

COUNCIL: 26 NOVEMBER 2020

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS STATEMENT

AGENDA ITEM:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Members will be aware that Nick Batchelar retired from his role as the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning at the end of October after more than seven years in the role. Education in Cardiff has seen significant improvements since August 2013 when Nick took on the role, including Cardiff's removal from Estyn improvements in 2016 and the opening of nine new schools as part of the 21st Century Schools programme.

Other landmark projects have included the delivery of Cardiff Commitment, and the launches of Cardiff 2020 and Cardiff 2030 – Cardiff's vision for education. Nick also championed Cardiff's ambition to become a Unicef Child Friendly City, working with partners in a cohesive approach to put children and young people at the heart of the city. It has been a personal pleasure to work with Nick since I became the Cabinet Member for Education.

Nick leaves a proud record of achievement, and a strong platform for his successor to build on. I would like to thank him for his work during his time here, and wish him and his family all the very best on his retirement.

I am pleased to welcome Melanie Godfrey, who started work with the Council on 16th November 2020, as the new Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and I look forward to working with her to take forward our Capital Ambition commitments, Cardiff 2030 agenda and School Organisation Planning programme.

Qualifications Assessment Arrangements in Wales 2021

On 10th November 2020, the Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams MS, confirmed Wales' approach for qualifications in 2021 and her decision that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels. In place of exams, the Welsh Government intends to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments, which should include assessments that will be externally set and marked, but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision. The Minister's expectation is that this work will form the basis for centre-based outcomes, which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales.

Primary School Admissions

Applications for Reception places in primary schools for admission in September 2021 opened on 16 November 2020 and a new campaign has been launched to provide guidance to parents applying for a place. It is extremely important that parents complete their application correctly and apply on time by the closing date of Monday 11th January 2021 in order to have the best possible chance of securing a place in one of their preferred schools.

The School Admissions team has developed an information film setting out 7 tips to assist families by explaining how the admissions process works, the importance of using all preferences available to them and why they should apply on time. This is available in several languages, including Arabic, Czech, Romanian, Portuguese, Polish, Somali and Bengali, and is available to view on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqFFf-qb0HU>

Digital Devices for Pupils and Teachers

10,000 new Chromebook devices are being distributed to schools across the city by the end of the autumn term to help schools with online and blended learning, whilst children may be affected by absence due to Covid-19.

4,800 Chromebooks will be delivered to schools over the next few weeks with the remainder being delivered towards the end of November. The 10,000 have been allocated broadly on the basis that every primary and secondary school will receive a year group set, with some additional devices being given to central support teams (e.g. Educated Other Than At School) for use with those pupils. By the end of term every school should receive a full year group set of Chromebooks (half in the initial batch and the other half from the second batch). The Chromebooks will be distributed to all primary and secondary schools.

These Chromebooks are in addition to the 6,500 digital devices and 2,000 4G broadband devices which have already been provided to children and young people in Cardiff who have been identified as digitally deprived and 3,000 digital devices provided to teaching staff, since the beginning of the first national lockdown in March.

Tablet Gifting Scheme

Following several successful funding bids, the Digital Skills team, which is part of the Adult Learning service, is now able to offer free tablet devices with internet access to individuals in Cardiff on a low income who do not have a access to devices at home. The funding is allowing the team to support those people by enabling them to stay connected with the services they need, as well as maintaining social connections to support their well-being. The tablets will be pre-loaded with apps, shortcuts and information on digital activities and council support services, including online Adult Learning courses and training, Digital Job Club with Into Work Services and a host of health and well-being activities hosted by the Hubs and Libraries service.

There are a limited number of tablets available, but further work is being carried out to expand the scheme further. Applications for this scheme are subject to eligibility and are open only to Cardiff residents who meet the following criteria:

- Those who do not have access to a digital device or broadband at home; AND

- Their health and wellbeing is suffering as they feel isolated OR they want to access training or look for work online; AND
- They are in receipt of benefits or on a low income.

Eligible Cardiff residents can apply for a tablet by contacting the Council's Adviceline on (029) 2087 1071.

Advanced Thinking School

Danescourt Primary School has been recognised by the University of Exeter as an Advanced Thinking School. This is an important milestone for the school on a journey that has involved the whole school community over the past seven years. It is the result of a tremendous amount of hard work put in by Claire Lawton, Cognitive Lead, and the school's 'Think Tank' team in leading this project for the school.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills
19 November 2020