

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION****COUNCILLOR DAVE HARLING****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG  
DATE: 24 April 2014****SECONDARY ADMISSIONS 2014**

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, the Council offered 98% of parents one of the 3 secondary school preferences that they had expressed for their child. 77% were offered their 1st preference school, 14% their 2nd preference school and 7% their 3<sup>rd</sup> preference school. Only 2% of children were offered a school that was not listed as a preference.

**BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN SCHOOLS DANCE FESTIVAL 2014**

Our 9th Blackburn with Darwen Schools Celebration of Dance took place on the 22nd and 23rd March at King George's Hall. There were 45 schools involved with over 1,100 pupils taking part and nearly 2,000 family and friends came to watch over the two nights. The event was supported by a number of VIPs, including Councillors, Senior Education Department staff and Head Teachers.

With this year's theme of 'History' the dances were inspired by all manner of different historical periods and events. The enthusiasm of the children made it a memorable occasion and it was great to see the children supporting all the other schools so well. This event was a fantastic showcase for Blackburn with Darwen and a real credit to the children, young people and staff of the Borough.

**GOVERNORS CONFERENCE**

Approximately 140 governors, local authority officers and guests attended this year's Governors' Conference at Blackburn Central High School. The theme of the Conference was 'Your School, Your Children' and the keynote speaker was David Cameron. David is a nationally renowned speaker, a former Director of Children's Services who is now an independent education consultant. David led the morning with two sessions.

In the first he talked about what really matters in learning and how governors can support and challenge in this process. During his second input David built on some of the key themes, emphasising the role of governors as the voice of the child, and how teachers can best bring alive learning for young people.

## **'HOT SPOT BLITZ' ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN WITH BLACKBURN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (15<sup>TH</sup>& 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014)**

Blackburn Central High School commissioned the Education Welfare Team to conduct a 'Hot Spot Blitz' exercise. The purpose was to raise the profile of regular attendance across the school community and to target those pupils who were, or at risk of becoming, Persistent Absentees (a Persistent Absentee is defined by the Department for Education as a pupil with 15% or more absence).

A team of 3 Education Welfare Officers undertook intensive work with parents and pupils over a 2 day period. This also gave the opportunity to intervene with pupils whose attendance rates hovered just below the 90% mark – viewed by many parents as an 'acceptable' level of attendance, even though it is the equivalent of missing 1 day off school every fortnight, well short of both the national average and Ofsted expectations.

Staff have continued to monitor the pupils who were targeted in the Hot Spot Blitz. By the end of the February half-term, 38 students had improved their attendance rates, many by between 3 – 4%, a significant increase. Of the small number of pupils whose attendance rates remained static, most have recorded 'authorised absences' due to medical issues. The parents of the improved attenders have all received positive letters from the Education Welfare Team acknowledging their children's progress.

## **RETIREMENT OF PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS**

Four primary Headteachers from across Blackburn with Darwen retired at the end of the Spring term. Thank you to the following for their commitment to the pupils in the borough and for their dedicated leadership; Janet Grimes of St Cuthbert's CE Primary, Barbara Booth of Shadsworth Infants, Alison Smallridge of Meadowhead Infants and Ann Brants of Longshaw Infants.