

ASSOCIATION NEWS – SUMMER 2016

Concern Over Key Stage 2 Assessment and Results Notification

There has for some time been a general concern regarding the changes both to the Primary and to the Secondary Curriculum. However, whilst accepting that some changes were necessary, the rate of their implementation was the real issue – given that any alterations to the demands placed upon Year 11 students had to be the cumulative effect of 12 years of schooling it should ideally have taken far longer to bed these changes in. However this was never going to be permitted so we are only beginning to witness the effects of such changes. This Summer saw the impact upon Key Stage 2 and there have been strong criticisms of the tests set this year. Whilst it was always going to be inevitable that the demands placed would have been higher, what was sadly missing were any realistic opportunities for the less able students to get far into the papers.

The key word here is differentiation, whereby there should be enough challenge in the papers as set to stretch the most able whilst at the same time giving weaker students the chance to show what they had learned; it was this latter element that was most significantly in short supply. One of our Head Teachers had sent an open letter to the then Secretary of State for Education and to the Schools Minister complaining about this and we have followed this up with correspondence to both but copied to the four Borough Members of Parliament – we did receive a response from the Schools Minister but it failed to impress us.

When the results were then subsequently communicated to schools in July we all heard that, nationally, only 53% had met the required standard – we have yet to obtain the comparable figure for Dudley schools. However the documentation that listed the results and which went out to families has proved so unsatisfactory that we have felt it necessary to lodge complaints once again. Many, but not all, schools found it useful to provide parents with separate information in an attempt to clarify what the results actually meant; for instance in defining the results of the tests themselves a total of 13 abbreviations have been used and some of these appear to duplicate one another – for example a test result might be “B” which indicates “Working below the level of the test” or “NS” which is defined as “Not achieved standard” but what is the difference? It seems equally remarkable that the result might be “H” to indicate “Pupil cheating” or “Q” for “Maladministration”. If the system is meant to make things more straightforward for parents, it fails miserably. We will keep members up-to-date with this aspect in the future and with ministerial responses to our concerns.

As far as GCSE is concerned we will have to cope with two systems over the next few years as changes have been staggered – some subjects will be graded with the new “9 to 1” system this Summer whilst others will retain the A*, A, B, C etc – each year more subjects will convert to the new system and examination certificates will therefore show a mix of the

two for the next two or three years. At the time of writing these notes the GCSE results have not yet been published so there is nothing extra to addas yet !!!!

Who is Responsible for Education and Inspection?

In July, there have been many changes as to who is Minister for Education and as to who is the Shadow Minister that five different people have had one or other of those titles in this one month alone. Currently the Minister is Justine Greening who replaced Michael Gove's successor Nicky Morgan whilst Angela Rayner is the Shadow Minister (Pat Glass having lasted only two days in that role after Lucy Powell resigned). By the time this Newsletter is read all of this could well have changed yet again !!!!

As far as Ofsted is concerned Sir Michael Wilshaw completes his term as Chief Inspector at the end of the calendar year and is to be replaced by Amanda Spielman who currently chairs the examinations regulator Ofqual. Although her appointment was formally made by the Privy Council on July 19th it was criticized earlier both by teachers' unions NUT and ATL as well as by the House of Commons cross-party Select Committee on education. The reasons for the concern were that Ms Spielman had no teaching experience at all (whereas Sir Michael had been a Head Teacher) and that, according to the Select Committee she "lacked passion for the role". In fact, although never having taught, she is a senior figure in the Ark Academy chain and so does have some understanding of secondary education; nevertheless she seems to have little or no experience in respect of Early Years, Primary education or Further Education and is reported to be weak in the area of child protection. Only time will tell of course but it seems certain that her work will be under much scrutiny. It is perhaps worth noting that Ian Austin MP (Dudley North) is a member of the Select Committee referred to earlier.

Meeting with James Morris MP

Members met with the Member for Halesowen and Rowley Regis at Halesbury School at 7.00 pm on Friday April 29th and discussed with him many aspects of the recently-released Government White Paper "Educational Excellence Everywhere". Although he defended the paper, there was strong criticism by members of certain of its contents, in particular that all schools were to be obliged to become academies by no later than 2022; all present (with no abstention) indicated their belief that this was not an appropriate way forward. Significantly the Education Minister (Nicky Morgan at the time) announced a short while later that this part of the White Paper was to be dropped – following criticisms from numerous sources and not only from ourselves.

This Years Healthy Lifestyle Competition

This annual event led to there being several hundred entries and the winners and their families attended the Awards Ceremony in early June. Deanne Fishbourne, Interim Lead for Educational Outcomes presented the prizes and the DAGB Healthy Lifestyle shields to the

two schools, St Mary's CE Primary and Hillcrest Secondary School and Community College which had dominated the entries.

Valete et Salve

We are sorry to be losing Deanne Fishbourne who has been with us for a year as Interim Lead for Educational Outcomes but welcome, in her stead, Suzanne Edwards who takes on the substantive role.

Thanks

At the end of the academic year thanks are due to all those who have supported the Association, to members of the Executive, to all those who serve as DAGB representatives in schools throughout the Borough, not forgetting staff at Westox House and our friends through the National Governors Association.

Brian Patterson,
Chair DAGB