



# **LOCAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT REPORT (RUNNYMEDE): 2002-2003 ACADEMIC YEAR**

## **SUMMARY**

This report highlights past and future issues relating to educational attainment of pupils within the borough.

## **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Local Members can use the discussion to identify strategies to further facilitate the improvement of education within Runnymede through their support of schools and/or pupil groups. Feedback on key issues can, if necessary, be taken to the Children & Young Peoples' Select Committee (date to be arranged) for consideration in the next Educational Development Plan cycle.

The committee should consider whether schools would welcome further contact from Local Members to discuss issues that need to be addressed during the coming year and which the members can help with.

## **SCHOOL & PUPIL ATTAINMENT WITHIN RUNNYMEDE**

Educational attainment within Runnymede cannot be separated from the economic and social characteristics within its borders and those of the surrounding areas. On one hand, indicators of economic disadvantage can show parts of Runnymede to be advantaged. For instance, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals can be below the national average, and the percentage of adults with higher qualifications can be above average, as can the percentage of the population in 'higher' social classes. However, in some local areas disadvantaged communities sit next to, and contrast sharply with, more advantaged neighbourhoods.

When studying the attainment of schools within Runnymede it must be remembered that, often, but not exclusively, high levels of social or economic disadvantage can lead to low levels of attainment. Schools in such areas may have to cater for a very wide range of additional pupil needs and therefore may find it difficult to improve. Low pupil numbers, which lead to budgetary pressures, sometimes compound their difficulties. The effect of parental choice can make the contrast of schools even more marked, as well as adding to transport difficulties in the area.

The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is low in Surrey. The spread across ethnic minority groups is similar to the national average, except that there are relatively few black pupils (e.g. those of African or Caribbean origin). However, some of the schools in and around Runnymede have a higher percentage of pupils with English as an additional language. In general, the learning of pupils with English as an additional language is good. Although their early attainment may be relatively low, evidence suggests they usually catch up over time.

In Surrey a slightly higher than usual percentage of pupils are taught in special schools at primary level. At secondary age the percentage is well above average. Runnymede, like Surrey, also has an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Runnymede has 2 special schools, however, the fact that the schools specialise in helping pupils with moderate learning difficulties and emotional & behavioural difficulties means that pupils may travel in from quite a large part of Surrey and may not therefore live in Runnymede. At the same time, Runnymede children may travel out of the borough in order to be taught in schools which cater for their particular needs if they are different to those catered for in Runnymede special schools (e.g. severe learning difficulties, autism etc.).

There are approximately 10,100 pupils in maintained schools within Runnymede. This is a large number but remains the smallest pupil cohort of all the Surrey boroughs. Pupils attending maintained schools in Runnymede can choose from among 10 Infant schools, 5 Junior schools, 9 Primary schools, and 4 secondary schools, as well as the 2 special schools mentioned earlier. Unsurprisingly, given the relatively small number of pupils, this is the smallest number of schools in a Surrey borough.

Runnymede schools generally function well in terms of their overall performance and management. However, Runnymede has one school in special measures. Schools in special measures have been judged as failing in certain critical areas and require intensive additional support from the County Council - which has a good reputation for helping schools come off special measures within a relatively short period. Runnymede also has a school designated as having Serious Weaknesses, which is also being given comprehensive support. However, this school is considered to have made significant progress and is awaiting its next Ofsted inspection to confirm that it has recovered enough to be taken off the register for schools needing support.

Overall, the Runnymede schools provide a good service. The strengths of the schools in the area are shown most clearly in the new 'value added' calculations provided by the government in their performance tables. Whilst the overall level of attainment by pupils in Runnymede is often not very high compared to neighbouring boroughs or adjacent authorities, the pupils make good progress. At Key Stage 2, 43% of Runnymede schools are deemed to have pupils who progress more than expected (which places these schools in the top 25% or performers nationally). Another 35.7% have pupils whose progress is 'broadly average'. At Key Stages 3 and 4, 4 out of the 5 schools included in the performance tables (the total includes 4 secondary schools and 1 special school) were deemed to provide progress for pupils that was 'broadly average' and therefore acceptable.

Whilst a couple of schools appear to have less healthy Value Added scores, this does not mean that these schools are not doing a good job. One of the weaknesses of the national Value Added analysis is that it does not take into account factors that mean pupils would not be expected to make as much progress as others (e.g. they have a learning disability, other special educational need, or have English as an additional language, etc.). Independent Surrey calculations for these secondary schools indicate that they are often doing well given the composition of their pupils' learning needs.

## **ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE:**

### **Confederations:**

Runnymede schools, like those in the rest of Surrey, have been offered an opportunity to work in confederations. It is hoped that this will allow schools to more effectively pool resources, share skills and staff, and to streamline the passage of pupils from primary to secondary phases.

School support for confederations is very strong within some areas of Surrey. For instance where virtually all of the Spelthorne schools are committing themselves to promoting confederated working. The main benefit of confederation is perceived to be the co-ordination of the use of multi professional support. Formalisation of the confederations will proceed over the coming year.

At present there appears to have been a mixed reception to the idea of confederations within Runnymede schools. Some schools have already embraced the idea of joint partnership working and have become part of the Chertsey Partnership. This was originally set up between three schools but has expanded over recent years. The partnership functions very much as a confederation already. Obviously, the negotiation processes involved in

increasing the pooling of resources is at an early stage for many of the other schools in Runnymede. Further updates can be provided to the Local Committee in the future.

### **Teacher Recruitment:**

Teacher recruitment remains an issue in many parts of Surrey. This issue is often more pronounced in those areas that border the London boroughs because prospective workers often prefer to work in those neighbouring areas as the wages are higher. Schools can also encounter difficulties due to housing costs, and due to the fact that school budget problems can mean it is difficult to organise attractive packages for new staff.

Surrey County Council has set up projects within the Education Development Plan to help alleviate the problem. FourS (the traded company newly set up to provide school support) is currently implementing these.

### **Budget:**

Budgets for Runnymede schools will be a key issue in the coming year. Due to Government legislation the funding system of schools has changed. The new system was not as coherent as Surrey County Council would have liked. Whilst the new system directed more money towards needy areas it has been problematic because it has meant that there could be sudden changes in the amounts a school received. This has impacted on the feasibility of long-term projects in some schools.

Due to the impact of teacher pay rises the relative amount of money available for schools to use on non-salary items has reduced. Therefore, without the government providing additional funds there will be relatively less money even for the needy areas that the funding system was set up to address. As the second phase of threshold payments for staff cut in, Runnymede schools will be experiencing very tight budgets. The pressure on budgets will be particularly acute for schools with unfilled places (see also Admissions section).

The situation is made more acute because schools will have to balance their books next year. Some schools have had deficits this year which Surrey County Council has been able to underwrite due to having enough resources to provide a 'fall back'. However, next year the Council will have no funds left to do this again.

School budgeting for secondary schools with sixth forms can have the added complication that the Learning & Skills Council, which disseminates funds, does not do it in a way that allows schools to plan ahead. Government regulations are attempting to ensure this changes so that 3 year planning is possible. However, some schools remain sceptical about the effectiveness of these regulations.

### **Admissions:**

There are two main issues regarding future planning for admissions; falling birth rate and possible changes to the admissions system.

In the next 10 years it is predicted that the falling birth rate in Surrey will mean that careful management of school places is required. The impact will be felt first in the primary phase but will eventually reach the secondary schools. In

Runnymede, the falling birth rate and other demographic changes mean there will almost certainly be a surplus of school places but priority is currently being given to reviewing other parts of the County were the problem is greater.

One of these areas is Woking and as this is adjacent to Runnymede it is appropriate to report progress in respect of that review. There have been a number of exploratory meetings with Headteachers, school Governors and local County Councillors. There are currently no proposals for change but it is possible that options will be developed in the coming months. Options for change will be subject to a consultation process with schools, County Councillors and the public.

Furthermore, pupil numbers in secondary schools are predicted to fall in the next 10 years and Surrey County Council therefore needs to consider the long-term impact on the organisation of secondary schools from Guildford, through Woking to South Runnymede.

The County Council Executive agreed at its meeting on 11 November 2003 to support the Executive Director, Children & Young People, in setting up a working group to consider options for the future pattern of secondary school provision in the area. A full consultation exercise with schools and then the public will follow. This is currently being developed with Headteachers, Governors and other bodies with consultation planned for the summer. All Local Committees affected by the consultation will be consulted in the summer.

The prospective changes to the school admission process for September 2005 may also impact on Elmbridge schools. Surrey County Council recently sent out a consultation document for parents to gather their views about improvements that can be made. Discussion will centre on the benefits of changing the system from one where parents rank three schools in order of preference to one where the three schools selected are given equal weighting. It is intended that a report detailing the results will be presented to the Executive of the County Council on 2 March.

### **Truancy Patrols:**

Truancy patrols undertaken jointly by Education Welfare Officers and the Police are continuing to have an impact on school attendance. Further patrols are planned and each area of the County will receive one patrol per term: additional patrols are arranged where there are identified needs.

The following table shows simple data about the number of pupils stopped in Runnymede. The data for 9/03 – 12/03 is for part of the academic year. For 2001/2 and 2003/4 (past year) truancy in Runnymede appears to have been the lowest in the County. For 2002/3 the sample was small and the data is therefore skewed.

Years	No's Stopped	% Truancing	Variation by Borough
2001/2	92	10%	10 – 59%
9/02 – 7/03	66	45%	20 – 48%
9/03 – 12/03	18	11%	11 – 73%

### **WHAT CAN THE LOCAL COMMITTEE DO?**

Local Members are often governors for schools, however schools in Runnymede may welcome a commitment from Local Members to visit their schools or to arrange some meetings to discuss issues which are important to them and which members can provide effective advocacy on.

Runnymede Local Members may wish to support Surrey's arguments that it requires more cash for schools. The present governmental system of directing cash away from the South East could be questioned.

Members will need to be aware of the pressure that some Runnymede schools will have to balance their books and eliminate deficits. It may be useful for members to facilitate the discussion between schools as to how participating in confederations could be of use. Confederation would allow schools to share budgets so that funds could be used more effectively.

### **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION:**

For further statistical and field knowledge information about Surrey attainment Local Members should read the forthcoming Children & Young Peoples School Performance Report (2002-2003 academic year). This provides a detailed analysis of performance in Surrey schools. The report is scheduled for release in March

Information regarding pupil groups such as those with special educational needs will be covered in the separate report entitled "Children's Services educational support "

The Local Education Officer and a school consultant from FourS will be present at the Local Committee meeting to provide more field knowledge and to answer questions that Local Members may have.

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