

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2015



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

Helping to raise standards in education



Highcrest awarded Flagship status **Page 2**



ADULT LEARNING
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Learning Opportunities for Adults **Page 11**



A
Message
from our
MP

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Contact the MPA:

Post: 34 Perth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 6XX

E-mail: rafigraja@hotmail.co.uk | Tel: 07956 622 469 | visit our website www.mpawycombe.co.uk

If you wish to have a say in choosing a government or local Wycombe District Councillors, then don't forget to exercise your vote on 7 May 2015.

Welcome to a fine looking summer

I trust all of you have had a relaxing and enjoyable Easter break, although the weather has been rather unpredictable through the holiday period.

As we move towards the summer and schools prepare for the annual GCSE and A level exams, we wish all and every pupil at every local school all the best in the forthcoming exams. The weather over the next few weeks is predicted to be warm and even hotter than Spain, which should encourage people to come out and take part in the General Election and Wycombe District Council elections; both events taking place simultaneously on Thursday, 7 May 2015.

Although we knew the date of the General Election a long time ago, the real campaigning has started just before Easter and the campaigns should hot up in the next few days. Those of you interested in putting questions to the Parliamentary Candidates can go to the Hustings at the Bucks New University on Tuesday, 28 April 2015 at 7PM. This meeting will be chaired by Colin Baker (a former Dr Who) and is organised by the Bucks Free Press. There is a second Hustings meeting organised by Wycombe 38 Degrees at All Saints Church on Wednesday, 29 April 2015 at 7.30PM, this meeting will be chaired by Dr Sarah Crowther. If you have a question then email Wycombe38d@gmail.com.

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Disraeli School shows the way in engaging parents

We are very privileged to be involved in the Wycombe Challenge Project. We are a school with a large majority of children entering Nursery and School well below national expectations; this applies to all Ethnic groups.

We are receiving an amount of money to make a difference to the large majority of our children which is great news. We have been given the option of deciding where it is most needed. After much discussion and data analysis we have decided to focus on our current Year 5 pupils. It is a group of 21 children who are below national expectations. The group is made up of 7 White British, 12 Pakistani, 1 White Other and 1 Mixed White British pupils.

The funding will be used to narrow the gap by putting in support in 1:1 Reading, small group Reading, 1:1 Maths, small group Maths, Comprehension and Writing. We have also timetabled in 'Speaking Programmes'. This has already been a great success. Children are given opportunities to plan a conversation with a member of staff using photocards, books, items from home and then deliver the talk to a group of their peers.

In the ideal world we 'aspire' for our Year 5 to be at a Level 3a in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of Year 5. However with the group we have chosen this will be a challenge due to a lack of support these children receive at home. Not because the parents are not interested or not because they don't value the learning but because of their own sometimes limited learning, vocabulary and experience.

For the last 12 years we have been working with Adult Education to support our families. We do this by running courses and development for parents and at times parents and children. This has included: Phonics with your child, Helping your child to succeed at school, A different focus every term, Numbers, writing, speaking and listening, ICT and Reading with your child.

We have also taken families on visits to the Seaside, Garden Centres, Woods, Parks, which has really helped to develop the children's learning. We have come a long way but still have a long way to go. Working tirelessly we will develop children to reach their full potential. The extra help from the Wycombe Challenge is therefore welcome indeed.

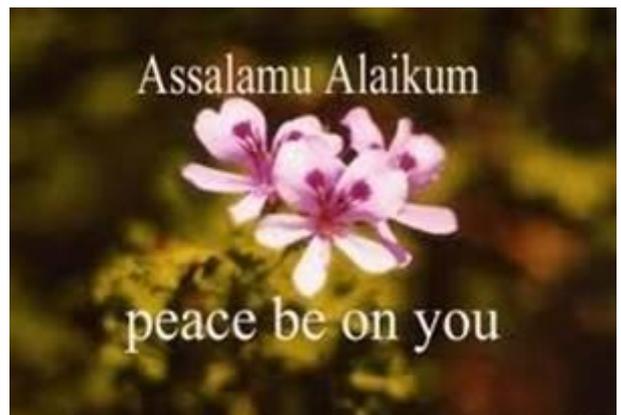
Mrs Jatinder Virk
Headteacher

Asalaam alaikum,

Muslims customarily use the greeting, 'Asalaam alai Kum' as advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings upon Him, His family & companions) which literally means 'Peace be with you.' He (pbuH,Hf&c) advised that this holy greeting is what the inhabitants of Paradise and angels use to greet one another, and is recommended to use between us here on Earth. (al-Baihaqi)

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Raja Yousaf
Thames Valley Muslim Police Association
raja.yousaf@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk



Cressex School – some pleasing developments are afoot

Students and staff at Cressex finished another exceptionally busy and rewarding term and now look forward to an equally successful summer term. In common with all schools, our Year 11 students are preparing hard for their forthcoming GCSE examinations. We wish them all well at this important stage in their lives.

The central part of students' experience of school is of course the lessons they attend and we continue to work hard to ensure that these are consistently meeting the needs of all our students. I would particularly like to highlight the success of our additional teaching to support the development of students' skills in speaking, reading and writing English. We are also making sure that our highest attaining students, those capable of securing the top grades in their exams, are given targeted additional guidance to help them to do their best.

We have a very active programme of extra-curricular activities. In recent weeks students have visited: the gardens of the Manoir aux Quat' Saisons in Great Milton, Oxfordshire; Cosmeston Mediaeval Village in Wales; the "Big Bang" Science Festival in Birmingham among many other interesting destinations. Closer to home we were delighted when our Year 7 boys' team won the Mini-Olympics competition held at Great Marlow School and when we received terrific feedback about the confident contribution of our Year 9 students to the Bucks Model United Nations General Assembly. On top of all that, our students have broken all previous records by raising over £2,700 for a wide range of charities in the first two terms of the year.

Our Year 7 will be oversubscribed again in September 2015 and we are full or very nearly full in all other year groups; our community continues to grow and thrive. On behalf of the whole school community it really pleases me to hear the positive views that are now rightly being shared about our school "out there". If you would like to come and see for yourself, please get in touch and we can arrange a visit and a tour.

David Hood
Headteacher

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Do you have an article you would like to submit?

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Sixth Formers are trained to give Internet Safety Lessons at Highcrest

Sixth formers at The Highcrest Academy are teaching younger students about the dangers of the internet thanks to a ground-breaking partnership with the County Council. The pupils have been trained to deliver presentations on how to stay safe online. During the next few months, they will show the potential risks of the internet and will try to impress upon fellow students how their 'online behaviour affects their offline world'.

Alison Watts, a project officer from the Council's Youth Service, has run the E-Safety awareness training at Highcrest for 17 staff and 14 Sixth Formers. This helped the youngsters gain the AQA Level 1 - a nationally accredited award - in 'Using the Internet Safely'.

"This is the first school the Youth Service have worked with to do this and will look to roll it out if it's successful to all schools across Bucks," she said. "We have been extremely impressed with the way it worked at Highcrest, where the students were very engaged and enthusiastic. Internet safety is of paramount importance to our authority and every parent in this county needs to be aware it is an issue that simply cannot be ignored."

The academy marked Safer Internet Day by showing online safety messages on plasma screens around the school. Sixth Formers who are in the scheme told how pleased they are to be involved.

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It feels good to get our perspective on the situation. We are there to promote the safety of the younger years. *Head Boy George Carter, 18*

We live in a cruel world. There are lots of dangers on the internet. It will be good to help children understand this. *Khayam Salim, 16*

It helps you understand that not everyone is nice in this world and you don't have to put up with it. *Petrina Prata, 16*

The training had impressed upon students a valuable message when faced with peer pressure online - don't be afraid to say 'no'!

Highcrest Students enjoy 'Best-Ever' Careers Fair

Eager students enjoyed the biggest-ever careers fair at The Highcrest Academy recently as 28 companies and organisations turned out to support the school. "The buzz around the hall all afternoon was incredible," said Learning Resource Manager Sandra Cariven, who was delighted by the number of firms which attended.

More than 400 students worked their way around the wide range of stands, including universities, colleges, an accountancy firm, the Army, Navy and RAF, Wycombe Wanderers and healthcare professionals. One of the biggest hits was the British and Irish Modern Music Institute which enjoyed big queues all afternoon. "It was the fifth such careers fair we have held and this was definitely the best. We are looking forward to repeating it next year," added Mrs. Cariven

Hearing Dogs for the Deaf is Highcrest's Chosen Charity

Three hearing dogs were led on to the stage at The Highcrest Academy recently as the school enjoyed a visit from a charity that gives vital support to deaf people. The aim of the presentation was to help raise awareness in the school's quest to support the charity this year. In preparation, the pupils had raised more than £300 – which was handed over at the assembly.

At the time, Lisa Bishop, Community Fundraising Manager for the charity, said: "It is absolutely fantastic that the students chose Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and are already showing great commitment to their fundraising. As we do not get any Government funding, we rely entirely on the generosity of others to keep this wonderful charity going."

Later, a charity bag pack was arranged at Asda, High Wycombe where the students raised a further £431.60 for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. Lisa Bishop said: "The pupils from Highcrest were a real credit to the school."

Shena Moynihan, Highcrest Principal, said: "As always, I am very proud of the way our pupils are prepared to give freely of their time for good causes. The pupils who took part in the bag pack will be extremely pleased that they raised so much money for this year's chosen charity."

Narrowing the attainment gap

The Bucks Learning Trust is in the process of strategically outlining its thinking about focused interventions to raise standards of educationally underperforming groups in High Wycombe and the 'Wycombe Project' should see the light of day in the not too distant future.

It is very much hoped that local stakeholders will have an input about the type and level of intervention so that parents from economically deprived pockets can feel part of the process, which is aimed at removing the high levels of underachievement by some sections of the community in High Wycombe. The MPA feels that parents need to be engaged and enabled to assist their children in gaining access to all levels of education. This may be one to one tuition for the parents (explaining how schools operate and how parents can organise their homes, so that their children do not lag behind). The MPA also feels that for any intervention programme to succeed it not only needs the support of the stakeholders but is also sustainable, so that the reasons for underachievement do not return in the future, at the levels it has persisted for decades.

Kamran Khan tells us about efforts at Sir William Ramsay School to improve links with parents and the community

The challenge of engaging parents in students' learning is one of the vital steps in unlocking a child's true potential. We know that parents have a desire for their children to succeed and one of the key components in delivering this success is to develop a channel of communication involving parents, students and staff so that they can all take an active part in supporting students in their development.

As part of this process, staff at Sir William Ramsay School have been working to improve their links with parents in the local community. The aims of the group are wide reaching but include improving academic attainment and attendance at parents' evenings. We believe that we should strive to make our school a welcoming environment for students, parents and carers so that they feel confident in the knowledge that we are committed to supporting students at our school.

We are at the beginning of this challenge but all staff at the school are aware of our aims and committed to enhancing the educational outcome for Pakistani origin students in particular. It is our hope that we always communicate with parents to develop their understanding of their child's progress but an equally important part of that conversation is your contribution as parents. Our aim is to develop a continuing dialogue with parents built on the shared belief that this dialogue will serve to improve the chances of students when they move on to their lives beyond school.

There is no better way to communicate than face to face. Our parent consultation evenings allow us to have honest and productive conversations with parents, giving them the chance to share in the success of their children and to support them when identifying ways to make improved progress. We welcome questions from parents and are willing to share our ideas to help your child achieve their potential. Your child's future is something we are all invested in and we are committed to supporting them in achieving their goals. I speak for all staff at Sir William Ramsay School when I say we are prepared to answer any questions and willing to support all students achieve their potential. We look forward to continuing the conversation, face to face, in the near future.

Kamraan Khan

Easter news from Holmer Green Senior School

We come to the end of an extremely successful term at HGSS. From my perspective, as Headteacher, it is a time when the incredibly hard work of the past year is now clearly 'paying dividends – our position in the local performance tables is very healthy and promising indeed. We have also undergone an external review that not only states that we should now be graded 'Good' by Ofsted but agreeing with my claim that we now have the staff in place at HGSS to push on to Outstanding. We certainly have the students for that and I have been more impressed than ever by our current Year 11 and Sixth Form students and their ambition not just to pass their exams but to do so with the highest grades possible.

This Easter we are publishing not one but two publications for parents and the wider community. Do look inside and read about the many opportunities enjoyed by our students this term. In addition our pupils will be taking home a complimentary copy of the Bucks Free Press with a supplement created by our aspiring student-journalists under the editorship of Miss Ramchandani. We are extremely proud of their work and I am sure you will agree with me that it shows HGSS to be the school that we are – a school where people come first and relationships are outstanding.

Michael Jones
Headteacher

Ramadan – in the summer

The month of Ramadan this year (1436AH of the Islamic Calendar) is scheduled to start around 20 June and its end is likely to coincide with the end of the summer term.

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and consequently the Islamic year is about 10 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, (also called the Western calendar and the Christian calendar). During Ramadan Muslims, all over the world, fast daily from dawn to dusk and take as much time as possible for praying, reading the Holy Koran, giving to charity and doing good deeds for others to earn merit for the after life, as during Ramadan, it is stated in the Koran, that the doors leading to the blessings of God are opened, whilst those leading to hellfire are closed.

Fasting during Ramadan, one of the 5 tenets of Islam, (the others being 'Kalma' the declaration that there is only ONE GOD and Mohammed (peace be upon him) is his prophet, 'Nimaz' (regular 5 daily prayers), 'Zikat' (giving to charity) and 'Hajj' (pilgrimage to Makkah) is not mere abstention from eating, drinking and smoking during the period of the fast, but also forces the observer to refrain from being untruthful, unkind, cheat or gossip: otherwise the merit gained through fasting is negated. We are constantly being unsettled by inane problems like traffic and work-related stress, Ramadan comes as a liberating experience. Fasting teaches us that the first step in learning to share is to control one's own urge to consume - a message that has a certain poignancy in this consumer orientated world. The daily fast therefore, is a very strong regulator of the believer's behaviour, without the need for a police force to monitor the situation.

For the Muslim believers Ramadan is a special and holy month which brings spiritual uplift and brings families closer; for most families it is only during Ramadan that the whole family sits together for 'Sehri' (the early morning family meal) and the 'Iftari' (the breaking of the fast at sun set) meals. The daily fast during Ramadan is a good practice and almost all the people who fast during Ramadan find that their daily routines revolve around and become more focused on the fast and its observance. Its impact is positive and huge, the sense of togetherness throughout Ramadan is a wonderful and beneficial experience.

I am often asked about the rules for fasting by children as they very often wish to take part in 'Sehri' and the 'Iftari', and it also seems to give them a purpose and a sense of achievement if they can control their urges for food and drink during the day. My understanding is that fasting during Ramadan is not obligatory for the infirm, those on medication or young children of primary school age. As a first step young children are only encouraged to fast at the week ends or during school holidays or to only 'fast' till lunch time and then refrain from eating their favourite sweets until 'iftari'. The length of the fast during summer (in High Wycombe it can be as long as 18 Hours) is sure to test the resolve of many people and it is going to be very challenging for students sitting GCSE or A level exams.

The 'Sehri' meal ends at twilight and signifies the beginning of the fast each day. The fact that the pre-dawn meal is not only allowed, but also encouraged suggests that fasting is not meant to be simply a feat of physical endurance. It's more about changing ones daily routine by controlling the appetites. Depriving oneself of, say, the bar of chocolate at break-time is a small exercise in self-discipline.

Ramadan adds another dimension to community life. The Mosques in High Wycombe are full during most prayer times and especially for the two hours every evening for special extended prayer service called Tarawih. A very Happy and Rewarding Ramadan to all of you.

Rafiq Raja