

September 2017 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Suffolk students celebrate as GCSE results continue to rise

Self-reported statistics from Suffolk schools recently released show that more students in Suffolk have achieved expected levels of GCSE attainment in English and Maths this year. This year, there has been a change to the way that English and Maths GCSEs are graded. Results are now graded from 9 to 1, (previously A to G) with 9 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. The expected standard for pupils to achieve is now a grade 4 and above (previously a C grade and above), with grade 5 considered a 'strong pass'. These changes will be phased in to cover all subjects by 2020. More than 7,000 students in Suffolk were entered for GCSE results. According to provisional results collated from around 80% of schools in Suffolk, 63% of students achieved a grade 4 and above in English and Maths this year. The figures suggest more than 2% more students have achieved the expected standard for English and Maths, compared with last year. Some schools have made significant gains compared to last year:

Ormiston Denes Academy: 20% increase to 53% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and Maths.

Holbrook Academy: 15% increase to 88% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and Maths.

Stowmarket High School: 15% increase to 60% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and Maths.

The self-reported figures also show a significant increase in the number of disadvantaged pupils achieving the threshold measure in English and Maths. Approximately 6% more students in Suffolk achieved this measure this year compared to last year.

More students in Suffolk pass A level exams than across the country

Provisional A level figures show that Suffolk pupils have once again performed well with the number of A*-E grades awarded above the national average. Almost 3,000 pupils were entered for A Levels in Suffolk. Although yet to be verified, the figures show that 98.2% of A levels taken in the county have been awarded an A*-E grade, compared with 97.9% nationally. 77% of A level grades achieved were within the A*-C bracket, in line with national figures and a 1% increase on last year's results. Pass rates remain high across the county, with St Benedict's Catholic School and Newmarket Academy both reporting a 100% pass rate (A*-E grade achieved). Students at Sir John Leman High School made a significant 11% gain in the number of A*-C grades awarded this year, increasing from 71% to 82%.

Energy Efficiency grants now available for local retail businesses in Suffolk

Recent changes to European funding rules mean that retail businesses across Suffolk can access grants for energy efficiency measures. Suffolk County Council is collaborating with Norfolk County Council to use EU funding to support businesses from a range of sectors. A number of shops have already benefitted from free and independent advice and a change in the funding regulations means that shops can now also access grants towards the capital costs of any energy saving measure. The Carbon Trust calculate that taking 20 per cent off the energy spend of any business is equivalent to a 5 per cent increase in sales. One of the businesses already benefitting from the scheme, is Clickers Archery in Norfolk. Owner Graham Harris said: "Business Energy Efficiency Anglia's help has enabled us to reach our long-term goal of carbon saving in a shorter period of time. It would have taken us a few years to generate the funding ourselves but receiving the grant funding through BEE Anglia has accelerated that process." Grants are available for up to a maximum of £20,000, with a minimum of £1,000 for those businesses which take part in the scheme. To date, the Business Energy Efficiency Anglia (BEE Anglia) project has reviewed 371 organisations in Suffolk and Norfolk (156 in Suffolk), identifying cost savings of £2.26m (which equates to £6,146 per business), and carbon savings of 22,371 tonnes (61 tonnes per business). These savings are equivalent to the carbon used in 6,648 flights from London to Sydney. This initiative is not just about identifying savings. BEE Anglia has so far awarded over £118,000 in grant funding for various energy efficiency projects in Suffolk including radiant heating, vehicle tracking, wood burners and more efficient lighting. The BEE Anglia project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and is being delivered across the region through a partnership of Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, Groundwork and NWES. The project has three core offers that have been designed to help businesses reduce carbon and save money using independent advice. Energy experts will visit the business' premises to conduct a free, impartial and independent review that identifies the best cost and carbon saving opportunities. Businesses interested in any aspect of this service can find out more and register online at www.beeanglia.org or call Groundwork on 01473 350370. Dedicated advisors will be able to answer any queries about eligibility for the programme or potential grant projects.

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