

## Portfolio Report

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

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

### Education

Results days are some of the proudest moments in the education calendar. This summer, I joined colleagues to celebrate with our young people across schools and colleges on their GCSE and A-Level results days. It was inspiring to see the talent, determination, and ambition of Oldham's learners as they move on to exciting new destinations. The initial indications are that broad GCSE attainment will remain as strong as in 2024 and that Oldham pupils have achieved better A' levels than in previous years.

The Key Stage 2 SAT results for Reading, Writing and Maths show that 2,073 children met the expected standard. That's an improvement of 2.2% in the borough compared with national improvement of 1.1%. I'm particularly pleased by the improvements made this year by boys and children with free school meals. It's a reflection of the incredible hard work of our children, teachers, and school leaders.

Ofsted inspections this term have brought more good news, with positive reports at The Oldham Academy North, Brian Clarke, EACT Royton & Crompton, Kingsland PRU, and a range of successful inspections across our primary schools. These results show that the quality of education in Oldham is going from strength to strength.

On attendance, we continue to lead the way:

- Secondary attendance is up 0.6% on last year - the best of all 11 statistical neighbours.
- Primary attendance is up 0.4% - ranking 3rd of 11.
- Special school attendance is up 0.8%.

This is a major achievement, and I thank everyone who has worked tirelessly to make sure our children are in school, learning, and thriving.

### SEND and Inclusion

Oldham is once again at the forefront of change, shaping the national SEND reforms and leading the way in inclusion. Over the summer, we continued testing Year 3 of the SEND reforms, including the launch of our new Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO). This initiative is already providing practical advice and hands-on support to schools, strengthening mainstream inclusion and ensuring more children can thrive in local classrooms.

Work to expand and improve alternative provision is also progressing strongly. Primary and secondary outreach services are now in place, and I am proud to share that we are developing a partnership with Oldham Athletic — an exciting collaboration that will provide targeted, positive opportunities for children who need a different kind of support.

At the same time, our SEND Capital Provision Strategy continues at pace. We are now in Phase 3, with expressions of interest out to schools for new Additional Resource Provisions (ARP) and upgrades to existing SEND provision. These investments mean more local specialist places, stronger inclusive settings, and better outcomes for children and families in Oldham.

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## **Music Service**

Oldham's young musicians have once again been a source of immense pride. Over the summer, the Music Service delivered an extensive programme of performances — from national and Saddleworth band contests to vibrant town centre showcases as part of Festival Oldham. These events not only highlighted the exceptional talent of our young people but also the cultural richness that makes Oldham such a special place.

## **Post-16 and Skills**

Oldham is determined to give every young person and adult the skills and opportunities they need to succeed.

I am pleased to report that the proportion of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has fallen again — down to 4.63% in June 2025, compared to 4.96% in May. This steady improvement shows the difference our collective efforts are making. This figure is still too high, however, and I have asked officers to develop an improvement plan.

The Empower Oldham programme continues to support young people to overcome barriers and move into education, training, or work. Positive Steps is now developing an evidence base to demonstrate its impact on NEET figures, helping to secure the case for future GMCA funding.

We have also secured a significant share of investment from the GMCA's £10 million capital fund — with Oldham College receiving £437,000 to increase capacity by 180 places over two years. This is a strong signal of confidence in Oldham's post-16 offer and will directly benefit local learners.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for a revamped Careers Event in November, which will connect our young people with Greater Manchester and Oldham employers, raising ambition and opening doors to new opportunities. At the same time, the Employment & Skills Strategy will be launched at the Get Oldham Working Summit — setting out a bold vision for skills in our borough.

The Lifelong Learning Learner and Volunteering Celebration Event took place in July. Over 100 people came together to celebrate the achievements of 42 learners and to honour 18 volunteers who have given their time as learning support workers and tutors. Their stories are a reminder of the power of lifelong learning and the community spirit that runs through Oldham.

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