

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Mohon Ali  
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

This report provides an update on the main activity since the last Council meeting relating to portfolio responsibilities.

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### 1. SEND and Inclusion

I am pleased to report that during the recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), Oldham Council's education services were given significant praise. This included the effectiveness of alternative education provision, and oversight of children missing education, those that are electively home educated and those educated other than at school. Additionally, the education provided to children looked after through the Council's virtual school, and the support given to children through our education advisory services, were also identified as strengths.

### 2. Quality of Education

I can report that for the second time this year, chief executives of multi academy trusts operating in Oldham met with elected members, the Council chief executive and the director of children's services. These meetings signal a real desire across all education partners to work jointly to continue to improve outcomes for our young people. The discussion centered around:

- A joint vision for education in Oldham.
- Approaches to improving attendance.
- Ensuring schools are as inclusive as possible.

Recent Ofsted inspection outcomes have broadly maintained the positive borough trend. In the secondary sector, I was disappointed to see Saddleworth School being graded as Requires Improvement. However, I was reassured to see within the inspection report recognition for the work the leadership team is already doing to make further improvements. I was delighted to see both The Radclyffe School and Crompton House School graded as Good.

In the primary sector, both Christ Church (Denshaw) and Oasis Limeside Academy were graded as Requires Improvement. However, St Hilda's, South Failsworth Community Primary, Beal Vale Primary, Limehurst Community Primary School and Royton Hall Primary School were all graded as Good. Inspection outcomes across Oldham's primary schools are currently at a historic high. Oldham's special schools continue to be a real strength, with Hollinwood Academy maintaining its Outstanding grade and the Springboard Project being graded Good at first inspection.

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## Attendance

As mentioned above, the Council's work to improve school attendance was recognised by Ofsted during the recent ILACS. Additionally, our innovative methods to analyse school attendance data to enable schools to support families have also been recognised by the Children's Commissioner. Oldham is now leading a piece of work on behalf of the Commissioner across Greater Manchester to share and spread our best practice. I look forward to hosting a visit by the Commissioner to Oldham during the summer.

## School Places

Although there has been a slight reduction in first preference rates for secondary school places this year, there has been an increase in the top three preference rate. Both first and top 3 preferences have improved this year for primary school places.

Primary 2024 preference rates:	Secondary 2024 preference rates:
1st preference 94.1% (2023 92.9%)	1st preference 75.7% (2023 80.4 %)
Top 3 preference 98.1% (2023 96.6%)	Top 3 preference 94.5% (2023 94.1%)

## Virtual School

There are currently 410 Children Looked After (CLA) in the virtual school. It has been fantastic to see the range of activities the virtual school has arranged for these young people. During May half term holidays, the Virtual School ran two programmes: Year 6 children visited the Anderton Outdoor Activity Centre run by Bolton University and Year 7 children completed 'An Introduction to First Aid' course. All children engaged well, developing new skills, confidence, and new friends.

## Music Service

The Youth Brass Band performed at the International Inner Wheel Convention in Manchester's Central Convention Complex on Friday 10 May. The Youth Brass Band were exceptional ambassadors for the borough. The band also performed as part of the Saddleworth Whit Friday band contests on 24 May. They received a warm reception at each of the villages and once again, impressed by all that heard them.

## 3. Employment and Skills

The Oldham Employment and Skills Board will launch its strategy and delivery plan in July 2024. This work will be reported to the Oldham Economic Board. Additionally, the Atom Valley Innovation Roadmap will be presented at the next Atom Valley Skills Board meeting to support the curriculum development that will drive the inward investment needed to secure advanced manufacturing and materials companies in Oldham.

Empower Oldham is our programme to support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to re-engage in activity. I can report that, through this programme, mental health advisors are now in post and will offer packages of support to young people through both online and group work. Additionally, our partners at Job Centre Plus have re-instated a Youth Coach based within the Council's Get Oldham Working service. The Oldham Youth Hub offer continues to co-ordinate and communicate all these support services to young people across Oldham.

Last year our inaugural Oldham careers fair for young people was a huge success. I am proud that Oldham Council will again be working with our partners to run this event in 2024. The provisional date is 24 September 2024, and I am confident that this will again be a great opportunity to showcase the exciting range of career options our young people in Oldham can benefit from.

With regards to adult education more broadly, so far this year Oldham Council's Lifelong Learning Service have enrolled 2,158 residents and have achieved a 99% pass rate. Once again this is an outstanding performance by this service; they continue to provide our residents with a range of opportunities to realise their personal ambitions. I will be celebrating the achievements of our learners at a celebration event on 16 July.

**Recommendations:** Council is requested to note the report.