

E REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- 1 After all the local and national media coverage of the serious problem of teacher recruitment and retention, I am pleased to be able to tell Members that all Buckinghamshire schools opened fully this term. Yes, some of our schools have vacancies that are being covered both from within the school staff and from supply and short term contract and Members know of the very great efforts that many schools have had to make to ensure that their staffing complement was filled for this term. Those efforts were considerably supported by Officers here.
- 2 I was pleased to contribute to the welcome that we organised at the end of August for the teachers that we have recruited from Canada and I hope that they enjoy their stay in Buckinghamshire.
- 3 We have been able to appoint a specific Recruitment Strategy Manager to help schools work on this problem that looks as though it may remain across the whole of the southeast, if not nationally, for the next 3 or 4 years. A whole range of initiatives are underway including to do with starter homes and I would be happy to circulate details of these to Members.

Examination and Test Results 2001

- 4 We now have provisional information from Buckinghamshire schools which indicates that the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations (or equivalent) this year was just over 65.4%, a rise of over 2% on last year. The percentage obtaining at least one grade A* to G rose by 0.6% to 97.6%. These figures mean that we have exceeded the targets set out in the current Education Development Plan.
- 5 At A level, the percentage of entries achieving A to C grades rose from 68.6% to 70.7%

- 6 We also have provisional information on pupils who took the Key Stage 2 tests at the end of the Primary phase this Summer, which indicates increases in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or better in the English (+0.4%) and Science (+2.9%) tests, but a decrease in the Mathematics test (-1.2%). These changes are in line with national trends where the changes from 2000 were as follows: English (no change); Science (+2%); Mathematics (-1%).
- 7 We have also looked particularly at achievements in Key Stage tests by looked-after children. Among this group, outcomes for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are generally positive with many significant achievements, particularly at Key Stage 1, especially when one takes into consideration the disproportionate number of children with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties. 64% achieved the target in reading comprehension and writing, 73% in mathematics. At Key Stage 2, 67% achieved the target in science compared with 76.5% of their peers in Bucks. Considering the evidence of particular vulnerability, early social disadvantage and a high level of special educational needs there is clear evidence of a high level of participation and significant achievements. Attainments at KS3 show there are some potentially high achievers for GCSE results in future years.

White Paper: 'Schools Achieving Success'

- 8 The White Paper 'Schools Achieving Success' sets out the Government's education priorities for its second term in office. The document is mainly concerned with secondary education and is designed as a framework for raising standards throughout that sector. If any Member would like to see a Summary of the White Paper, please contact me. In many cases, the proposals are concerned with an expansion of initiatives already under way, including, for example, teacher recruitment measures, and specialist and beacon school status. In other areas, broad principles are set out and detailed proposals will follow. These will include in particular plans for a major reform of provision for 14-19 year olds.

- 9 The County Council is invited to reply to the consultation exercise by 7 November 2001 and will seek views from relevant partners in developing that reply. In the longer term, the Council will need to develop a strategic response to the implications of the White Paper for the future of secondary education in the County.

Accident on School Visit to Vietnam

- 10 Council Members will know of the tragic death of Amy Ransom, a Wycombe High School pupil, on a school visit to Vietnam during the summer holiday. All our sympathies go out to the family, the school and those involved in the holiday. For our part, as we would do in any such incident, we are reviewing, as we do regularly, our Educational Visits Policy to ensure that, if there are any lessons to be learned and applied, this will be done.

Changes to Schools

- 11 It is also important to confirm to the Council that formal changes have happened to the following schools this September.
- 12 Highcrest Community School opened as a Fresh Start school on 1 September. Initial major phases of building were ready when the school opened. I am also very pleased to say that the school is off to a very good start; with much improved examination results and an increase in admission numbers.
- 13 Southcourt Infant School and Beech Green Nursery School, Aylesbury duly closed on 31 August, and most of the pupils transferred to the enlarged Oak Green School. Our appreciation of the work of the two schools was expressed at the last meeting of the Council.

**MARION CLAYTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS**