



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

NEWSLETTER Easter 2010

Helping to raise standards in education

"It is in all our interests to help the underachievers when it matters."

Message from Rafiq Raja - MPA Chairman

Although the School Summer Term is upon us, weather wise it has been a strange period since Christmas. We have had more days with snow cover in south bucks than any period in recent memory. The snow has not only left us with pot holed roads, but it seriously disrupted the ability of schools to deliver the education to our children.

Nevertheless, each school made valiant efforts to stay open where possible and when it was necessary to close the school, for reasons of safety for both children and staff the internet and e-mails were used as never before. We have definitely moved into the 21st century.

As chairman of the Muslim Parents Association in High Wycombe, I make an unashamed appeal to parents from all sections of the community and particularly from the Muslim community to take an active interest in the education of your children. We need your help; today's children are our doctors, nurses, civil servants, social workers of the future and indeed our future.

Buckinghamshire is rightly proud of its academic achievements as it has some excellent schools, a very passionate and determined army of teachers as well as a dedicated governing body for each school. Some of the recent school results at GCSE and A level have been the best in state schools in the country. However, whilst the majority of children from the mainstream community are achieving very high results, the Pakistani heritage pupils are not. The gap between the two sets of school children in Buckinghamshire is rather wide. The recent results show that whilst 62% - 63% of the mainstream pupils gained five A*-C grades at GCSE, including English Maths, only 37% of Pakistani heritage pupils attained this passport to future training or further education.

When comparing the performance of children on Free School Meals, (FSM) – the measure for low income families – we find that the Pakistani origin pupils from this group are further behind. About 30 per cent of Pakistani boys and about 35 per cent of Pakistani girls entitled to free school meals met the GCSE target – but this is still below the rest of the county.

Unfortunately, the white working class pupils on free school meals show even less glowing results than the Pakistani origin children on free school meals. About 20 per cent of white British boys entitled to free school meals got a key GCSE score.

After the most recent results Steve Edgar, divisional manager for Buckinghamshire County Council's school improvement service, said that males and those from an ethnic minority and a deprived background had weakened exam chances.

It is therefore in all our interests to help the underachievers when it matters.

Contact the MPA:

Post:

Rafiq Raja,
34 Perth Road,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP13 6XX

E-mail:

rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk

Tel:

07956 622 469

NEWS

The MPA has a website, which is under construction at the moment but it is hoped to be functioning very soon.

mpawycombe.co.uk

First English class in Totteridge gets under way

The MPA has tried to engage the Pakistani origin parents to show more interest in the education of their children but for the message to be more effective it was necessary to equip parents with the right tools.

Command of the English language, for people whose first language is not English, has been identified as a real priority, yet a considerable number of ladies are unable to play a more active and effective role in the education of their children because they have lacked the confidence to interact with schools for cultural or religious reasons, but mostly because their English was rudimentary.



Rafiq Raja with Durdana Ansari (Project Director Ethnic Minority Foundation) & Linden Rowley of IDEa (The Improvement and Development Agency).

It has been a real pleasure to start English Language classes for ladies at the Totteridge & District Community Centre, Totteridge Drive, as from 1 March.

The classes have been started as a result of collaboration between the Muslim Parents Association, the Ethnic Minority Foundation and Adult Learning High Wycombe. The first four week session has already finished and the next session will start on Monday 19 April 2010. The classes are being held on Mondays and Tuesdays but because of growing demand the class will also take place on Wednesdays, between 10am and 12pm. There are about 40 learners but there are still some spaces available on the Wednesday class.

To enrol please call Sara Ali (Coordinator EMF) on 0791 269 2295 or Rafiq Raja (Chairman MPA) on 0795 662 2469.



NEWS

The MPA is planning meetings in the Wycombe Mosques to highlight the importance of education and workshops to equip parents with some basic information about the education system.

To get involved please contact MPA at rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk

Cressex Community School becomes a Co-operative Learning Trust

Hearty Congratulations to Governors, staff, parents and children of Cressex Community School for having become the Cressex Co-operative Learning Trust, a first in Buckinghamshire.

Students, staff and parents at Cressex Community School are looking forward to the school's future within a brand new educational trust, the Cressex Cooperative Learning Trust, which came into being on 1 April 2010. The aims of the trust are to support raised standards of achievement for students in the school and to broaden the range of opportunities available to the students. Cressex Headteacher David Hood said: "We are delighted to be creating a formal partnership with a group of outstanding partners from the education sector and look forward to the benefits this will bring to our young people." The Trust partnership consists of Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Wycombe Abbey School, Bucks New University, the Cooperative College and Buckinghamshire County Council.

Starting in September, the Trust will oversee the development of a "stakeholder forum" which will provide a voice in the development of the school for all members of the school community, including: students, staff, parents, members of the wider community and community organisations with a legitimate interest in the future of Cressex School. Mr Hood went on to say that "The school very much hopes that the MPA along with other organisations will seek to play an active role in the Forum". All best wishes to everyone involved in establishing the Cressex Cooperative Learning Trust.

NEWS

Despite the bad weather I am pleased to say that it has been a real pleasure to visit some more schools and I have been deeply impressed by the dedication, energy, commitment and focus of the Secondary school heads in Wycombe, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting for the first time.

On 24 March I was privileged to attend a 6th form conference at Highcrest Community School; a first of its kind in Wycombe, where I was on the 'education' panel of five to answer some very interesting and mature questions from the 6th formers. Highcrest School deserves real praise for the initiative and I very much hope that the annual 6th form conference can become a feature of school calendar with 6th formers from all Wycombe schools coming together for the event.

Let's make it happen.

Happy Easter from THARA

Thara Stores would like to thank all their customers for their support over the last year especially during the credit crunch.

Thara Stores offer a wide selection of all the Asian foods, spices and fresh fruit & veg plus everyday food items at lowest prices around.

We have departments for fresh Halal meat and poultry, a department for ready made fashion ware and colourful fabrics of all kinds.

We offer great reductions on bulk purchases for restaurants, takeaways, parties or weddings.

Visit us for more information and to see many offers we have in store. For a polite and efficient service come to Thara Stores your local Asian supermarket.

2 Whitelands Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3EQ

Tel: 01494 445653 | Fax: 01494 638972

Why not share your experiences?

Have you any experiences of the education system you would like to share with the MPA?

Do you wish to write on a topic of your choice around the subject of education, in a future issue of the MPA Newsletter?

If so then please get in touch today and see if your experiences can help others.

Please ensure your articles have a maximum of 500 words. Please e-mail unless absolutely impossible.

Exam Tips

Some of our school pupils will shortly be sitting GCSE & A Levels. There is no substitute for hard work and proper planning. There is still time to get help from your teachers on a point you have not quite understood. A few extra marks can take you from a D to a C grade; therefore a little sacrifice of your time now can pay dividends indeed.



Here are some tips from the pen of an experienced Secondary school teacher:

- ✓ **Plan:** Work out how much **work you have to cover and how much time you have before the exams then draw up a realistic** timetable.
- ✓ **Study in bitesize chunks:**
- ✓ **Switch between subjects** to avoid becoming bored of a single topic. The most effective way to revise is to concentrate on understanding rather than memorizing.
- ✓ **Take short breaks every hour** or so to give yourself a rest. Drink water and eat healthy snacks to keep your brain ticking over.
- ✓ **Don't be distracted:** Find a quiet place at home where you won't be distracted by your family, friends, TV or Facebook.

What about on the day? On the day of the exam, don't try testing yourself on specific questions - this will just make you panic about what you think you don't know, rather than focusing on what you do know. Don't think about passing or failing. If you've kept to your revision plan, and you're calm, the answers will come naturally.

I would also add that you should plan to have a good night's sleep before an exam, arrive for the exam in good time, with all the writing equipment you may need. Once the exam starts take a few minutes to read the question paper and highlight the questions which appeal to you, but remember to answer the required number of questions. Don't spend too much time on the one question you can do well and then find that you have not left enough time for the final question, even though it may not be to your liking. It is much easier to score more marks on the last question than it is to obtain an extra mark on a question you have already answered well, so use your time wisely and do not go over the apportioned time for each question.

Good Luck!

More revision tips can be found at www.aplustutors.co.uk

Why not tell us what is going on in your school?

Any comment or suggestions for reducing the achievement gap between the Pakistani heritage and mainstream pupils would be welcome.

Are there any 'out of the box' ideas which need to be tried?

INDEPENDENT CCTV LAY VISITOR PANEL

The Wycombe District CCTV Lay Visitor Panel is seeking to recruit additional members to help it to discharge its obligations as a CCTV public scrutiny body, in accordance with the aims in the Terms of Reference set out below:

1. To provide independent an objective security of the CCTV operation.
2. To safeguard the rights and interest of all citizens residing in or visiting the area covered by the CCTV operation, with particular reference to any current Data Protection and Human Rights or other current and relevant legislation.
3. To assume the role of critical friend of, and give the best possible advice to, Wycombe District Council on the operation of the CCTV System and how best to inform the public of its operation and efficacy.

The Lay Visitors Panel has up to 16 members and appointments are for initial periods of four years. The requirements of a Lay Visitor are as follows:

1. The Lay Panel meets at Wycombe District Council Offices approximately once every six weeks, (usually on a Monday evening at 7pm) for no more than two hours.
2. There is an Annual Public Meeting, usually held in February of each year, when the Panel's Annual Report is presented to the public. Representatives of the Police, CCTV Control Room Management and Wycombe District Council also attend to answer questions from the public.
3. Each member is expected to make an unscheduled visit to the CCTV Control Room at least twice a year, at a time convenient to themselves, and to complete a report which is then distributed to all panel members and appropriate personnel at Wycombe District Council. The Control Room is open 24 hrs a day, 7 days per week, and can be accessed by panel members at anytime.
4. Each prospective panel member who is invited to join after an informal meeting with two panel members will be CRB checked by Wycombe District Council. Subject to a favourable CRB check panel members are then required to sign a declaration of confidentiality document before commencing their duties.

The full Terms of Reference and the latest Annual Report are available on the Wycombe District Council website at www.wycombe.gov.uk under Community Safety/CCTV

If you are interested in joining the panel and would like more information please contact the chairman of the Panel, Colin Baker, by email at colincbaker@btinternet.co.uk

As another school term starts, here are a few words of appreciation for the parents from Sharon Cromie, the head of Wycombe High School.

As Headteacher of Wycombe High School, I am pleased to note the value and pride the MPA place on education. I take enormous pride in the achievements of all the students at Wycombe High School - the range and extent of their talents is very humbling. They attain at a high level academically and contribute to a wide range of extra curricular activities, including sport, music, drama, dance and enterprise. Wycombe High School students achieve this by adhering to our school motto, fortiter, fideliter, feliciter (courageously, faithfully and joyfully). They ensure our school is one where mutual respect is evident and diversity is celebrated.

I appreciate that is not the school alone that creates such an environment - the relationships we have with our parents and the wider community is a key component of our success. Many of you may have daughters at Wycombe High School and I am grateful to you for the support you give our school. Every parent plays a role in their child's education - you encourage, you celebrate success, you attend parents' evenings, you provide support and help at school functions, you encourage your child to join clubs and societies to build her confidence and skills, you respect your child and teach her to respect others, you teach her how to make good decisions and trust her to do so.

All of this is true of whatever school a child attends. We are extremely fortunate within Buckinghamshire to have such a range of very good schools, all supporting our wider community. I have been the Headteacher at Wycombe High School for just over one year. We work extensively in the wider community, particularly with primary school partners. Over the next year we hope to work more with our parents, many of whom will be members of MPA, to offer for example ICT classes, led by our Sixth Formers during the school day. I look forward to providing updates on how this is working in future editions of MPA's Newsletter and indeed meeting some, if not many of you, in the future.

Sharon Cromie
Headteacher
Wycombe High School
www.whs.bucks.sch.uk



Singlamarket.co.uk

01494 853 899 or 07889 771654

Web Design – SEO Services – Graphic Design – Logo Design – Leaflet Design & Print

If you wish to reach the Muslim community of High Wycombe, then we can carry your message on very favourable terms.

Life after work – reflections from the” third age”

A Cressex School Governor gives us a few glimpses of life after the world of work.

In May 2006, at the age of 57 and after 36 years in the world of paid work, I found myself with time on my hands.

I have friends and acquaintances who have virtually had to be dragged from their workplace at statutory retirement age, frightened by the perceived abyss of time left when that working week disappears. In truth, my job had become pretty all-consuming and it was clear that I could not continue at the same pace for much longer. I had enjoyed a fulfilling career, but the chance to retire early and redirect my energies came as something of a relief.

I left work with few specific plans. No retreat to a seaside bungalow was envisaged – I had come to appreciate that my roots are too deep here. A world cruise or part-time consultancy work did not appeal to me and looked forward to the simple things. I would walk and cycle more in the glorious Chilterns, regain the habit of reading books which I had largely lost, and perhaps take a few more holidays. I would also have time to devote to interests and voluntary work which though part of my past life had previously taken second place to my career. I had a vague notion that I might formalise a very amateur interest in art history into study for an Open University degree. A growing fascination with the canal system might, in time I thought, lead to the acquisition of a narrowboat to pursue this new hobby.

I was certain that I would get to more Wycombe Wanderers' games, particularly those on midweek evenings which work had previously precluded.

So how have things turned out?

Not for one single minute have I regretted the decision to retire. I have no trouble filling my time – sometimes usefully, at times frivolously, and at other times almost unconsciously. I maintain contact with some former work colleagues, welcoming the reinforcement that talking to them provides that I did the right thing. They in turn enjoy the opportunity to talk to someone who understands the challenges and difficulties they face, without their candor being perceived as weakness.

Those plans I had have pretty much been realised. I walk most days and have rediscovered books. “The Guardian”, which I have purchased regularly since leaving school, no longer remains unread. I feel better informed.

The canals proved a more immediate lure than I expected and urged on by an old university friend who reminded me “you're a long time dead”; a second-hand narrowboat was acquired within 4 months of retiring. We moor in a wonderfully scenic location under Ivinghoe Beacon and often spend weekends there. Several holidays have been enjoyed, including 5 and 7 week cruises around rural England - a wonderful way to travel and see the countryside.

I spend more time on community work, developing activities I was already involved in, and acquiring some new interests. “Retirement” has shown me that there is still real work to get stuck into and no shortage of opportunities for anyone willing to remain active, engaged and, hopefully, able to make a contribution. I have also learned that there is a particular satisfaction in doing things for their intrinsic worth, and not through the contractual promise of a monetary reward.

I remain involved in organising road races through Handy Cross Runners; serve on the conduct and discipline panel of my professional institute, hearing complaints against members; act as a “lay” member of a committee which recruits new magistrates, involving some most enjoyable interviewing and continue to serve as a Governor of Cressex Community School, an immensely satisfying role as we see the new building taking shape and the school powering forward on all fronts. The change of status to a Cooperative Learning Trust will present great challenges for the management of the school but the result will be huge opportunities for youngsters in the area, their families and the community as a whole.

Continued

Some aspects of retirement have caught me unawares. The fact that I can spend some days without apparently doing anything, yet not be bored. How much more acutely I have tuned into the changing seasons and daily patterns of weather. I perhaps spend more time looking back rather than forward, a natural consequence of getting older I suspect, and try to balance this in a proactive way by remaining engaged with exciting things which have their focus in the future, or at least the here and now.

Perhaps the biggest, most welcome but unanticipated feature of retirement has been the arrival of a first grandchild. As well as helping me to maintain a proper perspective on things, and hopefully slow down the aging process, I somehow find that I do not have quite as much spare time as I expected!

David Riddington

Foster a Black or Minority Ethnic child

Every year over 58,000 children are 'looked after' in foster care, and over 10,000 of these are from Asian, Black and Ethnic Minority communities. Social Services face a shortage of foster carers, but there is an even greater shortage in finding appropriate families for children from these backgrounds.

In Buckinghamshire there are many children and young people from Black and other ethnic backgrounds who are in need of a family that can reflect their ethnicity. These children really benefit from obtaining a sense of identity and understanding of their heritage and culture whilst they are 'looked after' by a foster family. This can be elements as simple as the particular music young children hear, the language spoken or type of regional accent or dialect, the colours of clothing and fabrics seen and distinct household and cooking smells, which all provide a particular and distinct environment proven to contribute towards the formation of their cultural identity.

In order to become a foster carer you must have an ability to communicate effectively with children and young people. You will also need to have a spare bedroom for a foster child and room in your life to support that child through their foster placement with you. The rewards are many and the ability to open your life and family to a child in need is something very special indeed.

To find out more about becoming a foster carer please contact the Family Placement Recruitment Team on 01296 382 555.

The Faith Leaders Forum of High Wycombe

in association with Amnesty International, Friends of the Earth, High Wycombe Transition Town & Bucks New University Students' Union

are sponsoring an

Election Meeting with all Parliamentary Candidates

at

All Saints Parish Church, High Wycombe

Sunday 18th April

8pm

All Welcome

