

# Aimhigher

Inspiring Young People, Changing Lives

**BIS** | Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**Aimhigher...**

## From the Minister

We all want what is best for our young people. We recognise that education, and the opportunities that it gives, plays a major role in improving their life chances. So we work hard to provide them with the best possible education and encourage them to do their best whilst at school and college.



Progress is being made and Aimhigher has contributed to that progress. Over half of all young people from every social group now say they aspire to university. More young people from poorer backgrounds are now going to university than ever before. But the social class participation gap is narrowing too slowly. Young people with the potential to achieve at the highest levels are still missing out. We owe it to them to do more.

Many people already recognise that raising the aspirations of young people in disadvantaged areas requires a response from a wide cross-section of society. It cannot be done by teachers, universities, community groups or anyone else acting alone. Everyone with a part to play needs to contribute in whatever way they can. This leaflet ends with a challenge – to find out more and get involved. I hope it inspires you to do just that.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'David Lammy'.

**David Lammy MP**  
**Minister of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills**

## Going higher

Himesh Bilimoria comes from an ordinary working family, with parents who didn't go to university. But at his school, a multi-ethnic, north London comprehensive, he got lots of advice, guidance and support from Aimhigher, the national programme to widen participation in higher education.

Now studying Maths at Warwick University, Himesh's prospects are looking bright. 'Aimhigher gave me the encouragement, advice and opportunity to find the right path for my future,' he says.

Aimhigher works to raise awareness, aspirations and attainment among hundreds of thousands of young people like Himesh every year. It targets learners who have the potential to get to university but may be under-achieving, undecided or lacking in confidence, providing the support and information they need to go higher.

*"Aimhigher has changed the attitudes of our students towards academic endeavour. It has been one of the most important and influential initiatives in the history of our college."*

**Alan Barham, Head Teacher,  
Sittingbourne Community College**

*"Aimhigher makes a very real contribution to education policies and programmes, brokering a unique relationship between schools, colleges and HE providers."*

**Jim Taylor, Executive Director, Services for Children and  
Young People, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council**

## Inspiring activities

Schools and colleges are key players in Aimhigher partnerships, as the entire programme is designed around meeting their students' needs and priorities.

Aimhigher's wide range of exciting activities includes;

- the largest national roadshow in Europe, visiting schools and colleges in disadvantaged areas,
- campus visits and summer schools,
- master classes and subject-specific events linked to the school curriculum,
- visits to employers.

With academics and university students bringing their skills and experience to much of the programme's work, young people in Aimhigher schools benefit from a rich and inspiring mix of knowledge and views.

*"We were listed as a National Challenge School because of our low score of 5 A\*–C including English and Maths. But with Aimhigher's help, including extra daily classes to prepare for exams, we raised our CVA score from 1030 in 2007 to a staggering 1042 in 2008."*

**Ian Widdows, Deputy Head Teacher,  
The Giles School, Lincolnshire**


*"We used some of our Aimhigher funding to target additional support at AS learners who were deemed at risk of dropping out. The retention rate among those learners turned out to be 10% higher than in a control group."*

**Debbie Fletcher, Executive Director 14–19,  
Birmingham Metropolitan College**

## Making a difference

Most important of all, Aimhigher produces results. Research has shown that in participating schools, after just one year of Aimhigher activities;

- aspirations to enter HE were **3.9% higher** than in similar schools without Aimhigher,
- attainment improved by **2.5 GCSE points** over similar schools without Aimhigher, with an estimated **4.6% improvement in Key Stage 3 Maths**,
- for every 100 young people of average attainment there was around **one additional university entrant**,
- young people with average attainment levels at Key Stage 4 were **as likely to go to a high entrance requirement university** as their counterparts in schools without Aimhigher.

A photograph showing two young women participating in a large floor game called 'Star Student'. The woman on the left is wearing a black hoodie with 'TEAM 2' and a yellow star on it, and is holding a large black paper airplane. The woman on the right is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and black boots, and is holding a large white paper airplane with two black circular cutouts. They are standing on a colorful floor mat with the words 'Star Student' written on it in large, stylized letters. The background is a bright, colorful pattern of stars and shapes.

Pupils playing Star Student, a giant floor game that introduces school pupils to the idea of higher education in a fun and interactive way. Created by Northumbria University and launched with Aimhigher funding, the game is making a significant impact on attitudes and aspirations.


## Partnership works

With 42 local partnerships across England, Aimhigher brings together universities, schools, colleges, Connexions services and workbased learning providers.

Each partnership offers a wealth of expertise and experience, tailored specifically to raising awareness, aspiration and attainment among young people in their area.

*“Our primary school pupils are getting switched on to science by a Bradford University project based on Tenerife’s Mount Teide Observatory. Every pupil gets to use a real telescope to take images of space, while teaching staff have learned more about the subject and benefited from professional development.”*

**Marek Baranski, Rochdale Aimhigher**



Aimhigher isn't aimed just at young people in full-time education. Partnerships also work to raise the aspirations of other groups, such as Apprentices, by supporting and encouraging them towards higher-level learning.

## Breaking down barriers

In September 2009 Aimhigher launched Aimhigher Associates, a major new area of activity.

Aimhigher Associates is a £21 million scheme to recruit and train around 5,500 current university students to provide individual and small-group help to more than 21,000 pupils. Usually from a similar background to the pupils they support, Aimhigher Associates can appreciate the barriers the young person may face, and share their own experience of overcoming them.

*“Neither of my parents had been to university, and I was a bit nervous about the idea. But my Aimhigher Associate helped me to see that going to university is not going to be such a scary thing.”*

**Kandi Waterman, Year 10 pupil,  
Ryde High School, Isle of Wight**

*“Aimhigher’s work with Connexions in County Durham, such as our collaboration on the county Higher Education Convention, is having a real effect. University entrants from here are up 6.2 per cent over five years, while the number of young people not in education, employment or training fell by almost 15 per cent between 2006 and 2008.”*

**Janice Bray, Executive Director,  
Connexions County Durham**

You can get involved in Aimhigher by:

- supporting the programme in your local area and nationally
- spreading the message that raising young people's aspirations matters
- gaining the commitment of others with influence in your locality, region or constituency.

Find out what your local partnership does to help young people in your area.

To find your local contact, go to:  
**[www.aimhigher.ac.uk/whos-who](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/whos-who)**

For more information about Aimhigher, go to our website, at:  
**[www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner)**



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