

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION**

**COUNCILLOR DAVE HARLING**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING**

**DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG**

**DATE: 26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016**

### **GCSE STRONG PERFORMANCE**

Recently published GCSE figures show Blackburn with Darwen to be the strongest performing local authority in the region in the new progress measures in Secondary schools and 7<sup>th</sup> best in pure attainment terms. They also revealed that we have the strongest performing school in the entire country, in terms of the progress made from entry into secondary school to GCSEs (Tauheedul Girls High School).

Against a regional context of weak performance, where only 4 of the 23 Local Authorities had a positive figure for Progress 8 (the new national progress measure), Blackburn with Darwen had the best figure, followed by Trafford, Cheshire West and Stockport. Blackburn with Darwen not only outperforms Lancashire County Council in aggregate, but outperforms every single district – from Ribble Valley, Chorley and South Ribble, to all of the eastern districts (Hyndburn, Rossendale, Burnley and Pendle). In pure attainment terms, Blackburn with Darwen ranked behind only Trafford, Wirral, Cheshire East, Stockport, Cheshire West and Bury – all considerably leafier than the borough. We outperformed Lancashire in its totality and comfortably outperformed other similar East Lancashire districts (Hyndburn, Pendle and Burnley).

In summary: on progress, our Secondary schools outperformed secondary schools in any other area of the North West. On simple threshold attainment, they comfortably outperformed all similar areas in the region and performed at a level in line with schools in much more affluent parts of the North West (Cheshire and the more affluent parts of Manchester).

### **SCHOOL INSPECTIONS UPDATE**

Four Ofsted school inspection reports have been published since the last Council Forum report. Two primary schools have improved on their previous judgement of 'requires improvement' to 'good'. The Inspector remarked that St Stephen's Tockholes C of E Primary School has benefitted from the partnership with Blackburn the Redeemer C of E Primary School which have provided wider opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively. Meadowhead Infants was judged 'good' in all areas and the report highlighted that the school had improved considerably with raised standards and good opportunities for pupils to achieve and develop.

Witton Academy received it's first inspection since becoming an Academy in May 2014 and was again judged 'good' overall. The report praised areas of outstanding teaching specifically in physical education, expressive arts, food technology and religious education.

St Antony's RC Primary School maintained a 'requires improvement' judgement with a 'good' for overall effectiveness of early years provision. Inspectors acknowledged improvements in the quality of teaching for pupils in early years and in upper key stage and recommended that pupils in other areas of the school are challenged appropriately to improve on the judgement.

## **UNDERGRADUATE SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive has written to the borough's 2016 A Level and vocational high achievers to offer employer support throughout the duration of their studies. As well as gaining ongoing work experience it is hoped that the project will encourage young people return to the borough to live and work as graduates.

The response from young people has been very positive and so far 16 matches have been made. Employers who have signed up include Blackburn Rugby Football Club, Campbell Driver Partnership, Patrick Grant Community Clothing Partnership, WEC Group, the NHS and the Council.

## **CAROL CONCERT IN THE CATHEDRAL**

Over 400 Primary aged pupils from across 15 schools took part in two Christmas concerts at Blackburn Cathedral. Each school had the opportunity to perform an individual festive song and performance standards were very high. The schools joined together to perform three massed songs, two congregational carols and the music was supported by the Organ Scholar at Blackburn Cathedral.

## **OFSTED ANNUAL EDUCATION & SKILLS REPORT**

The Ofsted Education and Skills Annual Report for the North West region for the 2015/16 academic year has highlighted excellent performance progress within our schools. Secondary schools in the borough ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of 23 schools with 90% of pupils attending good or outstanding schools, up from 76% the previous year. Primary schools also provided a good news story with 86% of pupils attending good or outstanding schools which is an increase of 15% over the past 4 years.

## **AREA BASED REVIEW**

Blackburn with Darwen is part of the pan-Lancashire Area Based Review alongside Blackpool and Lancashire to establish the "health" of colleges. The review will run until Spring 2017 and cover the financial resilience of colleges and their ability to offer high quality education and training, based on the needs of learners and employers within the local area. All of the colleges, their governors and representative bodies in the borough are involved in the review.

The agencies taking part in the review are the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Education Funding Agency, Regional Schools Commissioner, Ofsted and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

To date the Local Authorities and the LEP have completed their presentation on current and future need gaps and colleges have presented their response. Discussions are underway about potential physical changes including college mergers.