

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2014



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

Helping to raise standards in education



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ADULT LEARNING
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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from our
MP

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The Killing of dreams

At the time of writing terrible news is coming in about the massacre in a school in the Peshawar, Pakistan carried out by the Pakistan offshoot of the Taliban. We have grown used to barbarism, inhumanity and cruelty of the extremist people in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan itself, but the deliberate and pitiless killing of innocent school students is an appalling outrage and a real tragedy for the families of the dead children; one mother has said that her son was her dream and the dream has been killed. Whilst killing of innocent children in large numbers is not uncommon in America, but the scale and calculated butchery of 132 pupils and 9 staff takes this sort of mindlessness to new heights.

We sympathise with the families who sent their children to school in uniform in the morning and had to dress them in their burial shrouds by the evening and can only offer heartfelt prayers and wishes that the families will be able to cope with their unimaginable loss in this brutal way. The terrorists do not in any shape or form represent Islam or speak for the ordinary Muslims of the world and need to be rooted out from all areas. One only hopes that the anger does not lead to targeting of more innocent lives by the government of Pakistan.

It is ironic that the Pakistani Taliban carried out this atrocity in a school, as the name Taliban is derived from the word 'Talib' which in Urdu means someone who desires and is often coupled with the word 'Ilm' (knowledge), so a 'Talib-

ilm' is a person who desires or is acquiring knowledge, a student. How can the perpetrators of this massacre justify targeting students, when one would have thought that the Taliban would be for education, yet all their actions indicate that they wish to keep the future generations in the dark.

Narrowing the attainment gap

The Bucks Learning Trust is in the process of strategically outlining its thinking about focused interventions to raise standards of educationally underperforming groups in High Wycombe and the 'Wycombe Project' should see the light of day in the not too distant future.

It is very much hoped that local stakeholders will have an input about the type and level of intervention so that parents from economically deprived pockets can feel part of the process, which is aimed at removing the high levels of underachievement by some sections of the community in High Wycombe. The MPA feels that parents need to be engaged and enabled to assist their children in gaining access to all levels of education. This may take the shape of one to one tuition for the parents (explaining how schools operate and how parents can organise their homes, so that their children do not lag behind). The MPA also feels that for any intervention programme to succeed it not only needs the support of the stakeholders but is sustainable, so that the underachievement does not return in the future, at the levels it has persisted for decades.

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Highcrest awarded Flagship status for inclusion

External assessor Chris Chivers gave the academy, its staff and students glowing feedback.

The Highcrest Academy has been upgraded to a national Flagship School for inclusion, just the 12th secondary school in the UK to achieve the flagship status. Highcrest was evaluated in a two-day inspection against a nationally-recognised framework called the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM).

"The Highcrest Academy is a school that has a clear understanding of what is expected and what can be provided to enhance the learning experience for all children," he said. "There is an energy and enthusiasm from the staff which is infectious and clearly visible in the attitudes and behaviour of the children who gave their time to be interviewed. The children admit to being encouraged and inspired to aspire."



Mr Chivers added: "Learning is at the heart of whole-school development, with significant work being undertaken to ensure that personalised approaches to learning are a reality for vulnerable students, with a differential approach the aspiration for all learners."

He praised the academy's leadership, but also singled out the students, saying: "The students are a credit to the school. They were invariably polite, happy to engage in detailed discussion of their own learning and their experiences through their time at the school. They are partners in the running of the school, many being given responsibility through student leadership programmes."

The IQM standard says in its criteria: "Educational inclusion is about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background."

Mr Chivers' assessment said of Highcrest: "There is significant evidence of good practice in Inclusion, across all categories of need. Inclusion is evident in every aspect of school life, ensuring that Every Child Matters and, as an extension, that every person associated with the school is also fully valued."

To obtain flagship status in the award, a school has to be successfully assessed twice previously. The first time for Highcrest was in 2008 followed by a second one in 2010. Highcrest believes it was the first school in Bucks to gain an IQM.

Principal Shena Moynihan said: "I am thrilled at the way in which our academy has been recognised in this award scheme. Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do at Highcrest because we really do believe that every child matters regardless of their background. Being a Flagship School is a great honour for us because it means we share best practice with others. This award truly reflects the wonderful work of our staff, governing body and, of course, our fantastic students."

And there was more praise from Mr Chivers at the recent ceremony when he told a packed auditorium: "There is a heart and soul to this school; a humane learning environment, ably led by emotionally-literate human beings."

"At the core of this, is a firm trust in the human capacity to improve, supported fully by the love and guidance of a committed community. The children of The Highcrest Academy are fortunate enough to have access to such high-calibre thinking and care."

Miss Oddie said: "We were delighted and honoured to collect this award, and were so proud to hear the glowing tribute about our academy. As we say time and again, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do at Highcrest."

Picture of Highcrest receiving their award on Page 7.

Cressex Community School – Autumn 2014

Head Teacher David Hood tells us about a good Ofsted



An important piece of news to share with the readers of The MPA Newsletter is that, since the last edition, we have been visited by a team of inspectors from Ofsted. We were very pleased to have the good practice we know we have worked hard to develop acknowledged. We have now formally been recognised as a “good” school.

In particular, inspectors noted that:

- **Students develop good knowledge, skills and understanding in most subjects and particularly in mathematics.**
- The improvement in students’ achievement is a direct result of the school’s **drive to improve learning and teaching.**
- Students enjoy **a rich range of learning experiences** to match their abilities and interests.
- **Students work hard and behave well. The school is a harmonious community** where students get on well and are respectful of each other and of adults.
- **Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the school** and have a positive impact on students’ learning and behaviour.
- **The sixth-form course run for a small group of students is outstanding.**
- The school’s leaders have established **a strong climate for learning**, which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and examination results for students.
- **Governors understand the school well.**

The report has led to some welcome positive coverage in both the local and the national press. An article in the Bucks Free Press “The rise and rise of Cressex Community School” (12 September 2014) highlighted the school’s journey over recent years. You can still access this article via the newspaper’s website. Another article in The Independent (2 October 2014) focused on Cressex as a “Cooperative School”. Here is an extract:

“Cressex can certainly testify that the [cooperative] approach raises standards – its English GCSE results improved this year against a background of national decline, with 54 per cent of pupils getting A- to C-grade passes. It has also been rated as “outstanding” by the education-standards watchdog for its maths and its sixth-form provision”*

I should also add that “expected progress” figures in both English and maths are higher than the national average and that this year’s results in the sixth form meant that students’ average grade for the courses they took was Distinction (equivalent to grade A/B at A level).

Meanwhile, day to day, we remain focused on ensuring that the students who come here – including the 152 new Year 7s who joined us in September – have the most positive experience of secondary education we can provide. As ever, if you would like to come and see Cressex for yourself, please make an appointment to visit. We would be very pleased to see you.

David Hood - Headteacher

Listen to ‘The World of Education’ - Taleem Ki Dunya Every Sunday, on High Wycombe’s Awaaz Radio (107.4FM) between 10AM & 12 NOON.

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 particular emphasis on informing the ‘hard to reach’ community.

If you are interested in taking part in a future programme then get in touch with Rafia Raja: raja@awaazradio.com

Ofsted inspections

Many of the Wycombe Schools, which have had an Ofsted inspection last year were not entirely happy with the final grading. However, it is pleasing to note that some schools that have had an Ofsted recently have done well; no doubt reflecting the hard work put in by the staff, parents, governors and pupils. Our congratulations go to Cressex Community School (see page3) and Highworth Combined School and Nursery, both of which were given a 'good' overall grading in the recent Ofsted inspections.

Hot Mid day meals for early year pupils

Free hot lunchtime meals for the KS2 (Reception, year 1 & year2) children have been provided in some (all?) schools as from September 2014. It would be interesting to hear from schools about their

experience of providing hot mid-day meals and whether it is helping in other ways other than giving children the right levels of energy for the afternoon sessions.

Awaaz Radio

Awaaz, High Wycombe's local community Radio, is coming up to its 4th year of 24/7 broadcasting in Urdu, Punjabi and English. It is a tremendous community resource and the MPA is delighted to be part of Awaaz Radio's broadcasting of the World of Education programme on Sundays, from 10AM to 12 Noon (107.4FM).

Finally, the MPA would like to wish all its readers and supporters a very peaceful Christmas and a very happy and productive New Year.

Oakridge New Head vows to develop the school further

Jane Jefferson updates us about Oakridge School

As the new Headteacher at Oakridge School, I am excited about the future and look forward to developing the School further so that our children continue to have an excellent education, memorable experiences, and develop a life-long love of learning.

I am very fortunate to work with a team of very talented and highly committed staff who are passionate about the children's education, encouraging them to challenge themselves and achieve their best.

In our Ofsted report in June 2014, the School was once again graded as good. The Inspectors stated that our children learn and work collaboratively in a calm and caring environment and are respectful. This is both a testimony to the staff at School and our families.

This term we have been very busy re-writing our visions and values statement. We have hosted a parent's information evening, celebrated Eid with a party, learnt about other countries through our French Day and entertained our families with a Harvest Celebration.

Through our cross curriculum links, our children have a range of opportunities to learn how Maths and English link to the world we live in and develop a broader understanding of how the decisions we make impact on our lives and the lives of others.

Visits from prospective parents are warmly welcomed and I look forward to working with the Community both this year and in the future.

Jane Jefferson – Headteacher



Things are moving on at Holmer Green Senior School

The Head shares the good news

What a delight it was to receive our best set of GCSE results in August this year. 64% of our GCSE students achieving 5 A*-C Grades (including English and Maths) is an outcome I am extremely proud of and I wish to thank students and staff for their hard work to achieve this.

The academic year has started well with staff and students adjusting quickly to the new systems which have been put in place (e.g. a one-week timetable). Our new Year 7 students have settled well and were incredible in their role as Tour Guides at our very successful Open Evening and Morning.

So much has happened in the past eight weeks; Highlights for me must include our highly successful Enrichment Fair as well as the opportunity to show off our new Design and Technology facilities and purpose built 6th Form Centre (which has now been opened). So many students have commented that it has felt like returning to a new school. New uniform, new facilities, the best results in the school's history a great start to an academic year - I feel confident it will prove an even greater success.

Our students are now enjoying brand new facilities for Resistant Materials, Food Tech, Graphics and Textiles together with a new IT Hub and IT Classroom. The Sixth Form are also enjoying all their new spaces which include a large Study Room, 6th Form IT Suite, 6th Form Coffee Lounge and new toilet facilities. The new Lecture Room was also a real bonus from this building project and is in use daily for assemblies, classes and as a meeting space. Our next project is to secure the funds for a new Sports Hall for the school.

In July Mr Kavanagh went with a group of 6th Form students on their World Challenge trip to Nepal. The trip was a great success—but hard work too!



Michael Jones - Headteacher HGSS

An invitation only meeting, due to shortage of space, is being organised to hear the Human Rights Lawyer **Imran Khan** on **Tuesday 23rd December at 7pm.** at the **Castlefield Community Centre, Rutland Avenue High Wycombe HP12 3LL.**

If you would like to attend please contact:

khaiaam@karima.org.uk

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Post Sixteen Provision at Sir William Ramsay School

SWR Assistant Head explains the new A Level Curriculum

There has been much in the media about forthcoming changes to A-Level Curriculums and the move from modular to linear assessment with the decoupling of AS and A Levels. At Sir William Ramsay we are committed to ensuring our students are given the best opportunity to succeed with a curriculum that addresses their learning needs.

In 2009 Ofsted stated:

"The curriculum is outstanding because it matches the needs and aspirations of students very well..."

Part of this process is making sure that students, parents and carers are aware of the changes and how they impact on students learning needs. As such we have closely looked at how this separation of AS and A2 qualifications will impact on student progress and attainment to develop an outstanding curriculum, whereby students can achieve their full potential at the end of the two years of study.

We will meet the two phases starting from September 2015 with the development of a curriculum that offers 28 separate courses at Level 2 and 3, ranging from A Level and BTEC to the NVQ, with a further 9 Enrichment courses available, to ensure that all learning styles are met and that all of our students can achieve their full potential.

"....good teaching underpins the students' good overall progress. This includes sixth formers... The students' good outcomes can, in part, be attributed to improved tracking and monitoring systems that have enhanced the advice and guidance they are offered." (Ofsted 2012)

Due to our tailored and expansive curriculum on average over 80% of our students go on to study at University.

Students at Sir William Ramsay School have stated:

"It has a wonderful and positive atmosphere"

"It feels like a community, we work together as a team"

"It had the qualifications I wanted and needed. The teachers care about personal achievement and there is a range of enrichment opportunities that help you compete in the job market."

Sheetal Hillier

Head of Sixth Form / Assistant Head

If you would like to find out more about our offer please visit swr.bucks.sch.uk.

If you would like to book a tour of the school please contact: valdred@swr.bucks.sch.uk

Westfield Academy is a multicultural comprehensive school catering for students aged 11-19. There are 1150+ students on roll.

In the last issue Rashida Kazi gave us an insight into how school support improved student results at Westfield. She now tells us about the progress made including by the 6th form

Our GCSE examination results show steady improvement and for several years we have been in the top group of Hertfordshire schools for providing Added Value. This means that should a student attend Westfield Academy we will get the best out of them, whatever their starting position.

In November 2012 we received a "Good" Ofsted rating and following this in September 2013 we converted to Academy status. This transition was only possible because of the Ofsted and Local Authority conviction that we are "a school on the rise".

This year the school is delighted to record an increased number of students leaving to study at university and to record our first ever successful Oxbridge candidate.

The following tables summarize the results gained by students in their final years of Key Stage 4 (year 11) and Key Stage 5 (Year 13).

Key Stage 4

HEADLINE – KS4	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
% achieving 5 +A*-C GCSEs	97	97	97	84	71
% achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs inc English & Ma	66	69	54	48	27

Our aim for the 6th form is to provide high quality academic and vocational education in a supportive environment where students are encouraged to develop as independent learners and supported and stretched to succeed. To equip our students with skills and attributes for a successful future **all** are challenged to take on responsibilities and leadership roles both within the school and the wider community.

Students choose three or four Level 3 courses, depending on their pathway. Entry onto A Level courses requires a B grade in the relevant GCSE subject as well as having at least 5 A*-C GCSEs. Each Level 3 subject is allocated five lessons a week. Alongside their academic studies, students follow complimentary courses which are selected to enhance their experience and support their applications to University or employment. They are also expected to contribute to school life through the enrichment programme. The remainder of a student's timetable is for students to study under their own initiative.

There are some challenging students who lack the ethos and commitment required to continue with their studies in the Sixth Form. They are made aware of this very early on in the year so that those students who are meeting the deadlines feel encouraged to keep up with the pressure and as a result get offers from reputable universities of their choice. By compensating for their lack of effort we as parents and teachers are not helping our students to face the real world.

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Highcrest awarded flagship status for inclusion

Pictured: Maureen Oddie, Vice Principal at The Highcrest Academy, Joe McCann, Principal of IQM, with students:

Amy Crowe, Faith Cobbler, George Carter and Luis Rio-Rios.

Written by a practising teacher, this article is aimed at parents of children aged up to 14.

Studies in Britain have shown that children who are supported by their families with homework are likely to perform significantly better in academic examinations at 16 years old and beyond than those who do not. If we want our children to be successful in school, family involvement is important.

How can you help?

1. By showing an interest you are communicating the fact that school work is important and needs to be taken seriously.
2. Encourage children to complete homework to the best of their ability.
3. Urge children to watch less television and spend more time studying and reading.
4. Express high expectations for children from an early age.

Practical Ways to Help

1. Provide a quiet environment
2. Have a Regular Homework Routine
3. Praise Effort and Achievement
4. Show an Interest
5. Provide Equipment
6. Set a Good Example
7. Monitor Homework

By helping your child with homework you not only improve his or her chances of achievement in school and in life, but you can help to develop your child's confidence, self-discipline and sense of responsibility.



The Benefits

Parents who take an interest in their children's homework have a better knowledge of their education. Additionally, children who are able to complete assignments successfully are likely to develop a good working attitude.

A Message from our MP

Wycombe MP Steve Baker comments on issues of interest

The last few months have been very troubling on the international stage. We have witnessed unrest in many parts of the globe particularly in the Middle East and have also seen the outbreak of Ebola in Africa. I know many of my constituents take a close interest in what goes on in the world and compassionately try to alleviate suffering. I was moved to learn from a recent study that my constituents are among the most generous in the country for giving to charity. I am not surprised as I know many people contribute to worthy causes giving time, money and effort to help those in their immediate community and wider afield.



One issue which I know will be of interest to many people living in High Wycombe is the status of Palestine. Over the past few months I have come to understand the situation and history of this part of the Middle East better. Given all that I have read, it seems clear that if there is to be a lasting and just peace at all, Palestine must be recognised before it becomes impossible to bring about a two state solution. This is why I was in favour of the UK recognising Palestine in the House of Commons when the vote was held in October. If you would like to read more about my views on this, you are welcome to go to my website <http://www.stevebaker.info/2014/10/recognise-palestine/>

Moving on to matters closer to home, at the beginning of October I published ideas I have found to give people access to better and easier round-the-clock emergency care at Wycombe Hospital. It is worth remembering that Wycombe Hospital currently treats all stroke and heart attack patients from across the county and parts of Berkshire and is a centre of excellence for stroke care. I want the NHS to build on this so that any patient can come to Wycombe hospital in an emergency at any time of the day or night and be treated in the most effective way possible. It is interesting that NHS England has recently issued a report giving its five year view on the future of the NHS, and it particularly highlights the need to integrate care between A&E departments, GP out-of-hours services, urgent care centres, NHS 111 and the ambulance service. I endorse this view, and hope that local NHS commissioners and providers in Bucks will find a way to give people peace of mind which comes from local healthcare and clarity about accessing it.

At a national level, I am playing my part to secure Britain's future, both on the Treasury Select Committee and have been heartened by the recent good news on the economic figures and especially those which show an increase in employment.

On a final note, staff in my constituency office tell me they have dealt with over 1,000 individual constituent cases in the last year, and have around 400 cases open at the moment. I am pleased to have been of service to so many of you. If you too are trying to cut through government bureaucracy which has driven you to the point of distraction, you are welcome to ring the constituency office on 01494 448408 or drop me an email at steve.baker.mp@parliament.uk.

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Would you like to get involved with the MPA?

Do you have an article you would like to submit?

Then please get in touch via our website mpawycombe.co.uk

Who Benefits from the new 11+ test?

Dr. Katy Simmons presents disturbing evidence of inequality in Bucks schools

A recent report by Local, Equal and Excellent, (LEE) a group of education campaigners in High Wycombe, gives clear evidence that the new so-called 'tutor proof' 11+ exam in Buckinghamshire has failed to help children from more disadvantaged homes get grammar school places.

The Report, 'Who benefits? The new 'tutor proof' 11+ exam in Bucks' describes the startling way in which the 11+ continues to select for children's background rather than ability – and how the situation has got worse not better under the new exam.

The new 11+ exam was introduced in Bucks, a fully-selective county, last year. At the time, both the test provider, the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University (CEM) and The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS) claimed that it would be harder to coach children for the new exam and that therefore it would be fairer.

One of the big problems for the campaigners was getting the real data. Despite receiving hundreds of thousands of pounds from local schools' budgets to develop and deliver the new exam, the CEM refused to publish the full pilot test data or analysis which they used as the basis for their claims that the new exam would be more resistant to tutoring. In addition, LEE found that Buckinghamshire County Council's own officers had expressed concerns about equalities issues but there was no evidence that those concerns had been followed up.

Using many Freedom of Information requests, LEE have been able to show the real picture. With the new test, a number of different groups appear to be **worse off** with the introduction of the new 11+ exam. They include local children (Bucks children compared to non-Bucks children), children on Free School Meals (FSM) and children of Pakistani heritage, the largest Black and Minority Ethnic group in Bucks.

The difference between the pass rates for children from Bucks' private schools and children from Bucks' state schools remains considerable and has increased since last year. A private school child is now over three and a half times more likely to pass the 11+ than a state school child.

Other key findings are that for children from the more affluent districts of South Bucks and Chilterns, the pass rates were 33% and 37% respectively in 2014, and 33% and 42% for the 2015 intake. Further, children from the more economically diverse districts of Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale, the pass rates were 22% and 16% respectively in 2014, and 20% and 17% in 2015. In other words, a child from Chiltern District is two and a half times more likely to pass the exam than a child from Aylesbury Vale District.

The number of children from Wycombe passing the 11+ has declined by five percentage points since the introduction of the new exam. For the 2015 intake, this is equivalent to 94 fewer children passing the exam – or over one half of an upper school year group.

Children receiving FSM had an extremely low pass rate, of only 4%. The report further finds that children who speak English as a second language (ESL) did significantly worse in the 11+ exam than English first language speakers. ESL boys achieved an overall pass rate of only 14.5%.

Between 2013 and 2014, under the new 11+ exam, the number and proportion of children of Pakistani heritage getting a place at one of High Wycombe's three grammar schools fell.

Local Equal and Excellent say, "Far from increasing social mobility, Bucks' selective system is simply reinforcing existing patterns of disadvantage. It is a system of winners and losers that has created one of the biggest attainment gaps in the country – with the children who most need our help losing the most."

LEE is now calling for the exam to be abandoned until and unless an alternative can be developed which does not select on the basis of a family's ability to afford tutoring or any other home attribute. LEE urges all concerned local parents to look at the evidence and support the campaign for a fairer education system. See for yourself by going to LEE's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/LocalEqualExcellent>

Dr Katy Simmons is a member of Local Equal Excellent.

Learning Opportunities for Adults

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning is pleased to let you know about learning opportunities we have on offer for Buckinghamshire adults.

The Community Outreach and Family Learning Team can deliver bespoke adult learning courses for adults lacking confidence in their abilities. This could be due to (but not exclusively) unemployment, mental health issues e.g. anxiety, depression, social exclusion e.g. due to age, language or low education attainment i.e. fewer than 5 GCSEs A*-C (including English and Maths).

Our courses are tailor-made to meet the needs of the participants.
Courses can be:

Run at any free venues e.g. community centres, hostels, mosques, schools and children centres, in a variety of subjects such as sewing, craft, confidence building, IT, pre-employment and free to learners who meet one or more of the above criteria. Moreover, the courses run at a time convenient to the participant (including school holidays and term time only).



As well as developing your own personal skills, we can help you support your children's learning. Courses aimed at building your confidence in helping your child with language and communication are available locally.

For more information contact:

Community Outreach Team cldevteam@buckscc.gov.uk 07917895847

Family Learning Team flt@buckscc.gov.uk 07867831433

FREE CHILDCARE FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

Buckinghamshire County Council introduced the offer of **FREE** childcare places to all eligible families with a 2 year old.

What's on offer?

Eligible families will be able to get 15 hours of quality early education for their two year old **FREE** every week during school term time at a local provider (pre-school, nursery, childminder or playgroup).

Children as young as two really benefit from accessing childcare at this age. They will make new friends, improve their social skills and once they're old enough to go to school, they're already well prepared and often achieve more.



Is my 2 year old eligible for a free place?

We may well have written to you directly informing you of your entitlement. If you have received this letter, and are interest in early education funding, please complete the referral form and return it back to us.

Alternatively, please visit www.buckscc.gov.uk/2yearfunding for the eligibility criteria.

Allocation of your 2 year old funded place will only be considered and accepted by the provider by evidencing the 2 year old confirmation letter. Please note funding cannot be backdated.

How to apply

If you meet any of the criteria mentioned above and believe you are eligible for a free place, you can apply by using one of the following:

- Please complete the online www.buckscc.gov.uk/2yearfunding
- Visit your local children's centre

**Sure Start
Children's Centres**

