

NQT Welcome Event 10.09.14

Welcome to Brighton & Hove

Dr Jo Lyons, Assistant Director, Children's Services (Education & Inclusion)

I'd like to wish you a warm welcome on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to your new role in Brighton & Hove. We are delighted so many of you have chosen this place to start your career. Brighton & Hove is an amazing place to live and work. As a qualified teacher I still believe being a teacher is one of the best professions and career choices you could make. To have the opportunity to make a difference for children and young people of Brighton & Hove through quality teaching and learning and raising aspirations for every young person is a privilege and essential part of making Brighton & Hove the best place for children and young people to grow up.

We have high aspirations for our children & young people and high expectations of schools and you as teachers. We want all our schools to be good and outstanding. We want all our teachers to be the very best.

I am sure you are now quite rightly focussing all your attention on your teaching and the children in your classrooms and your school. But I think it is important that you understand a bit about the wider context in which you are now working. Understanding how schools work together and with others to provide services for children & young people to meet their additional needs is an important part of the role.

We recognise that some of you work in academies, independent schools and a few of you are from outside the authority. Whatever the setting you're in, you will all want to ensure that you have high expectations of the children and young people you teach and understand how they can access extra help and support if they need it.

In Brighton & Hove all services that have a role in supporting children & young people (education, social care, health etc) work together in partnership to better join up their services, so children access these early when they need them. Working with us are parts of the private, community and voluntary sector and Sussex Police who work with children & young people. So you are now part of a complex network of support from a wide range of experts in the city.

It is especially important that these services work better together where children & young people are vulnerable or have extra needs (social, health or educational) that result in them not being able to learn and develop in your classroom as well as they can without additional support.

Many of you will have children & young people in your classrooms who may be subject to a child protection plan, who may be carers for a parent or be in care themselves, they may witness domestic violence or live in poverty....all of these will affect their ability and readiness to learn and succeed. In these circumstances you will be one of several people making sure they get the right help and support to learn and progress. This multi agency working to deliver co-ordinated support through a common assessment process is crucial. This makes sure that information about a child's needs is properly shared between professionals and enables them, along with their parents/carers, to jointly decide what early intervention and support would best meet their needs.

We are a very diverse city, with a significantly growing Black & Minority Ethnic population and a large Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community. It is important that you understand the needs of children from these families, as well as other minority groups. 22% of our pupils are now from a BME background, approx. 15% are eligible for free school meals and approx a quarter of our children have a special educational need.

We have made some significant achievements in recent years:

- Almost 80% of schools are judged good or better
- Achievement in primary schools continues to be above the national average and in the top quarter of councils nationally. We are among the top LAs in the country for teaching primary school children the core skills in reading, writing and maths
- We are delighted results for our children in care at primary and secondary have improved significantly this year
- In 2013 there were some significant improvements in our secondary results although this is an area of top priority where we all need to work in partnership to raise standards
- Permanent exclusions are very low and there have been improvements in the amount of fixed term exclusions at secondary level
- Our management and provision for SEN children in the city is good and outstanding and we are closing the gap in achievement for this group
- The number of children who report that they are bullied is very low. We were proud to be awarded by Stonewall the no.1 authority for tackling homophobic bullying.

However, there are challenges facing many children and their families:

- Many of our children live in some of the most deprived wards in the south east – particularly in the East, Centre and North West of the city
- The number of children requiring a secondary school place will soon become greater than the current capacity across the city, so new provision is being developed in consultation with school leaders and others

- Educational standards must continue to improve and we must close the gap in achievement for our most vulnerable groups. There is an increasing focus on cluster working and by the council facilitating school to school support.
- Levels of persistent absence from schools are too high, so we are working with your schools to address this
- The number of children who are the subject of a child protection plan and also the number of children in care is higher than national and regional rates. Educational outcomes for children in care are poor
- The number of children being re-referred to our social work services is too high. To address this we have established a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which ensures that referrals are dealt with appropriately and an Early Help Hub to provide advice and support to schools and other agencies early to prevent problems escalating.

You will be part of a whole partnership working with us to address these challenges. Your teaching will make a major contribution to these most vulnerable children's future. As part of your induction in school, find time to understand the work of your designated person for child protection, inclusion co-ordinator, school nurse, Education Welfare Officers, Educational Psychologists and other staff who help co-ordinate and deliver the wider group of agencies that make up children's service in the city.

These challenges come at a time when the council needs to save £25 million each year for the next 4/5 years, so we may need to make some difficult decisions. We all need to work smarter and prioritise our work so that we are focussing our expenditure on services and interventions that have a positive impact, particularly for our more vulnerable children and young people. One of the ways we are doing this is through the Early Help Strategy, where children access relevant services earlier in life to reduce the need for costly specialist interventions later on.

We have some excellent schools in the city, with experienced and trained staff supporting you along the way. You will also have the support of our very experienced and knowledgeable School Workforce & Governor Support Team, who will be able to offer you professional development advice in your induction year and then all the way through your career, maybe even to headship!

I wish you well in your teaching career. Apart from parents/carers, teachers have the potential to make the most difference to children's achievements. You have a very important job ahead of you!