



Parish Newsletter September 2019

Cllr Karen Soons

07864 601 887 [karen.soons@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:karen.soons@suffolk.gov.uk)

## **Schools in Suffolk see an improvement in results across a range of subjects at GCSE level**

Self-reported results from Suffolk schools, released on 22 August, indicate an increase in students achieving higher grades.

This includes a 4% increase in pupils achieving at least a grade 5 in all elements of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and a 7% increase in the number of students achieving a grade 4, when compared with the previous year.

The English Baccalaureate constitutes GCSEs in English and Maths plus GCSEs from the Sciences, Humanities and Languages. This is seen by the government as an important academic foundation for all pupils.

The self-reported figures also show an increase in the number of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 4 in English and Maths. There has also been a 2-point increase in the attainment 8 figure for disadvantage pupils, which is likely to see disadvantage students exceed the national average when provisional results are released in October. Attainment 8 takes into account a pupil's overall results across a range of GCSEs.

More than 6,500 pupils in Suffolk were entered for GCSE exams, according to self-reported results collated from around 70% of schools.

Some schools have done particularly well:

- Debenham High School reported 71% of pupils achieving a grade 5 in English and Maths and 80% achieving a grade 4 in English and Maths.
- Debenham High School and Thomas Mills High School have reported the highest percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 in EBacc this year.
- Northgate High School, Copleston High School, Ormiston Denes Academy, Samuel Ward Academy, Thomas Gainsborough School and Westbourne Academy have all seen significant rises in the percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 4 and 5 in English and Maths.

These figures are based on self-reported data from schools and academies to Suffolk County Council. The results are subject to validation by the Department for Education.

**Councillor Gordon Jones, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, said:**

"I would like to congratulate Suffolk's young people on these fantastic results. They are testament to the hard work and commitment shown by pupils, parents, teachers and governors. This early indication puts our students in a strong position to go on to higher education."

## **The Hold - preserving Suffolk's history for many years to come**

Building work on The Hold, the new home of the Suffolk record office, is now well underway.

Whilst The Hold is primarily a record storing facility, it has so much more to offer. It will be a completely accessible space - once through its front doors there's no need for visitors to use steps or lifts.

There will be a dedicated exhibition space which will host four specially curated exhibitions per year, to encourage both young and old to interact with Suffolk's culture and history. Most of these exhibitions will be replicated at our Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft Record Offices, but with a local twist to ensure that the whole county gets involved.

Exhibitions make up just a small portion of events that will be held in the building. A 200-seat tiered auditorium will primarily be used by the University of Suffolk but will also host conferences and talks by archivists. There is no other auditorium space with this capacity in Ipswich and it's hoped that it can also be used by the wider community.

Another first, not just for Ipswich but for the whole of the county is The Hold's thermal mass maintained strong room. This record storage facility spans an impressive 1650 cubic metres, spread over three floors. It will have enough space to store the records we currently hold in Suffolk and should also comfortably house further records for the next twenty years. Whereas many storage facilities rely on costly air conditioning systems to ensure records are stored at optimum temperatures, the design and construction of The Hold has resulted in it being able to maintain this with minimal intervention. Not only will this save money, but it also helps work towards our goal of being the Greenest County.

It has already been demonstrated to be incredibly effective, as initial readings show air permeability test results of 0.18 @ 50 Pascal (50 N/m<sup>2</sup>). This is one of the lowest readings ever recorded and shows that the strong room's air leakage is well within the required standard of 0.5.

The last thing we want to do is put our records at risk, which is why there will still be rigorous dummy testing and a requirement of stable readings for at least eight weeks prior to the actual records being stored. Once safely housed, we'll want to ensure that no new records pose any danger to those already archived. That is why the site incorporates a 'Quarantine Room' where new records can be treated for insects, mould and any other conditions which could spread to existing collections.

The £20m project is on target for completion by Easter next year and is set to come in on budget. The building will be part of the University of Suffolk campus and will be run by the county and the university together.

## **Suffolk bucks the national trend for vaccine rates as the UK loses its 'measles free' status**

On 21 August it was revealed that national rates for the second MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine have now fallen to just 87.2 %. This is thought to have led to the large increase in measles cases in England and Wales in 2018 (991 compared to only 278 the previous year).

However, as a result of the hard work of local healthcare professionals and the engagement of parents, Suffolk continues to buck this trend. Vaccination rates in Suffolk at the end of March 2019 reached 94.5% for the first MMR dose (by 24 months of age) and 90.3% for the second booster dose (by 5 years of age).

Following the introduction of a targeted, multi-agency campaign launched in December 2018, a Suffolk project group was set up to address falling vaccination rates. Public Health Suffolk have worked with NHS England and Improvement, Public Health England, Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Groups and Child Health Information Service to identify and remove potential barriers for parents and children in accessing immunisation services. They have also improved the quality of vaccination data and encouraged parents to consider the preschool booster/MMR just prior to school entry.

As a result, vaccination rates in Suffolk for both MMR doses improved between the first quarter and last quarter of 2018/19, by 2.4% for dose one and 3.5% for dose two. This is particularly encouraging at a time when there has been a decrease nationally, with the UK failing to meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended target of 95% for the second MMR vaccine. This, along with the consequential large spike in the number of confirmed measles cases in England and Wales, has resulted in the UK losing the 'measles free' status they achieved two years ago. The WHO views a country as 'measles free' when there are low levels of measles infection circulating in the population along with high vaccine cover, as well as good systems for identifying cases of measles.

NHS England plans to write to GPs across the country, including Suffolk, to promote 'catch up' campaigns, encouraging the parents of children and young people who

haven't received two doses of MMR to contact their GP surgery to arrange vaccination against this highly infectious and preventable disease.

**Councillor James Reeder, Cabinet Member for Public Health, said:**

"I'm delighted that Suffolk has bucked the national trend for MMR vaccination rates, which is a testament to the hard work of Public Health Suffolk, ably supported by Public Health England colleagues, our partners and local healthcare professionals.

"However, this good news doesn't mean we can be complacent. We have more to do and I would urge parents in Suffolk to take their children for vaccination and ensure their child's vaccinations are up to date. Vaccination prevents serious illnesses such as measles which has complications including pneumonia, ear infections, brain inflammation and in some serious cases even death."

## **Unsafe goods totalling £23 million detained at the Port of Felixstowe**

On 19 August, it was reported that nearly one million unsafe items have been prevented from entering the UK consumer market in the last year.

This is thanks to the work of Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards Imports Team at the Port of Felixstowe.

Figures for 2018/19 show that 996,143 items across 670 product lines were targeted, assessed and detained, with an estimated value to society of over £23 million.

Products such as baby carriers, strollers, child car seats and electric hot plates have been detained recently. The baby carriers were found to have non-compliant labelling, an easily detachable label which becomes a choking hazard, and the leg openings were too wide meaning that a baby could fall out.

Four in five of the UK's consumer goods arrive in the UK by a container. Half of these enter via the Port of Felixstowe, making it the busiest entry point of its kind in the country.

Suffolk is one of the few authorities to host a dedicated Imports Team, which is directly funded by National Trading Standards. As well as protecting the public from unsafe items, the team's work also helps to protect legitimate businesses trying to compete on a level playing field.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"The Imports Team plays a vital role at the Port of Felixstowe. Their work not only protects the people of Suffolk, but everyone in the UK, by preventing unsafe items finding their way into the supply chain.

“The team is constantly monitoring items coming into the country which could cause significant harm. Just from these recently detained items, it is not an over-exaggeration to say that hundreds of lives have potentially been saved. A single unsafe electrical item could result in a house fire, involving all our emergency services, putting multiple lives and property in danger. The fact that we are detaining such a large number of these items every year, reduces those risks considerably.”

When consignments are detained, officers carry out a visual assessment and may send products for further testing against relevant standards. If products are assessed as being unsafe, the goods may be suspended, and further enforcement action may be undertaken. Such items are typically destined for sale via third parties on online marketplaces.

## **Keeping Suffolk’s villages safe with Lorry Watch**

On 13 August, it was reported that two new Lorry Watch schemes have launched. The scheme are aimed at reducing the number of HGV drivers ignoring weight restrictions on the county’s roads.

The villages of Fornham All Saints (near Bury St Edmunds) and Barnham (near Thetford) join nine other similar schemes across Suffolk, set up in conjunction with Suffolk County Council’s Trading Standards and Suffolk Highways. Local residents in Fornham All Saints and Barnham have been noticing HGV drivers regularly ignoring weight restrictions and wanted to do something about it.

Suffolk’s Lorry Watch started in 2012 and to date has reported nearly 3,000 incidents of HGV vehicles exceeding weight limits, where clearly marked restriction signs are in place. Volunteers monitor their area and report suspected offenders.

The existing schemes have been a great success with only four repeat offenders being issued with a warning, meaning that drivers are taking notice when they are first contacted.

### **Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“Lorry Watch has proved highly effective in reducing the number of HGVs travelling through restricted areas. I’m grateful to the volunteers who report potential offenders to us, so that we can do our best to make sure our local communities and highways are kept safe.

“I would encourage anyone with concerns about HGVs ignoring restrictions in their community, to get in touch and consider a Lorry Watch scheme or find out more about our recently launched Community Self Help Scheme.”

Weight restriction orders make it an offence to drive a vehicle through the restricted area where the vehicle exceeds the weight limit imposed unless they are exempt, for example when delivering or collecting within the restriction zone.

If drivers from the same haulage company are being reported, that firm will receive advice on training their staff. The offence remains with the driver unless the haulage firm has caused the offence. Trading Standards can enforce weight restriction orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

If you are interested in joining Lorry Watch in an area in which HGVs are abusing a weight restriction, contact [lorrywatch@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:lorrywatch@suffolk.gov.uk) or 01473 264859 (option A).

## **A number of bus services to continue despite funding challenge**

On 31 July, it was reported that a number of bus services in the county will continue to run, despite a reduction in public funding coming into effect this autumn.

Since announcing in June 2019 that 23 routes were at risk, Suffolk County Council has been working with operators and communities to find solutions to the funding challenge. The council is pleased to confirm that permanent solutions have been found for two services and a further five will continue to run until at least the end of March 2020. Conversations are also being taken forward about a further four routes that the council is hopeful can continue to be served in some way.

The 971 service from Hadleigh to Colchester has been taken on by the operator Beestons, who will deliver the service on a commercial basis.

The early morning M33 and M34 service that takes a circular route around Bury St Edmunds, will also continue. This is due to section 106 funding which has been obtained by the council.

The council has secured £24,000 in extra grant money to extend the 387, 456, 112, 120 and 461 services until the end of next March. Operators, local communities and councillors in the areas served by these routes are actively working to find alternatives to keep the services running. This extension allows them time to find permanent solutions.

Suffolk County Council is also confident that although notice is being served on the 375, 483 and 62, solutions can be found. It is working alongside communities, bus users and operators to explore options such as local community transport, taxi-buses and alternative funding.

Alternative transport provision is also being sought for rural villages on the 108 route from Lowestoft to James Paget Hospital. Following conversations with residents, options such as community transport or taxi buses are being considered. The provision would enable residents in the villages along the 108 route to take community transport to Gunton, where they would then be able to board buses going in various directions

**Councillor Mary Evans, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Issues said:**

“I am really pleased that we have managed to continue these services which were at risk, and I am hope we can find alternatives for the other routes.

“This demonstrates Suffolk County Council’s commitment to working with operators and communities. With a decreasing budget, we have had to make a tough decision this year to withdraw subsidy but today’s news highlights how local and commercial options can be found to enable services to run without public money.

“I recognise how important passenger transport is in Suffolk, and I remain committed to ensuring that we provide the best travel network that we possibly can.”

Conversations with Suffolk’s bus operators began in June as it was announced that 23 services would have their public subsidy removed. This was part of a move to save £340,000 from the authority’s passenger transport budget.

Out of the 211 routes currently operating throughout Suffolk 61 are subsidised with public money. The 23 services were identified through a new fair and thorough prioritisation mechanism which was developed by a cross party policy development panel. The criteria takes into account passenger numbers, subsidy per single ticket and integration with other services. It also considers the number of entitled students using the service and percentage of journeys made by concessionary pass holders.

In 2017/18 the 23 services were responsible for 107,624 single journeys out of a total of 14.9 million journeys taken across the county. This means that the services are responsible for only 0.7% of journeys per year. On some of these services the council is currently paying £12.64 per single ticket which equates to over £25 per round trip.

Unfortunately, notice will now be served on the affected routes where alternative provision is not in place. As it stands these contracts will end by 2 November 2019, however the council remain open to conversations with operators and communities to see if solutions can be found.

A full list of the affected routes and solutions is published on the [Suffolk on Board](#) website.

## **Upcoming We Are Listening events**

Suffolk residents are invited to come along and chat with the Leader of the Council, other County Councillors and senior managers

- Newmarket: Tuesday 17 September, 11am-1pm

