hackney residents on the borough's schools and educational settings.

I remember back in 2002, when The Learning Trust was first asked to take over responsibility for delivering education in Hackney, there was little talk of success. Too many children and young people in our borough were being denied the chance to fulfil their potential within our primary, secondary and post-16 schools and settings. This was reflected in Hackney's exam results at all levels, which were way below both the London and national averages.

That is why it fills me with an enormous sense of pride to be able to say to you today that Hackney is without a doubt one of the most exciting, inspirational and successful places in the country to learn, aspire and achieve. Our fantastic results at Key Stage 2, GCSE and A level this year are evidence of the radical improvement in the quality of learning opportunities available within Hackney in the past eight years.

We are continuing to invest heavily in our schools and educational services. This summer we said goodbye to the Skinners' Company's School for Girls, but are excited by the arrival in its place of the Skinners' Academy – the fifth academy to open in Hackney in six years. Changes are also afoot at Haggerston, where for the first time this September, the school will open its doors to both boys and girls. Hackney today truly is awash at all levels with a vast array of skills, experience and talent. It's what we call Success in the Making.

Packed full of some of our recent success stories, I hope this newsletter will give you a flavour of the high achievement and vitality evident in so many of our schools. If you've got a story or an issue you'd like to feature in a future edition of Success in the Making, why not email me at communications@learningtrust.co.uk

Enjoy!

Alan Wood,
Chief Executive,
The Learning Trust.





FRIENDSHIP THE KEY TO SUCCESS AT CARDINAL POLE

Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School has rapidly become one of the best places in Hackney to study post-16. Last year, the school achieved the best A level results in the borough, with its results per exam entry comfortably above both the London and the national average.

This year, the success continued, with 65 per cent of students achieving grades in the top A*-C band.

For two of those students, Lorijent Lamce and Tammie Le, that success is made up of a number of ingredients. Dedication, motivation, hard work and, most important of all, friendship.

Friends at Cardinal Pole since year 7, Tammie and Lorijent believe they helped each other to achieve wonderful results that have secured places at their chosen universities. Tammie received 3 Bs in English Literature, Sociology and Philosophy & Ethics and will read English Literature at the University of Westminster. Lorijent, who arrived in the UK from Albania only shortly before joining the school, received 2 As (in Sociology and English Literature) and a B in History and is off to study law (just round the corner from Tammie) at the London School of Economics.

"My message to students sitting exams next year would be to work hard but don't make school the be all and end all. Make sure you have a life outside of your studies too," says Tammie.

Lorijent agrees and says that when in school, healthy competition between friends can even make studying fun. "If you can surround yourself with great friends that really want to work hard too like we did then you've got a much greater chance of success," he says. "I was always trying to beat Tammie and she was always trying to beat me!"

Round one to Lorijent. But who will win round two?



SKINNERS' ACADEMY OPENS

Hackney's fifth academy, Skinners' welcomes its first students this September. The Academy is a brand new school based in Woodberry Down for boys and girls aged 11-19 and replaces the Skinners' Company's School for Girls which closed in July.

Like its four predecessors, the academy begins with a clean slate, admitting a single cohort of Year 7 pupils this year. Eventually the school will accommodate 1,150 pupils, offering a varied and personalised curriculum and specialisms in Business, Enterprise and ICT.

Hackney residents have benefited from the support of the Skinners' Company since 1890, when the original school in Stamford Hill was opened, and Principal Jenny Wilkins is confident that, over 100 years later, the new academy is perfectly placed to continue that tradition of community collaboration.

"Our academy will be at the heart of the community, seeking and valuing the views of parents and carers," she says. "We believe that working with and listening to our community will secure the future success of the academy as a beacon of excellence for boys and girls."



SUCCESS? IT'S MUSIC TO OUR (LADY'S) EARS!

It seems an odd thing to say when bulldozers have just reduced much of the school to rubble, but Our Lady's Convent High School has never had it so good.

The Stamford Hill girls school is riding high on the back of sensational exam results this summer. At GCSE, 71 per cent of students received 5 or more GCSEs including English and Maths at A*-C, an improvement on the 69 per cent achieved last year and a remarkable result given that this cohort of students were not expected to do as well as their predecessors. At A level, meanwhile, no less than six students achieved the much-sought after A*, the new top level grade, while an incredible 83 per cent of students received grades higher than a C.

Work began in earnest over the summer to upgrade and modernise the school as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, which will see Years 7 and 8 remain in Stamford Hill, and Years 9 to 13 based at the old lower school site of Skinners' Company's School for Girls on Mount Pleasant Lane until building is complete in 2012.

The school's foundations for future success in their new surroundings have been laid by departing students such as Francesca Gilbert. From the age of eight, Francesca has juggled school studies with dedicated viola practice and performance. This summer, this hugely talented young musician, whose long list of orchestra memberships includes the London Schools Symphony Orchestra, deserved a standing ovation for her GCSE results - 3 A*s, 5As and 2 Bs.

These fantastic results have won her a place to study Music, History and Geography at the prestigious Wellington College. She has enjoyed her time at Our Lady's, where she says the support has been "incredible", but Wellington will move her one step closer to her goal - becoming a professional soloist.

"It will allow me to take fewer subjects and provide me with more time and space in which to practise and really concentrate on my music," Francesca says.

As well as recognising the support of her school, Francesca is also very thankful for the help and guidance of The Learning Trust Music Service.

"They've been exceptionally supportive over the years, giving me orchestral experience and performance opportunities," she says. "I did my work experience with the Music Service at the end of year 10 and I steward at the schools festival in the summer."

With so many opportunities available through schools and the Music Service, Francesca believes there's never been a better time to learn to play a musical instrument in Hackney.

"I have made many very close friends through all the various orchestras I have been part of. It has also given me the opportunity to go to places I wouldn't have otherwise seen, for example this year I have been to Turkey with the London Schools Symphony Orchestra which was amazing!"

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

The dramatic improvement in student results at Hackney sixth forms and colleges in recent years means more students than ever are choosing to stay in the borough to study rather than head for the exit.

Our students are now achieving, on average, three grades higher than their counterparts five years ago and are over 30 per cent more likely to go to university. Top grades from both A level and BTEC courses mean more students are gaining places at top universities including Oxford and Cambridge; making Hackney the most improved borough in London for A level and BTEC courses.

BSix Brooke House Sixth Form College has some of the best results in London. You need to apply early to be guaranteed a place on one of its wide range of courses.

If you prefer a school environment, Cardinal Pole Catholic School Sixth Form, the top performing Hackney Sixth Form in 2009, offers excellent BTECs alongside A levels. It is a mixed Catholic school but you do not need to be Catholic to apply to the Sixth Form.

For a girls-only sixth form, Clapton Girls' Technology College is rated outstanding by Ofsted and offers a friendly and supportive learning environment.

More details on these and other sixth forms and colleges can be found in our prospectus at www.learningtrust.co.uk (click 'schools' and then '14-19 Education'), from Connexions, school libraries or visit The Learning Trust 2nd Floor.

Places are open to in and out of borough students, so get your applications in as soon as possible; you can apply to more than one provider. Most have open days and it is a good idea to go to several. The 14-19 Education web page of www.learningtrust.co.uk has links to all relevant contacts.



A SMALL STEP OR A GIANT LEAP?

Making the transition from primary to secondary school is a major step for any child. For Year 7 pupils (and their parents) nervous about the switch, here are some words of wisdom and comfort from three Year 8 pupils from Hackney Free & Parochial CE School that have been there and done it...

"I found it really easy to make friends when I started at Hackney Free. Our form tutors asked us to introduce ourselves to other people in Year 7 so I quickly got to know lots of other students. Now I feel like I fit in and I like the teachers and the lessons."

"The most important bit of advice I could give to next year's Year 7s is that they shouldn't be afraid to express themselves."

Hannah Zewde



"A lot of my friends from primary school came to Hackney Free with me and some of them were in my class. The teachers here are kind and helpful which also made it easier for me to get used to changing schools."

"My advice to new Year 7 students would be to make sure they join lots of after school clubs as this is where they can make good friends and learn new things."

Yusuf Sadeq

"When I first came to Hackney Free I was a bit nervous. Some of my friends from primary school came here too and I made some new friends from different schools who helped me to settle in."

"There are lots of nice teachers here who always help you when you need them, but the best thing about Hackney Free is the school uniform because we don't have to wear a blazer."

"Any children who are leaving primary school shouldn't worry about starting at a new school without friends because they will soon make new friends and have a great time!"

Michael Bramble

If you are a parent of a child transferring to a school this year look at our website at www.learningtrust.co.uk

CHOICE ADVICE SERVICE

ADVICE AND INFORMATION ON HOW TO CHOOSE A SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

CALL OUR HELPLINE 020 8820 7510

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY AT HACKNEY FREE



Hackney Free & Parochial Church of England Secondary School is by some distance Hackney's oldest school - this year the school celebrated its 490th anniversary. Thanks to the efforts of its students in GCSEs last Summer the new year 11s will have to work really hard to make the 491st year even more memorable.

Results this year were the best ever, with 42 per cent of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs including English and Maths at A*-C, a huge leap forward from 30 per cent the year before.

Headteacher Richard Brown said: "These are the best GCSE results in the school's history. The number of

children passing 5 GCSEs including English and Maths has doubled in the last two years. The students, supported by their parents, have worked really hard and deserve their success."

Two students particularly deserving of praise are Beatrice Mensah and Abubakar Saddique.

Beatrice came to the UK from Ghana just two years ago and has made rapid progress ever since. Winner of the school's 2010 Sedgwick medal and a Senior Prefect, she received an impressive set of results: 1 A*, 5 As and 3 Bs. A keen athlete and volley ball player, she hopes to become a sports physiotherapist and will study Biology, Chemistry and Psychology at A level.



"I can't believe it, I'm so surprised! I didn't do so well in my mock exams so I'm delighted with these results," she said on results day at the school.

It's probably fair to say that for Abubakar, success came as less of a surprise. This young man has hopes of following in the footsteps of Hackney's most famous businessman, Sir Alan Sugar. After achieving 5 As, 3 Bs and 1 C in his GCSEs, he will go on to study A levels in English Language, Business, Psychology and ICT.

"My advice to other students is to focus in lessons and learn how to prioritise your time," he says. "Eventually I'd like to follow my sister and dad by running my own business."

PRIMARY REGROWTH BEGINS TO BEAR FRUIT!



Hackney's primary schools are in good shape for the future. Thanks to the Primary Capital Programme (PCP), many schools have benefited from being rebuilt and refurbished using cutting-edge architecture and design.

The builders have just moved in at Orchard Primary School following close consultation between the architects and pupils to agree the best design.

A three-storey extension will increase the capacity of the school by a third and will include, among other things, a larger reception area for visitors, a parents room and full disabled access throughout. The existing Victorian building, meanwhile, is being fully refurbished and the playground facilities upgraded. The school hopes all work will be complete by 2012.



Berger Primary School was reopened this summer in a new building that is considered one of the most eco-friendly in the country, using the latest in green technology, such as photovoltaic cells for energy production, rain water harvesting to reduce water consumption and a

green roof to aid insulation and encourage wildlife and biodiversity. The second and final phase of building at Berger has just been completed, which includes a wildlife garden and dipping pond, a full five-a-side multi-use games area and a planting area for the children.

One building project that pre-dates PCP, is Lauriston Primary School, the first new primary school to be rebuilt in Hackney for over 30 years. Building work was completed in August this year and the school is now able to offer two entry forms for the first time. Like Berger, the building is designed with the future of our planet in mind, with much of it made from sustainable wood and the design taking advantage of natural ventilation and light.

WHY IT'S GREAT TO FEDERATE

There are many different reasons behind the success of Hackney's schools over recent years. Investment in better facilities, the drive and determination of its teachers, the ambition of its pupils and the support of parents have all helped transform the prospects of the borough.

No less valuable has been the inspirational and innovative leadership of our headteachers, without whom success might still be a distant dream. In Hackney, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to running a school. A variety of different leadership models are used, depending on the needs of each school and community.



One of the most successful approaches has been the introduction of federations. Since 2002, it's been possible for between two and five schools to join together, combining their governing bodies and pooling resources.

The Best Start Federation incorporates London Fields, Mandeville and Woodberry Down primary schools. Executive Principal Greg Wallace oversees the development of all three schools, with day-to-day leadership left to each school's management team.

Although it's still early days - Best Start only incorporated Mandeville earlier this year - the signs are that all three schools are already benefiting from the new structure.

"Our classrooms are vibrant, supportive and welcoming. They are full of children motivated by positive, well-paced and purposeful lessons," says Greg. "Through the Best Start Federation, parents and carers have access to a greater range of services - both for their children and themselves."

The Learning Trust's Tricia Okoruwa, Deputy Director Primary and Early Years, agrees that the introduction of federations is a positive step. "Evidence shows that the very best leaders in the system can make a difference beyond just one school and that working together in this way can lead to rapid improvement."



ONE YEAR ON: THOMAS FAIRCHILD

Of those that watched Thomas Fairchild Primary School burn to the ground in July last year, few would have imagined there was much hope for the school welcoming its students just weeks later at the start of a new academic year.

But welcome them it did.

It wasn't easy, but with the determination of pupils and teachers and the inspiration of headteacher Shona Ferguson, the spirit of Thomas Fairchild continues to burn stronger and brighter than any fire or flame.

Until the school is rebuilt, pupils are split across two sites, the lower school in Whitmore Primary School in Grange Street and the upper school in The Tomlinson Centre located on Queensbridge Road.

The school may be temporarily divided and in unfamiliar surroundings, but pupils, parents and teachers quickly settled into the new set-up, without losing sight of their goal – to move back into a new building as soon as possible.

To celebrate their triumph in the face of such adversity, the school spent a day earlier this year recording a video for the local community, featuring pupils and teachers singing two songs, When You Believe and You Gotta Be.

For Shona, the joy and happiness evident in the film epitomises the character of her school community.

"I knew my children and I knew my staff and I had no doubt that we would begin again and that we would be better and that we would be stronger."

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QUESTION TIME: PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Tricia Okoruwa, Deputy Director Primary and Early Years at The Learning Trust, answers your questions about primary schools in Hackney.

Key Stage 2 results have gone up this year. What are the reasons for this?

We have worked on a long-term strategy that has involved improving teaching and learning and the quality of assessment and targeting support for pupils who are below age-related expectations. I'm delighted to say that today the

majority of primary schools in Hackney are 'good' or 'outstanding', according to Ofsted.

Do you think turning primary schools into academies is a good idea and do you anticipate any of our primary schools becoming academies?

I think that this is something that each school would need to discuss with its stakeholders, including governors, parents and the wider community. Any decision taken should reflect the views of all those stakeholders.

To continue our success, what do we need to do?

We need to remain focused on the quality of provision being good or better in all primary schools. We need to continue to provide good

quality teaching and learning and ensure that all groups of children have their needs met and are able to achieve their potential.

What can parents do to help create success for their children?

It is essential that schools and parents work in partnership throughout a child's education. This collaboration and co-operation can range from volunteering as a teaching assistant to supporting their child with reading at home.

What does success look like to you?

Success for me is Hackney children enjoying a good, rich experience at primary school that enables them to begin secondary school as confident and inquisitive young people.

HARD WORK PAYS OFF AT STOKE NEWINGTON



Blood, sweat and tears is the secret of success at Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form, according to headteacher Annie Gammon.

With the back-breaking construction work involved in revamping the school as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme now complete, it was over to students this summer to take the strain as they sat GCSE and A level exams after months of preparation. And it seems it was worth the effort.

"We are delighted with the results of our students - their talent, potential and hard work is duly recognised by their excellent grades. It is a credit to them and the staff that they have done so well. The expected and

actual increase in results overall reflects our determination to ensure every student achieves their very best," says Annie.

GCSE results improved on last year, with almost a third of students gaining three or more A or A* grades and 50 per cent gaining 5 or more GCSEs including English and Maths at A* to C.

Samihah Hussain was one student who saw the benefit of some serious revision. She got 1 A, 3 Bs and 5 Cs which will allow her to stay on at Stoke Newington to study Chemistry, Biology and Maths at A Level.

"I'd definitely advise students taking exams next year not to leave coursework until the last minute and to put in 100 per cent effort

throughout the year. I started revising in January!" says Samihah.

At A level, many students exceeded their predicted grades, with the majority winning places at their chosen universities. Overall, 63 per cent got grades between A* and C.

Frankie McIlheney was one of those students who worked hard to get what he wanted, a great result with 3 Bs in Economics, Politics and Psychology. This was more than enough to win him his first choice place at Brighton University, where he will study History, Politics and Culture.

"I didn't work hard enough last year and I didn't do that well so I really worked hard this year; so I feel I really deserve these results," says Frankie.

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY!

Family Learning Festival this year runs from 16 to 31 October 2010

The Family Learning Festival is a fantastic opportunity for families to come together and take part in free, fun and informal learning activities in accessible locations all over Hackney.

The theme for this year's festival is 'Be Brilliant', so why not rise to the challenge and try something new with your family? Creative activities include music workshops, painting and jewellery making. You can even start to learn a language with our Spanish taster sessions, get tips about healthy food, or just brush up on your basic Maths skills. There really is something for everyone!

The festival programme has been co-ordinated by The Learning Trust and Hackney Libraries in association with local heritage centres and community organisations. To find out more, look out for the information booklet in your local community. You can also contact Sadie Old at The Learning Trust on **020 8820 7431** or visit **www.learningtrust.co.uk**

MOSSBOURNE MAKES IT PERSONAL

In the six years since it opened, Mossbourne Community Academy has become one of the highest profile schools in the country. Last year, 86 per cent of its very first cohort of Year 11 students achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C (including English and Maths). This year, those achievements were very nearly matched with an equally impressive 83 per cent of students reaching this milestone.

One of the key factors behind this success has been the school's investment in technology and its continual search for innovative ways to engage its students and promote its pledge to "maintain an inquiring mind".

This year, with the help of The Learning Trust, Mossbourne introduced 'virtual learning environments' which have helped to extend teaching and learning opportunities for students, encourage personalised learning and promote the sharing of resources by teaching and support staff within faculty departments.

Students are now able to access high quality lesson and coursework material outside school, communicate online with their teachers and extend their learning opportunities.

Teaching staff, meanwhile, can share resources, lessons, modules of work and teaching tips; and make additional teaching and learning material available to students to promote effective differentiation

The Learning Trust's e-learning manager Jeremy Harris is full of praise for Mossbourne's approach to adopting a more personalised way of working. "The team have a very clear vision of how the learning platform will benefit students and have supported the project accordingly," he says.

"We're now seeing examples of staff producing lessons and modules for students to access and respond to. This is encouraging independent learning and extending learning opportunities beyond the school day and, as a result, students are able to take time in reading, thinking and responding."



HAGGERSTON NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK

Schools usually look or feel a bit different after the summer break – maybe it's that lick of paint for the dining hall, the new faces in the classroom and staffroom or even the addition of a brand new building. But pupils, parents and teachers returning to Haggerston School this autumn will notice some really big changes.

For the first time in its history, the school now welcomes both girls and boys. And if that wasn't enough, the school uniform has been radically revamped.

The change was all part of the school's plan to refresh its image in the local community, but more importantly, to be in keeping with the drive to the highest standards in all aspects of the school. At the heart of the approach taken by Spy, the design agency employed to lead the project, was the direct involvement of pupils and teachers at the school.

A small group of volunteer pupils were appointed 'brand guardians' for the school, reporting back to their classmates on their work on developing different designs and colours to ensure that the final product ticked the right boxes for everyone.

"The approach we took alongside Spy was very successful," says The Learning Trust's marketing manager Paul Johnson. "The girls led the idea generation, design and colour of the uniforms from start to finish. I think it reflects very positively on them that it has been so well received within the school and the wider community."

Haggerston begins the new year boosted not only by a revitalised image but a terrific set of GCSE results. 55 per cent of students gained at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths at A* to C, compared to 49 per cent last year.

Chair of governors Barry O'Brien said:

"We are very pleased with these record results, building further on last year's improvements. We congratulate the students for their hard work, and the teachers who helped achieve these excellent results."

A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

With success comes the occasional setback. Due in large part to the dramatic improvement in quality of Hackney's education, several secondary schools are now oversubscribed, which inevitably means some families will be left disappointed.

According to Marian Lavelle, Head of School Admissions for The Learning Trust, only about 10 per cent of appeals are successful. "Whilst it is worth appealing, we also advise parents to look at other schools in case their appeal is unsuccessful," she says. "Remember, Hackney has a number of good schools."

After initial applications to his preferred schools were rejected, 11 year-old Ayden Ahmet feared he might become a victim of the borough's success. Thanks to the determination of his mother Filiz and grandmother Ilkay and the support of both Gayhurst Primary School and The Learning Trust's appeals process, however, Ayden has won a place at

his number one choice. This September he starts at Bridge Academy, a mixed, non-denominational school for 11-19 year olds that specialises in music and mathematics.

"I'm really excited about starting at my new school," he said. "I really love music and maths and the building looks great!"

His family are equally delighted.

"I really didn't think we were going to get a place, but we did and Ayden is very happy," said Filiz.

"It's marvellous he got in," agreed Ilkay, who added that they had found the appeals process clear and straightforward. "We collected a form from The Learning Trust to register our appeal," she said. "We were then interviewed and the panel asked us why Ayden wanted to go to Bridge Academy. The deputy head (of Bridge Academy) was there and explained to us that they couldn't let everyone in as they needed to keep class sizes under control, which is fair enough."

While the appeal was ongoing, the Ahmets also made sure they secured a place at another Hackney school, in case the appeal proved unsuccessful. But, to Ayden's clear delight, he got his wish.

"I'm looking forward to making new friends and starting a new life at my new school," said Ayden.

And what advice would Filiz and Ilkay give to parents who also find themselves victims of Hackney's growing success?

"If you don't get your first choice, appeal and in that appeal you should tell them exactly why you want your child there. Be honest and truthful and go for it!"

While most parents do not win their appeal, Ayden's case is proof that Hackney's admissions system takes the time to examine and judge every single application on its merits.

For information on how to apply for a place in a Hackney school visit www.learningtrust.co.uk

CITY ACADEMY ONE YEAR ON



When The City Academy, Hackney, welcomed its first students in September 2009, its ambition was clear. To set high standards for the academy and ensure that the school provided a supportive and enjoyable learning environment, where Hackney children flourish and achieve their goals. It has not disappointed.

It has become recognised as a national centre of excellence within the academies network, and received the highest number of first choice preference applications in 2010.

Mark Emmerson, Principal said "Last year was an outstanding one for the Academy with the overwhelming majority of students working to, or above, national expectations of improvement. Many students have made outstanding progress in their academic achievement and personal development since the Academy opened."

Looking forward to 2011 the school will continue to draw on the expertise and skills of its sponsors The City of London Corporation and KPMG and continue to build strong relationships with the local community and create an excellent local school.



A LIFETIME DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE



Hackney is blessed with a fantastic array of skilled and committed teachers and educators and this year the teaching and learning community recognised one of its very finest.

In March, deputy head of Stormont House School Beryl Grosvenor was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award at The Learning Trust Educators' Awards 2010 by former schools minister and special guest Iain Wright.

Beryl began her teaching career at Stormont in 1982. She quickly became an integral part of its growth and development and played a major role in the special school being rated as 'outstanding' after two recent inspections by Ofsted.

Colleagues and pupils are united in their admiration and respect for Beryl's achievements.

Carol Weston, business manager at the school said: "Beryl is absolutely amazing. She is totally dedicated to the pupils and the school and she

works tirelessly to give them every opportunity that she possibly can."

Jack, a Year 10 student at Stormont was also full of praise.

"It was great fun to be taught by Miss Grosvenor when I was in Year 8. She helped us prepare for the Easter play," he said. "She's a great deputy head too – if ever there's any trouble we know we can always talk to her".

Stormont House School headteacher Kevin McDonnell attributed much of the school's success under his leadership to Beryl.

"I honestly have never worked with or met anyone quite like her," he said. "I've often thought that if you were to cut through this building like a stick of rock, you'd see Beryl Grosvenor written all the way through it and if you did the same to Beryl, you'd see Stormont House written all the way through. What she has achieved here is simply momentous."

On collecting her award, an overjoyed Beryl said: "I am absolutely thrilled to receive this award. It's totally unexpected. I've been incredibly fortunate with the team of people I've worked with over the last 27 years, but particularly with the team I work with now. They are so intuitive, so committed and they work tirelessly for the promotion of the children. They have said wonderful things about me but I couldn't do anything without them."

The Learning Trust Educators' Awards recognise educators and supporters of education who have made a significant contribution towards transforming education in Hackney. They pay tribute to those individuals, teams and organisations who are really making a difference in the borough.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN HACKNEY

Stormont House is a community special school catering for boys and girls aged 11-16 years who have a wide range of special needs including those with moderate learning difficulties and a large minority of students with complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Horizon School caters for students who have mixed special needs. The school caters for students with both moderate and severe learning difficulties, but over the past 18 months, most new admissions have severe learning difficulties and complex needs

Ickburgh is a non-denominational community special school catering for boys and girls with severe and complex needs.

Downsview is a school for primary aged children with global developmental delay and associated difficulties.

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS FROM MIKE VANCE

The transfer to secondary school is a worrying time for pupils and their parents. Most of us can remember that first day, waiting for our names to be called out and meeting our classmates for the first time. The challenges facing our young people are no different today and it is important for your daughter or son to make a good start. Here are some ways that you can help your child to become an independent confident learner.

Homework

Set the standard for your child.

Spend time with your child in the first few weeks, and establish a homework routine.

Try to ensure that homework is done on the night it is set to prevent 'build-up'.

Check the planner with your child for what homework needs to be done, and when it is to be done by. Check they have everything they need to complete the tasks (ask them to tell you what they will need, to encourage independence).

Recognise how hard it is to work unsupervised.

Help your child structure their time by providing a clock or timer and agree the tasks that should be done in each (eg half hour) period.

Check on their progress. Make sure they complete the task in the set time. But otherwise leave them to it. Don't establish a pattern of always doing homework with them - it's unsustainable and they won't learn to work independently.

Point out the rewards of having a routine: homework doesn't drag on all night; it feels good to have completed tasks etc.

Check that your child has given homework in and, if they have not, check why (they may have had a supply teacher) and encourage them to write in their planner when they will give it in.

Take an interest in the marks and comments on the homework your child gets back.

Celebrate success and give the clear message that homework is valuable and important.

Struggling with homework?

Don't let children struggle on for longer than the recommended time - if they have done half an hour and only answered half the questions, let them stop.

If they are worried about the consequences of not completing homework write a note on the homework, confirming that the correct amount of time was spent on the task.

If children are stuck - either because they don't understand the task they have written down, or because they 'can't do it', offer support but don't 'do it for them'.

Encourage your child to make sure they understand what they have to do in the lesson. It's too late by the time they get home.

Encourage them to write down exactly what the teacher asks them to do.

If you and your child really cannot work out what has to be done, try ringing a friend in the same group or, as a last resort, write a note to the teacher asking for clarification and explaining that the homework will be done as soon as possible.

If there is a problem with the level of work, it is important that the teacher knows this. If work is consistently too difficult or too easy, it is important to let the teacher know.

Homework may not be automatically valued by the children in school. Be very wary of excuses your child will use;

- We didn't get any
- I don't need to do that, we did it in class
- We had a supply teacher
- It doesn't have to be in for ages
- I left it at school
- My teacher's got my book - they took them in
- My friend's borrowing my book
- I did it on the computer and it wouldn't print. I forgot to save it/can't remember what file I saved it in...

- I'm going to do it with my friend on the bus/at break

- I need to do it in the library - I'll do it lunchtime tomorrow

- I've lost my planner

Try to ensure that, if an excuse is given, you check it out and that your child still does the homework as soon as the problem is sorted out. If you do this the first few times, the 'excuses' will lessen but if they are successful in getting out of homework, they will carry on and it becomes very hard to re-establish good patterns later on when homework becomes crucial to examination grades. If your child is consistently not getting homework contact the school.

Parents Evenings

It is important that you attend parent evenings. It is an opportunity for you to ask questions and find out how your child is progressing.

Make sure you know the dates and times for parents evenings.

If there is a report, make sure that you look at the levels that your child has got. Check it with the previous report.

What levels did they have then in English, Maths and Science? If your child has not progressed since their last report then you should plan to discuss this with the teacher.

Think about the questions that you should ask and how you will ask them:

- How is my child doing in your subject?
- I looked at the levels and I noticed that ... has not made enough progress. Why is that? What can I do to help or support you?
- When can we talk again to see if my child is making better progress?

Remember that if you plan ahead, you will appear knowledgeable and organised.