

September 2019 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

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.

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. 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.

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, 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.

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 SCC 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 of over £23 million. Products such as baby carriers, strollers, child car seats and electric hot plates have been detained. 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, 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.

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