

COUNCIL: 29 JUNE 2023

DEPUTY LEADER & EDUCATION STATEMENT

Universal Free School Meals

Following the Universal Primary Free School Meal offer to all Year 1 pupils in Cardiff from April 2023, I am pleased to confirm that, as advised previously, from 5 June 2023, all Year 2 pupils are now being offered a free school meal. The Education Catering Team uploaded menus and made adjustments to ParentPay during the Whitsun half-term school holiday to enable Year 2 pupils to access their free school meal.

Facilitating the roll-out across all primary schools in Cardiff presents challenges as each school is different. In addition to issues around space and capacity at many school sites, the Council is also having to address the impact of ongoing supply chain issues and current workforce pressures, including the recruitment of suitable staff into our kitchen workforce. In addition to the normal recruitment routes, the Education Catering Team has been working with schools to advertise and promote these employment opportunities within their local communities.

Estyn Inspections

A total of 19 schools in Cardiff have been inspected by Estyn during the current 2022/23 academic year (three Secondary Schools, twelve Primary Schools and four Special Schools; with five of these being part of Federations), with a further two Primary School inspections also due to be undertaken this month. The inspection reports published to date have included a total of 51 recommendations. Estyn has also requested eight of the schools that have been inspected to provide information to support 13 interesting or innovative practice case studies. The Estyn inspections have resulted in one school being categorised as requiring 'Significant Improvement', three schools being categorised as subject to 'Estyn Review', with 13 schools not requiring any follow up.

Qualifications Arrangements 2022/23

Qualification Wales has confirmed that it will continue to support learners in Wales as they continue the return to pre-pandemic exams. The journey back to pre-pandemic GCSE, AS and A Level arrangements continues for this summer's exam series, with exams taking place again during May and June 2023. Non-examination assessments have already been completed in many subjects. Some changes have also been made to provide extra support for learners in the form of advance information, together with a supportive grading approach.

Advance information to support learners has included an indication of the topics, themes, texts, or other content that they can expect in their exams. This meant that learners had some information on what will be assessed before the exams took place and, as a result, this enabled them to focus their exam revision. The information provided was different for each subject, but it should help the pupils prepare for their GCSE, AS and A Level exams. It is not possible to provide advance information for the Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications; however, permanent changes have been made to these qualifications, whereby learners will not need to complete as many challenges as they did before the Covid-19 pandemic.

For GCSEs, AS and A Levels provided by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), results will be broadly midway between those awarded in 2019 (the last year before the pandemic) and 2022 (the first year that learners sat exams as we emerged from the pandemic). This means that when the WJEC awards grades, the process will continue to provide learners with some extra support or safety net. It also means that, for each subject, results are likely to be higher than they were in 2019, and lower than they were in 2022.

Preparing for exams and assessments can be a difficult time for learners and their school or college. It can also be challenging for their parents and carers. I am sure that members will join me in wishing all our learners the best of luck for this summer's exams and, again, in thanking our school staff for all the work and support they provide ahead of, and during, exams.

Opening of New Schools in 2023/24 Academic Year

The new Fitzalan High School is on track to open at the start of the new academic year in September 2023, as well as the new St Mellon's Church in Wales and Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary Schools.

School Visits

During April and May 2023, I visited a number of Cardiff schools and attend various events. I would like to thank firstly the pupils and staff at Stacey Primary School who gave me a very warm welcome at the end of April.

On 4 May, I joined pupils at Ninian Park Primary School for a Coronation Tea Party and was delighted to have the opportunity to plant a tree in their wonderful school garden.

On 9 May, I was also pleased to attend Mount Stuart Primary School with my Cabinet colleague, Councillor Julie Sangani, for the unveiling of the new Betty Campbell mural to commemorate Wales's first black headteacher. The 10-metre-tall mural was painted by Bradley Rmer and was made possible with support from the school's governing body and funding from Cardiff University.

In addition, on 12 May, I ran with some of the pupils at Radyr Primary School when I joined them during their Mini-London Marathon event and also visited Eastern High School.

Passport to the City – Cardiff Children’s University

I was delighted to attend a graduation ceremony at Cardiff University’s Centre for Student Life on 22 June 2023 for pupils from Holy Family, Radnor, St Mary the Virgin, St Joseph’s, St Peter’s, St Philip Evans, Severn and Windsor Clive Primary Schools who have participated in the Passport to the City – Cardiff Children’s University programme this year, which is supported by the Council’s formal partnership agreement with Cardiff University. Over the last few months, pupils have visited many of the city’s landmarks and had the chance to participate in various extra-curricular activities. I was pleased to be able to congratulate them all on their graduation.

The Cardiff’s Passport to the City programme aims to encourage and develop a love of learning by providing pupils with access to a range of activities, including art and music, science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), as well as cultural and graphic design courses. It also supports our ‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’ and Corporate Plan commitments to roll-out and scale up the programme and ensure that children and young people growing up in Cardiff can enjoy, experience and make the most of the great things this city has to offer.

Supported Employment Pathway

I am pleased to advise members that pupils are excelling on the supported employment pathway, which was formerly known as Project Search. The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Post-16 Team is incredibly proud of their 2022/23 cohort of students who are now halfway through their supported employment pathway with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB). One student who has particularly impressed staff at the UHB due to their work ethic, motivation and desire to succeed has been highlighted by their supervisor. This student is placed in the Hospital Sterilisation & Disinfection Unit where they work alongside other staff responsible for ensuring that reusable medical devices are cleaned, sterilised, and repackaged to high standards ready for re-using in operating theatres and other areas of health care. The student has been supported to apply for paid bank work within the Unit and it is hoped that, on completion of the supported employment pathway, a position will become available for which they can apply.

After weeks of planning, the Cardiff Commitment Team is delighted that three pupils have started their flexible supported employment pathway in Llanishen High School’s kitchen with the school’s catering staff. Pupils have been learning how to prepare food; monitor temperatures of food items; make fruit pots, panini and cookies, and fill fridges and restock shelves. On completion of the placement, the pupils will have the opportunity to apply to work with the Education Catering Team to deliver the summer Food & Fun programme. I want to thank the Education Catering, Health & Safety, Post-16 Inclusion and Cardiff Commitment Teams for helping to make this happen.

Green Skills Project

In May 2023, the Cardiff Commitment launched its Green Skills project with primary school pupils in the east of the city as part of their transition to high school. 230 pupils participated in this collaborative pilot project, which is focused on promoting and developing green skills and future career opportunities linked to the construction and energy sectors.

Hospitality Showcase Event

Earlier this month, the Cardiff Commitment and Cardiff West Community High School hosted a hospitality showcase event to launch the school's hospitality engagement project. The launch provided an exciting insight into the hospitality industry through interactive learning and exploration with Cardiff Commitment professionals and industry partners. Pupils, parents/carers and teachers were able to engage with colleagues, ask questions and find out more about potential pathways into a career in hospitality, try out fun activities like cake decorating and tastebud tests, whilst pupils served refreshments and showcased their hospitality learning. Thank you to all of the Cardiff Commitment partners who contributed, including Cardiff and Vale College, Clayton Hotel, Cardiff City Football Club, Compass Group, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Vale Resort.

Following this event, the Cardiff Commitment will be working with Ms Chivers, the Catering & Hospitality Subject Lead, to provide site visits, workshops, job shadowing and curriculum enrichment via Cardiff Commitment partners for pupils to gain authentic learning experiences. Pupils will also participate in the Junior Chef Academy delivered in partnership with Cardiff and Vale College and Compass Cymru. This will see 20 Cardiff West Community High School pupils (aged 14-16) offered an opportunity to take part in a 10-week programme to develop their culinary skills and understanding of the industry. This programme will be concluded with a graduation event where pupils will cook a three-course meal for attendees.

The 'Diff Diaries

During the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period in 2020, the Cardiff Commitment developed the 'Diff Diaries, which provided an online space to capture the voices of children and young people across the city at a time when they were unable to leave their homes except for an hour a day. The curation of the entries was passed to the Museum of Cardiff at the end of the pandemic and will, from this month, be displayed in the City Lab Gallery. At the launch event that was held on 9 June 2023, I was pleased to meet and award those pupils who participated in the 'Diff Diaries. I would highly recommend a visit to the Museum of Cardiff to see the display.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education
23 June 2023