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And let us know what you think!

As we head towards spring it is rather fortuitous that this year the winter has been rather mild and we have been spared the problems faced by all last winter and schools have not had to close.

The MPA has had a number of meetings with the young professionals and the 'hard to reach' community but one of the best events held was the BME Parents Conference in December 2011, which the MPA jointly organised with the Parents Forum for Children of African & Caribbean Heritage. The conference was a real success and both organisations not only learned to work together but successfully gave their respective messages to the conference.

We are thankful to all who participated and in particular Sue Imbriano, Yvette Thomas, Nicola Cooke, David Hood (head of Cressex school), Mike Jones (head of Holmer Green Senior School), Dr Katy Simmons (chair of Governors at Cressex), our guest speaker Dr Anas El Turabi and John Bajina who masterfully chaired the conference. As chairman of the MPA I should also like to record my thanks to Sade Adoh, Dr Toni Adoh, Cllr Chaudhry Shafique MBE (MPA Vice chairman) Riaz Ahmed (MPA Treasurer and treasurer for the conference) Gordon Stuart, Ken Wade, Kojo and Khiam Shabbir (assistant head at Cressex) Mrs Jefferies (Hamilton school), Imam Sultan Mahmood and Pastor John for their beautiful and relevant and uplifting prayers, Sanam who dutifully took notes and many others who helped in any way.

The conference ran three very successful workshops on the themes of: 'How to Choose a School for your Child', 'How to Assist the Learning Process of your Child' and 'How to Shape the Direction of your Childs School'. It is hoped that our joint conference for 2012 will be even better.

I hope that you will enjoy the contents of the Spring Issue of the MPA Newsletter and will let the editor know if you have any views on any issue to do with education or the Newsletter in any way.

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Holmer Green Senior School students win National Diana Award

Three Sixth Formers at Holmer Green Senior School have been recognised as Diana Anti-Bullying Champions for their work in leading the whole school anti bullying activities and in particular for their work mentoring younger, more vulnerable students to ensure they fulfil their potential in school.

The three students, **Zahir Abdul, Imran Javed and Yahya Hasan** (left to right in the picture) have been active members of the schools' ABC+ committee since starting their Sixth Form studies in 2010. They, alongside fellow Committee members, provide a listening ear and mentoring advice and guidance at lunch and break times in the school. In addition, over the past two academic years they have also worked with students who were at risk of becoming disaffected with their studies and provided a much needed confidence boost and support to help them through the challenge of their GCSE studies.

They have now been invited to an Awards Ceremony in London in March to receive their Diana Anti-Bullying Champion awards. Nicola Berry, Awards Manager for the Diana Foundation commented: "For young people, this Award is truly life-changing as they don't seek reward for the work they do... With the Award and our ongoing support these young people are spurred on to continue acting as a force for good and build a better society for all."



Above: Zahir Abdul, Imran Javed and Yahya Hasan

Do you have something to write about?

If you wish to write about something then please e-mail your contribution as soon as possible. Articles should be or about 500 words; however, if there is something of a more serious nature then please still limit it to one page of this Newsletter and e-mail it as soon as possible.



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Lorraine Pepper-McCrudden tells us about English Classes in High Wycombe

ESOL or English for Speakers of Other Languages is an acronym that has varied over the years. It has always represented, however, a lifeline to some members of the community (particularly women who are not in employment) who have found that whilst children rapidly become bi-lingual it is much harder, as an adult, to acquire the language of those around you.

That's why, nearly two decades ago, classes were set up for women to learn how to speak, understand, read and write in English. Initially reserved uniquely for women these classes have become mixed in terms of both gender and nationality as more women wish to find employment. As the demography of the area has changed classes reflect this diversity and students are not only obliged to speak English to communicate with each other but enjoy it very much. Asking 'Where are you from?' in a beginners class for example, or 'What are the traditions for New Year in your country?' becomes much more interesting if you don't know what answer you are going to get!

The ESOL Department at Amersham and Wycombe College has a history of providing help to people whose first language is not English. We are now conveniently based in The Priory Road Centre in the heart of High Wycombe on Priory Road, opposite the side of Primark. Here highly qualified, specialist, teachers enthuse even the shyest of learners to enjoy communicating in English through a range of activities from studying grammar and vocabulary, participating in quizzes, games and inevitably learning the notoriously difficult spellings of the English language!

Classes take place in the mornings, afternoons and evenings to enable learners to fit their learning around their lives. There are year long courses at all levels and in addition, short courses for those who need to apply for a British passport. Each ESOL student sits a speaking and listening exam and in addition a reading and writing exam where appropriate. When successful a nationally recognized certificate from either the University of Cambridge or Edexcel board of examinations is awarded.

Apart from learning a skill that makes talking to the doctor and your child's teacher a much more realisable and meaningful experience following an English course also increases confidence and employability. The courses are free to those who are unemployed, looking for work and receiving one or more of the following: Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit. For the majority of others the cost is subsidized by 50% by the Government.

Does your child need help with his or her School work?

If YES, Are you willing to get him or her some help with not just the school subjects but about Study/learning techniques. If YES again, then please email the Child's details to Rafiq Raja (rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk).

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Cressex Community School head explains why stereotyping is wrong

Each January "Youth Speaks", a public speaking competition for secondary school students run by the Rotary Club of High Wycombe, takes place at Wycombe Abbey School. This year a team of three Year 10 students, Aleesha Khaliq, Iram Ramzan and Usman Tahir represented Cressex. The age groupings of the competition meant that these students were competing against students up to four years older than them. The Cressex students prepared hard and gave an excellent account of themselves, showing no signs of nerves as they made their speeches in a large hall in front of an audience made up of other competitors, parents, teachers, judges and organisers. The first to speak was Iram, whose task was to introduce the topic – "Challenging Stereotypes" – and the main speaker, Aleesha. Usman rounded proceedings off with the vote of thanks.

The judges rightly commented on the high quality of all of the teams' contributions. The Cressex team got a special mention for their thought-provoking talk, an edited version of which I am very pleased to have this opportunity to share with the readers of the MPA Newsletter.

Challenging Stereotypes

At one time or another we have all been stereotyped, or been guilty of stereotyping others.

Stereotypes can be against one person or a small group, but very often they are aimed at large groups of society. Sometimes the reasons are not very clear, but they are part of daily life. Whether it's for the way someone speaks, or the way someone walks, or the way someone looks, stereotypes are always there.

As human beings we are very tempted to make stereotypes because our minds work by putting things into categories. Stereotypes can be made when a person does not know another person well. Stereotyping is when you make an assumption about a person or an issue without really having enough knowledge to form an opinion.

When talking about stereotypes, there are not just negative ones, as you could make an assumption about anyone for any reason. Everyone loves to attach characteristics to other people. For instance someone might see a person and just by looking at them may think they are a cat lover and it may even be that they're right. But the stereotype was of no harm to that particular person. However stereotypes can often be very offensive and in the worst case can destroy the relationships between groups of people.

Schools are a major place where stereotypes are created. For instance one school may say that another is not up to their standards or the students are not well behaved, whereas those in the school would totally disagree. This is something that happens throughout the country. It is one stereotype I would like to change. Only those that have a good knowledge of the school really have the right to make a judgement.

It is like saying, just because a person is born into a poor family, which does not mean they have no right to aspire to the same things as a child from a privileged background.

Sometimes stereotypes can be made on the basis of an experience with someone who has a specific characteristic that you may not have seen or heard before, which you can link to this person. So if you were to have a bad experience with that person you may hold a grudge against all people you see as being like them. Because of this experience if you were to see a different person with that particular characteristic you might be tempted to directly associate something bad with them.

The lesson we should learn from this is not to judge new people on our past experiences in our daily lives and not to generalise. The same lesson should apply to very influential people such as those who produce the media.

It is too easy and requires less effort for them to blame the problems of our country on ethnic minorities or other groups. We blame society, yet we are society! The solution to society's problems comes from each of us first of all.

Make the change in yourself that you want to see in others!!

David Hood

Headteacher

BME Parents Conference -in pictures

10 December 2011

At Cressex community School High Wycombe



The Venue



David Hood – head teacher of Cressex community school welcomes the conference To Cressex.



Conference chairman John Bajina outlines the day's programme



Pastor John and Imam Sultan Mahmood offer prayers for the success of the conference



Rafiq Raja - chairman of the MPA welcomes delegates to the conference



Sade Adoh - chairman of Parents Forum for children of African & Caribbean heritage



Sue Imbriano - Strategic Director Children and Young People's Services, BCC presenting her workshop



Dr Katy Simmons (Chairman of Governors at Cressex) leading a workshop



Cllr Zahir speaking with David Hood (hidden) whilst in the foreground Tahir Hakim & PC Yousaf Raja in conversation



Exhibitors at conference



Participants relax during a break



Ken Wade introduces the report back from workshops



Exhibitor Stalls at the conference



Chaudry Shafique reports on the first workshop about choosing a school for your child



Sade Adoh explains the discussions of the third workshop about how to influence the direction of your child's school.



The second workshop



Workshop participants



Mike Jones, head of Holmer Green Senior School speaking at the conference



Yvette Thomas – Children's Policy and Equalities Manager listens intently



Mrs Jefferson (Dep. Head of Hamilton School) speaking at the conference



Gorden Stewart explains the work of the Acacia Supplementary School



Kham Shabbir explains the work of the Karima Supplementary School



John Bajina brings the conference to a close



John Bajina in conversation with Pastor John



A couple of participants enjoy the break



Cllr Sebert Graham enjoys the break from the conference



Mohammed Rafiq & Chaudry M Shafique - MPA executive committee members compare notes



MPA Chairman introduces Dr Anas El Turbai to Khaim Shabbir, with John Bajina in the middle



Zahid Jawed at the conference



A group of some of the organisers L-R Sade Adoh, Riaz Ahmed, Ken Wade, John Bajina, Gorden Stewart, Toni Adoh & Kojo

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For any questions please contact Jess (Family Support Worker) on 07738501276 or at Hampden Way Children's Centre 01494 512138

Here are encouraging words for parents to get involved in their child's school

Parental involvement in the education of their children is very important as this forms part of the building blocks for their future and the future peace of mind of the parents. Parents of African, Caribbean, Pakistani and other heritage have been brought up on the value of education and being in an environment where one feels unsure as to what is expected; we as parents have left the education of our children at the school gates until such a time when one is asked to enter through the gates to the Headteacher's office to be informed of the child's misbehaviour.

The BME Parents conference sought to make parents aware of the need to actively participate in schools, to become a friend of the school by helping out at lunch times, reading to the children, helping out by going into your child's school to share your culture with the school. The conference informed parents about acting as school governors where as a parent you can learn more about how the school functions in many different ways to ensure that your children learn and become good members of the community in which they live.

The most common feedback from parents, who attended the conference, was their realisation that how little they knew about the schools and how happy they are to know that the schools want their input and support. This they feel makes them feel valued and able to contribute because the conference actually did 'tell' them the different ways in which they can help.

Language should never be a barrier, as a parent your presence in the playground, just keeping an eye on the children for example, goes a long way. Helping on special days to showcase your heritage through cooking, culture, music and even religion is vital.

I will say to any parent out there, ask your school how you can help and if you want me to accompany you or work with you and other parents; just let me know through Rafiq. Together we can, remember back at home in Pakistan, Nigeria, St Vincent, Zimbabwe, Poland etc. it is the togetherness of the community that makes everything work.

Shade Adho - Chairman

Parents Forum for Children of African & Caribbean Heritage

Dr Osman explains why we need to help our children rise to the challenges of tomorrow

There is little doubt that the years ahead will be challenging for the younger members of the Muslim community seeking to enter higher education. Many aspiring students will be faced with university fees of up to £9000 and are likely to leave education with hefty debts to repay. This is no consolation to many in the Muslim community who are already entering this period with a handicap, with sections of the community academically trailing behind their peers. Further education certainly aids, even if it does not guarantee, upward social mobility, and this is one reason among many to encourage and guide students towards suitable higher qualifications.

There are a number of steps that families and communities need to take, especially in the current climate. We need to be actively involved in ensuring our children are being taught to the best standards and achieving their potential. Communities and mosques should consider setting up bursaries and funds that award outstanding students and so assist them with the financial burden of university. We need to facilitate the development of other complementary skills and talents that prepare them for what is going to be an increasingly competitive job market. Furthermore, we need to realise that in an era of globalisation, our children will be competing not only with their peers in the UK, but also against the best graduates and skilled professionals from all over the world, and our youth must be able to rise to the challenge. Mentoring and career counselling can be

an important part of an education-promotion program that Muslim communities should seek to develop. Youngsters need role-models that they can relate to socially who can provide valuable guidance to help them as they make life choices. They will need to balance their interests against the realities of job prospects. The last thing students would want is to spend years paying off a debt for a course they didn't actually enjoy to do a job that does not meet their aspirations. That is an expensive way to make a mistake, and careers counselling, to some extent, aids students in making their decisions with their eyes open. The Wycombe Islamic Society (WISE) has, for example, arranged a careers fair on 17 February where professionals from within the community presented an insight into their own careers to assist potential undergraduates.

While there are other potential strategies that may be developed to help young Muslims academically, perhaps the most crucial ingredient that the young need to have and that should be encouraged is ambition. Even if families are not in a position to fully support their children materially, they have a vital role to play in inculcating within the Muslim citizen of tomorrow an ambition and determination to excel and a sense of duty to positively contribute not only to the Muslim community, but to society as a whole.

Dr Osman is a Specialist Registrar, Haematology, Imperial NHS Trust (Hammersmith Hospital / St Mary's / Charing Cross) and an recently appointed as an associate governor at Kingswood school, High Wycombe.

Dates for Your Diary

BME Lecture, at Bucks New University, 28 April 2012

This year the BME Lecture will be delivered by Hermione Horn, who is a current Ofsted Inspector, is proud of her heritage and passionate about raising education standards of all BME and particularly Pakistani, African and Caribbean origin children.

All who wish to eliminate underachievement see rising standards and a real reduction in the attainment gap between mainstream and BME pupils are invited to attend.

For more information email John Bajina: john.bajina@virgin.net

Awaaz Radio First Anniversary Event on 25th March

Awaaz, the local community Radio in High Wycombe (107.4FM) celebrates the completion of its first year of 24/7 broadcasting at the end of March.

In this very short time Awaaz has filled a void in the life of the Asian community of High Wycombe and has become the 'Voice of the Pakistani community' in particular. Azhar Hussain, the chairman (whose brainchild Awaaz is) and his team of professional and amateur broadcasters deserve a big thank you from the Asian community for excellent entertainment, live concerts and serious programme covering health, education, celebration of religious events and current affairs. The MPA offers its hearty congratulations and good wishes for its future progress.

Hajj Exhibition at British Museum London open until 15 April

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and is central to Islamic belief. Hajj is the pilgrimage to Makah, which every Muslim is obliged to undertake as long as they are physically and financially able to do so. This major exhibition charts the history of this deeply personal journey.

The Hajj exhibition is open daily between 10AM and 5PM (Until 8.30PM on Fridays), the entry fee is £12 for an adult and the nearest tube station is Holborn.

Listen to 'The World of Education' - Taleem Ki Dunya Every Saturday, on High Wycombe's Awaaz Radio (107.4FM) between 4 & 6PM.

The World of Education tries to inform the members of the Asian community in general and the Pakistani community in particular, about the importance of education with a special emphasis on informing the 'Hard to reach' community.

The World of Education/Taleem Ki Duniya (TKD) is a tremendous opportunity to discuss local and national educational matters (and dissemination of knowledge about other issues relating to health, diet, employment, taxation, etc) for the benefit of the Urdu/Punjabi speaking listeners and their children, who are the future for all of us.

If you are interested in taking part in a future programme or have some topics or ideas about raising educational achievement levels then get in touch with Rafiq Raja: raja@awaazradio.com

Dump the Dummy and Bin the Bottle!

Babies like to suck, so dummies can help soothe at bedtime or when your baby is tired or cross. But regular and extended use of a dummy and bottle can create **problems** with your child's **teeth** and their **speech** by:

- Limiting tongue movements which can delay language developing and make speech sounds unclear
- Causing a **gap in the front teeth** which may lead to a lisp
- Making it harder to swallow which may make your child more "dribbly".



Tips to prevent these problems:

- Try to keep the dummy for **sleep times only** from 8 months
- Try to get rid of the dummy by **12 months**
- Try **cuddling or reading** at bedtimes instead of giving a dummy
- **Always remove** the dummy when your child is trying to **talk**
- **Avoid dipping** the dummy in anything **sugary**
- Avoid letting your child use a bottle as a soother, and **never** put **juice drinks** in a bottle.
- Try giving the dummy away to the "dummy fairy".

Choose a time for your child to give up the dummy and bottle (not when you are under pressure) and make a clean break – throw away **all** dummies and bottles at once. Most babies and toddlers will only fret for two or three days.

Contact your Sure Start Speech and Language Therapist (Amarjit Sachdave) on 01494 475 475 if you have any questions or concerns.



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