

# REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

COUNCILLOR DAVE HARLING

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG

DATE: 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017

## SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

On the 1st March parents and carers of 1945 children residing in Blackburn with Darwen found out which secondary school their child will be attending in September as Year 7 pupils. Over 95% of local children received an offer of a place at one of their three preferred schools with 80.9% being offered their first preference. This compares favourably to 2016 when 92% of children received a place at one of their preferred schools and 74.7% received their first preference.

The Pupil and Admissions Team continues to support the drive for online services with over 88% of secondary applications being made online, up from 85.8% in 2016. The national offer date for primary schools is 16 April 2017.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL OFSTED INSPECTIONS

Three primary schools have had an Ofsted 'short inspection' since the start of 2017 with all three maintaining a judgement of 'good'. Short inspections are new, lighter touch, one day inspections for schools who have previously been judged good and the school receives half a days notice. For Brookhouse Primary the report commented that *"Children get off to a flying start to their time at Brookhouse because of high-quality provision in the early years."*

St Mary's & St Joseph's RC Primary School was praised for progress since the previous inspection visit with the Inspector stating that the school has *"improved the quality of writing across the school and in 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of Year 6 was above the national average."*

The inspector's also praised academic achievement at St Michael with St John CofE Primary School reporting that, *"Results over time, and evidence in the work of current pupils, both confirm that an increasing proportion of pupils are working above the expected standard for their age in writing and mathematics."*

## BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN SCHOOLS DANCE FESTIVAL 2017

The 12<sup>th</sup> Blackburn with Darwen Schools Celebration of Dance was staged on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at King George's Hall with 1000 pupils from 43 schools performing to an audience of 2000 family and friends.

The Access to Learning Service co-ordinated the event, and learning for the pupils included the experience of collectively participating in culturally diverse performances on a large stage, all of which helps to increase self esteem. The event was a fantastic showcase for the borough and a credit to the children and staff who worked hard to put on two great shows.

## INDEPENDENT ISLAMIC SCHOOL'S NETWORK

A school led Independent Islamic Schools Headteachers Network has been set up to support member schools and share ideas, plans and best practice. The network has representatives from both primary and secondary Independent Islamic Schools across Blackburn with Darwen and neighbouring local authorities.

Media Patel, the 'Prevent' Strategy Co-ordinator for the Council, and Ismail Adam, Link Education Welfare Officer for Independent Islamic schools were both instrumental in the establishment of group. The nominated chair is Yusuf Seedat, Headteacher of Islamiyah Girls Secondary School.

## PEACE CHARTER FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Blackburn with Darwen High Schools have come together to develop a Peace Charter for a collective approach to community, including the rights of young people, asylum seekers, refugees and women. Pupils from Local Authority schools, Academies, Free schools, Faith schools and Independent schools have worked together to write the charter which was launched in January with the backing of Headteachers.

The Charter will be rolled out for partners across the local authority to sign up over the coming months with the launch of this second phase planned to coincide with 'Celebrate World Day' on 21st September.

A recent national study on 'Understanding School Segregation in England: 2011 to 2016' carried out by the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) Foundation, SchoolDash and The Challenge has called on the Government to address segregation issues in schools. The Peace Charter is one of many examples of Blackburn with Darwen schools working together to create the opportunity to get together and build relationships to increase understanding and tolerance.

The work going on in Blackburn with Darwen with regards to inter-cultural relations has been recognised nationally by Professor Ted Cattle, a leading voice in this field, who has said, *"Blackburn with Darwen has done more than most areas to build bridges between communities and, indeed, I have often quoted their campaigns and policies as good practice – this includes their 'Belonging to Blackburn with Darwen' campaign and their 'Investor in Cohesion' Toolkit. They have had a dedicated team of officers, committed councillors and supportive voluntary and business sectors."*

## NEW ARRIVALS SERVICE UPDATE

Blackburn with Darwen is seeing an increase in children arriving from overseas, the majority of whom speak limited or no English. The New Arrivals Team provides in school support for primary pupils with little or no English. They are reporting a growing number of Urdu speakers, after experiencing a significant drop in their reported numbers over recent years. However, just over half of the Urdu speaking pupils arrived into the UK via one or more European Union countries – mainly through Italy or Spain, although others have arrived via Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Whilst these children have been exposed to other European languages for different periods of time, their schooling has commonly been frequently interrupted and so their own first language and cognitive and academic progress is often under-developed.

Between 1st September 2016 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 the New Arrivals Service provided language support to 31 new arrivals:

- 15 Urdu speakers arrived from Italy (6), Spain (4), Holland (1), Pakistan (4)
- 2 Punjabi speakers arrived from Spain and Italy
- 4 Romanian speakers arrived from Romania
- 3 Polish speakers arrived from Poland
- 2 Czech speakers arrived from Czech Republic
- 1 Italian speaker from Italy
- 1 Latvian speaker from Latvia
- 1 French speaker from France
- 1 Estonian speaker from Estonia
- 1 Farsi speaker from Iran

The team also specialises in promoting and supporting access to education for refugee and asylum seeking children and other new international arrivals, including the children of Central / eastern European migrant workers and those of Roma heritage. Between 1st September and 31st December 2016 the team provided additional support to 36 asylum seeker and refugee children and their families.