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Ultra-sound school kids

4 May 2023



Youngsters at **Ewell Grove Primary and Nursery School** have done it again. Back in the testing times of Covid during 2021, classes decided to organise their own entertainment programme to raise money for **Epsom Medical Equipment Fund** (EMEF), the charity launched in 1979 to help **Epsom General Hospital.**

This was the start needed to launch an appeal for the GE Ultrasound Scanner required by the Labour Ward theatre in Maternity at Epsom. With their parents backing them, they succeeded in raising nearly £1,000.

Last year they decided to repeat the feat – this time they brought a magnificent £1,132 which started the appeal off with a flying start.

This week the school was invited to present the GE Ultrasound scanner to **Dr. Dickson Osagie**. The school set the children a project to decide who would represent the school. There were eight lucky winners who visited the hospital with headteacher **Mrs Kate Keane**. “They were excited to learn the function of the Ultrasound scanner and how it works,” said Mrs Keane.

Dr Osagie added “We were very lucky to have an ultrasound donated to us by EMEF. It is a £27,500 piece of equipment. The Labour Ward theatre did not have its own dedicated ultrasound for the anaesthetic team to use. Donating this machine has gone a long way in improving the care we give to pregnant women in the hospital as it will help us to be able to put in difficult cannulas, also when epidural for pain relief is difficult to perform, the ultrasound helps make this easier.“

Excellence on ageing

4 May 2023



Between the two censuses of 2011 and 2021 the over 65 population of Epsom and Ewell increased by 16.1% to a total of about 14,670. About 18% of the total Borough population of about 81,000. As of 2021, Epsom and Ewell is the 12th most densely populated of the South East’s 64 local authority areas, with around 17 people living on each football pitch-sized area of land. Surrey University is doing something about ageism.

Combatting ageism and promoting the interests of older people through scientific research is crucial, particularly as a response to the discriminatory treatment they faced during the pandemic, according to the Director of the University of Surrey’s new Centre of Excellence on Ageing.

The University of Surrey’s new centre is in partnership with the Global Initiative on Ageing (GIA), which operates under the auspices of the United Nations. The Centre was formally launched on 26 April 2023, with the University hosting a formal dinner that brings together notable scholars and stakeholders focused on ageing. This was followed by a one-day showcase on 27 April, celebrating Surrey’s work in areas such as ageing and work, artificial intelligence and ageing, sleep patterns, nutrition, and generational shifts in ageing.

Professor **Max Lu**, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

“The Surrey community is deeply passionate about improving the standard of wellbeing for our elderly population – this is evidenced in our internationally-recognised research activities in areas such as improving the quality of sleep of

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individuals living with dementia, improving inclusion of the elderly population in the tourism and hospitality sector, and investigating the mechanisms underlying osteoarthritis and finding ways to treat it.

“The new Centre of Excellence for Ageing will serve to amplify these efforts, allowing us to understand more and provide genuine solutions that help to enrich the lives of our elderly relatives, friends, and fellow citizens while safeguarding their rights.”

More than 1.1 billion people worldwide are over 65 years of age; by 2050, the global population will be more than 2.1 billion.

GIA’s mission is to support the goals laid out within the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by improving the overall standard of living, participation and inclusion of the world’s ageing population. One of GIA’s key implementing partners is the UN’s Institute for Training and Research, UNITAR, which is dedicated to training and capacity building on a whole range of policy-based areas.

Professor **Paul A. Townsend**, the inaugural Director of the Centre of Excellence on Ageing and Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Surrey, said:

“I am incredibly proud to be part of our new Centre of Excellence on Ageing, which is a critical part of a global movement that recognises the need for a better understanding of the life course and ageing. We will focus on processes ranging from preconception through to appreciating the treatment of our elderly population. The pandemic disproportionately affected our seniors, leaving them to face discrimination and a lack of sympathy, with many left in care homes unable to see their families. This new Centre is dedicated to helping older people to benefit from the latest research and greatest advances in science today. They should receive the respect, care and quality of life that they deserve.”

Silvia Neira, Vice President of GIA, said:

“We are thrilled to announce the launch of the Centre of Excellence on Ageing at the University of Surrey. This new initiative will build on the incredible work of the GIA Foundation, expanding our capacity to research and engage with the many intersections of ageing and longevity.”

Surrey Prof. gets £2M for AI driven clean energy

4 May 2023



The University of Surrey’s Professor **Jin Xuan** has won a prestigious Open Fellowship from the **Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council** (EPSRC) to develop the next generation of clean energy devices using advanced artificial intelligence.

As well as using electrochemical technology to explore established applications like green hydrogen production and CO2 reduction, Prof Xuan will also develop future technologies, with a particular focus on cleaner, greener fertilisers.

Prof Xuan said:

“Manufacturing fertiliser to help crops grow is hugely carbon intensive, but if we can achieve a breakthrough on the difficult electrochemical reduction of nitrogen to generate ammonia, we could make significant steps to address this.

“The answer lies in artificial intelligence to design the complex electrochemical devices, but many existing algorithms in this area don’t offer explanations for how the AI comes to its conclusions. The relation between the inputs and outputs is a mystery, but I plan to open the ‘black box’ to find results which are reliable, explainable and transferable.”

The five-year fellowship will enable Prof Xuan to develop Explainable Artificial Intelligence tools and models which lead to an automated loop of materials design, manufacturing and testing of electrochemical devices. Prof Xuan will work with industrial partners from Siemens PSE, Intelligent Energy and Johnson Matthey.

Prof Xuan said:

“My ambitions for this research are huge and can only be achieved with long-term support like this. The flexibility offered to me through this fellowship will enable me to shape my research as findings emerge, following the solutions which reveal themselves through my work, in partnership with other academics and industry. I’m extremely grateful to the EPSRC for this support.”

President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, Professor **Max Lu**, said:

“Jin exemplifies Surrey’s values of inspiration and innovation. He is ambitious about solving global challenges, working collaboratively with interdisciplinary researchers and innovators. We’re very proud of him for winning this fellowship.”

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We can help your school reunite.

4 May 2023



Follow the example of a 50 year reunion for Ewell County Secondary School reported here. Epsom and Ewell Times can help your school reunion by putting the word out in these pages.

Former pupils of **Ewell County Secondary School** gathered at **The Station** pub in **Stoneleigh** on Saturday to reminisce and celebrate fifty years or more since they left and entered the working world.



The poster for the event borrowed from the **Rolling Stones** back catalogue to stress: “This Could Be The Last Time” and over a hundred schoolmates took heed and presented themselves for register. The reunion was aimed at those pupils that left the old schools then situated in Ruxley Lane and Danetree Road between 1971 and 1976. Organised by Ray and Bob Baxter, Tony Jones, Dave Reynolds, Martin Knight, Kevan McIlroy and Kevin Merchant the event was a huge success with only minimal corporal punishment and detentions administered. Friendships that were interrupted by leaving school and moving away in some cases were resumed after fifty years. Bob Baxter commented: “It was wonderful to lean our walking sticks against the wall, kick our zimmer frames away and boogie to T. Rex, Slade and The Rubettes again.” By popular demand another reunion is being planned for 2025.

Surrey academic wins ‘Woman in Innovation’ award for tackling bias against neurodivergent people

4 May 2023

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On International Women's Day **Surrey University** announce a prize winner among its female academics.

Online technologies to help neurodivergent people successfully enter the workforce are being developed at the University of Surrey, led by **Dr Alison Callwood**, in a project that has seen her win one of Innovate UK's *'Women in Innovation'* awards.

The *Generating Neurodiverse Inclusion Selection (GENIUS)* project will explore what communication methods and personalisation options could be used to optimise access and performance in online interviews and assessments for those with neurodiverse conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia.

Dr Alison Callwood, GENUIS project lead and Senior Lecturer in Integrated Care at the University of Surrey, said:

"Approximately 15 to 20 per cent of the UK population is neurodivergent. The unfairness they experience in the recruitment field is unjustified. Tackling this issue will not only improve the working lives of neurodivergent people by unlocking the valuable contribution they can make, but it will also boost the economy by helping address the rising number of unfilled positions in the workforce.

"I am delighted to receive this award which includes a £50,000 grant. The support it offers is invaluable to this project."

This project will build on previous work by Dr Callwood who has developed the successful interview tool *SAMMI* which reduces bias and provides robust, reliable, and cost-efficient interviews and assessments for employers.

Helping to further the project, the funding awarded to Dr Callwood will give her access to tailored business coaching, mentoring and a wide range of networking and training opportunities designed to help grow this innovative project.

Professor Paul Townsend, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, said:

"Congratulations to Alison on winning this award. Being one of only 50 recipients of this prize, shows the strength of her project and her hard work and dedication in this field. Her skills and the diversity of her career are valued greatly here at Surrey, and I am proud to have her in our team."

Indro Mukerjee, CEO, Innovate UK, the United Kingdom's innovation agency,

"We are proud to support this group of trailblazing women who are changing the world through the power of their ideas. Their innovations underpin solutions inspired by societal and environment challenges, as well as their own lived experiences. I hope their stories will encourage and inspire others to follow their lead."

Financial literacy for young in Epsom and Ewell

4 May 2023



Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has successfully delivered the first Financial Literacy Course to **Epsom & Ewell High School** (EEHS) to over 100 year 12 students. The course helps young people understand about money, loans, credit, how to stay out of debt and even how to save.

Every year, CAEE sees many people with serious and complex debt problems. It believes prevention is better than cure so are keen to deliver financial literacy training to as many young people as possible across the borough.
The six week course held last term was funded by Surrey County Councillors **Steven McCormick** and **Bernie Muir**

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together with **Alex Coley**, trustee of local charity **The Ruxley Foundation** and funding from the **Aviva Community Fund.**

Photo: James Newman, Headteacher; Marian Anghileri, Money Adviser CAEE; Cllr Alex Coley, Chair of Trustees of The Ruxley Foundation (funder); Cllr Steve McCormick (funder); Cllr Bernie Muir (funder); Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP; Louise Curd, Publicity & Fundraising Manager CAEE; Hilary Egan, Head of Sixth From, EEHS.

Hannah Cobbold, Assistant Headteacher of EEHS said: "This financial literacy project has not only provided the students at EEHS the skills they need to be financially aware in the future, but also an understanding of the importance of being financially literate. We were extremely impressed with the time and energy that Citizens Advice put in to collaborating with the school to create a scheme of work which was student friendly and
also informative."

A celebratory assembly was held to conclude the course where each student received a certificate and a contact card to enable easy contact to Citizens Advice in case of future money worries.

One EEHS student said: "On behalf of the sixth form and as a student here I want to give our gratitude towards the council for including us within this supportive pilot scheme. From this programme we've all been able to take away something positive; specific to each of us which we can implement into university and many other aspects in our future; whether that be learning about tax , loans, mortgages , credit cards; being scam aware and much more!"

"The sessions are one we'll never forget; as we've all taken the first step to become our own money managers and we know that if we ever need; no matter the severity; we can turn towards Citizens Advice. Thanks again for all your support."

Lisa Davis, CEO of CAEE said: "We are grateful to Epsom & Ewell High School and all the funders for enabling us to deliver this pilot project and look forward to continuing our work with EEHS to similarly support future students. Its success means that we can work towards securing funding to roll out this important messaging about managing finances to other schools in the borough in order to reach as many of our young people as possible".

Any schools or individuals interested in supporting or delivering the project can contact CAEE via its website www.caee.org.uk

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Surrey University levelling up

4 May 2023



Vocationally minded local students get a boost as the University of Surrey is set to accept T Levels. A more diverse pool of students will be able to enjoy access to a world-class education at the University of Surrey, as it announces that it will now accept the rigorous new vocational T Level qualifications for selected programmes.

The move follows a joint task group with Farnborough College of Technology (FCoT), providing the T Level provider perspective. Starting in the 2023/24 academic year, several undergraduate programmes across Chemistry, Nursing and Midwifery, and Bioscience programmes will accept T Levels.

Photo: Surrey University campus. cc Tanya Hart

Professor **Osama Khan**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic from the University of Surrey, said: The University of Surrey has always been a leader in employability – with its graduates being amongst the most employable in the UK. Embracing the continued revolution in vocational qualifications is a natural move for us as we continue to marry the very best in teaching and learning with the strongest possible links with employers and industry.

T Levels are new 2-year courses which are taken after GCSEs and are broadly equivalent in size to 3 A Levels. Launched in September 2020, these courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and education providers so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for entry into skilled employment, an apprenticeship or related technical study through further or higher education.

T Levels offer students practical and knowledge-based learning at a school or college and on-the-job experience through an industry placement of at least 315 hours – approximately 45 days. The courses are available at selected colleges, schools and other providers across England.

A University of Surrey student arriving with us through the T Level route and completing an industrial placement as part of their studies with us will graduate with years of experience in the workplace – setting them up for a flying start to a successful career.

Virginia Barrett, Principal CEO at Farnborough College of Technology, said: "The University of Surrey has been working with us to understand these new, employer-led qualifications, and we are pleased to see that they will now enable many of

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our T Level students to progress onto their degree programmes. Our T Level students are frequently among the most driven and career-focused at our Ofsted Outstanding college. The T Levels we offer have been introduced to match the local jobs market, so we are confident that the combined offer of studying locally at FCoT and the University of Surrey will be a great benefit to both students and their future employers.

“Also, our own University Centre at Farnborough offers learners from all T Level programmes a progression route into higher education, including a range of accelerated degrees, higher national qualifications, and higher-level apprenticeships, all taught on-site at Farnborough. I invite all those considering their post-16 options to visit our next Open Event to explore their T Level options with us, safe in the knowledge that these can lead to fantastic opportunities within higher education, employment, and apprenticeships.”

T Levels are an alternative to A levels, BTEC, apprenticeships and other post-16 courses.
To explore FCoT’s range of T Levels, visit www.farn-ct.ac.uk/t-levels.

Epsom students put Xmas style in Centre

4 May 2023



Fashion Imaging & Styling students studying at **Epsom’s University for the Creative Arts** (UCA) have created a festive window display for the town’s Ashley shopping Centre.

The local students created work that interpreted the festive season through cutting-edge fashion styling and eye-catching photography.

Their work was inspired by colour themes, seasonal climate, festive paraphernalia, and clothing – from wearing a wrapping paper design, referencing traditional tartans, or joining the ski elite.

“Collaborating with local shops and retail allows us to play an active part in the Epsom community. It will give residents the chance to view and share in the creative journey of our young creatives,” **said Martin Sparkes, a senior lecturer at UCA Epsom.**

The Ashley Centre’s Manager added: *“The Ashley centre is the heart of the town of Epsom for retail, and it is important that we work closely with the community. So, we are delighted to be able to collaborate with these talented students by giving them the opportunity to showcase their talent, as well as learn more about the retail industry from the shopping centre.”*

The window installation will be up until the end of January 2023.



Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

4 May 2023

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A £40 million project to improve education facilities for some of Surrey's most vulnerable children has moved to its next stage. **Surrey County Council** is currently not providing enough spaces in its "alternative provision" schools, which cater for children who have been excluded from mainstream schools or have additional educational needs. [Ed. SEND = special educational needs and disability.]

The current facilities are also described by the council as in "extremely poor" and "dilapidated condition".

It is hoped that being able to provide places in council-run facilities will unlock more than £1m a year because the cost of a place with private providers is around £30,000 more per year than in an authority setting.

A meeting of Surrey County Council's cabinet on Tuesday (October 25) heard from the authority's cabinet member for education and learning that the new and redeveloped sites would be "first class".

Councillor **Clare Curran** (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West) outlined plans for sites across Surrey which would be redeveloped, demolished or built from scratch to aim to increase the authority's capacity.

Currently, according to council documents, the authority can only provide 196 spaces, out of a total of 240 that are required by law.

Legally, the county council must secure suitable, full-time alternative education for children who, because of reasons including illness or exclusion, would not be in education unless it was arranged for them.

It must also make sure there is provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who have Education, Health, and Care Plans in place.

Alternative provision is often a short-term solution until a child can return to mainstream education or move to a dedicated school, but in some cases is a longer-term solution.

Cllr Curran said the new sites would provide an environment where children would feel valued, could access high quality curriculum and get the emotional, health and well-being support they needed.

She said: "These short-stay schools can include some of the most vulnerable and marginalised children and young people that are in the county. We really want to ensure that we're providing them not only with first-class accommodation, but a first-class learning experience."

The plans, which would add 44 alternative provision places, include new sites in Elmbridge, on a council-owned site at Thamesfield Farm North, in either Surrey Heath or Runnymede and a new school on a new site for Reigate Valley College.

There are also plans to demolish the current Fordway School in Spelthorne, with the school relocating temporarily to Wey Valley College in Guildford while a new school is built, and plans to requires remodel and expand the Wey Valley College site.

The targets for the school sites are autumn and winter 2024.

An officers' report said: "The current assets are in extremely poor condition and lack capacity to provide adequate places in appropriate locations across the county. Existing accommodation across the current nine buildings is significantly undersized and the buildings are in a dilapidated condition which is likely to render them unusable within the next two years. As such, the existing accommodation does not enable the provision of a full statutory educational offer that meets the educational needs of Surrey's most vulnerable learners."

Cabinet members approved the £43.2m budget for the project, which should also generate £5.77m in capital receipts when current council land is sold off.

The officers' report showed that the average cost of a child going to an independent facility was around £52,000 per year, compared to £22,000 per year for a place at a maintained specialist school.

The additional places in council-run schools would mean a difference of £1.32m a year to the council's budget.

Surrey Skills at the Summit

4 May 2023



Surrey County Council launches **Surrey Skills Pla**n at **Skills Summit** November 10. A landmark event in Surrey next month will bring together education providers and businesses in a bid to turbo charge Surrey's local economy.

The Surrey Skills Summit at **Sandown Racecourse** on 10 November will give leading local businesses the opportunity to

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outline what skills they need in the years to come. Education providers including colleges and universities will be on hand to discuss tailoring vocational offers and training, with a view to developing Surrey's workforce of the future.

The event will also launch the **Surrey Skills Plan**, including recommendations and actions to help deliver the skills, jobs and opportunities for Surrey's economy to thrive.

The Summit will also include:
 Presentations from experts on the national skills landscape, including developments and their implications for Surrey businesses and training providers.
 Case studies from Surrey businesses who have taken creative approaches to meeting their recruitment, retention and skills needs
 The chance for businesses to have their voice heard to help build a world class skills system in Surrey that meets the needs of all businesses and residents.

Learn more and register here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/surrey-skills-summit-tickets-415842374737

Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth, said:
"Surrey has the UK's second largest GDP after London and for decades has been a natural home for companies from across the world. As competition for talent becomes tougher and skills shortages become more pronounced, it's essential for Surrey to become more proactive in planning for the future. The Skills Plan and events like the Skills Summit are essential for growing a sustainable economy for Surrey. We need to come together to provide the right conditions for business to thrive, delivering skills, jobs and opportunity for all."

Surrey County Council News

Surrey's Safe Drive Stay Alive returns

4 May 2023



To **Dorking Halls** next month, for its first live performances in three years. The live show has been performed in front of 190,000 young people between the ages of 16-19 since its inception in 2005 and is an emotionally engaging and thought-provoking education production, coordinated by **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service**.

Working with the other emergency services, the event aims to raise road safety awareness amongst young people and positively influence their attitudes to driving as well as their role as a passenger in cars.

The performance has been designed to engage an audience of young learner and novice young drivers, a group that is at higher risk of collisions, injury and death on the UK's roads and aims to make young people aware of their responsibilities as road users and the wide ranging and potentially devastating consequences should these not be taken seriously. The ultimate aim is to reduce the number of road traffic collisions involving young people and the number of deaths and injuries amongst this at-risk driver group.

The performances comprise a series of films featuring people recalling true stories and real-life impacts of road traffic collisions. Between each of these films, speakers, including personnel from the emergency services and members of the public personally affected by a road death, recount their own experiences.

Over the last 17 years, 285 performances have been held, with, this year, 70 different schools, colleges, youth groups and even army bases from across the county attending. In the past two years, Coronavirus restrictions forced the event to be staged online, where an estimated 28,000 young people tuned in.

This year, Safe Drive Stay Alive are offering free tickets to the public performance on Wednesday 9 November, providing an opportunity to witness this impactful performance for yourself. Spaces are limited, so secure your today by visiting: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/safe-drive-stay-alive-tickets-430812460667

The event has been supported by organisations including the **Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Surrey, Surrey RoadSafe, Toyota GB**, **esure** and **Sheilas' Wheels, Ringway, Surrey Educational Trust** (SCC), as well as the **High Sheriff of Surrey**, the **Safer Guildford Partnership** and **Safer Surrey Heath**. Additional funding is provided by a large number of town and parish councils across Surrey. This funding allows the event to be put on free of charge, and cover venue hire and transportation costs for attendees to and from the venue. To find out more about Safe Drive Stay Alive, please visit: https://safedrivesurrey.org/

Surrey County Council News

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Inspirational Surrey Syrian awarded

4 May 2023



Surrey Arts inclusion music teacher **Raghad Haddad** has won the Inspirational Music Leader Award at the Youth Music Awards 2022. Raghad received her award on 19 October in Troxy London in recognition of her work for Surrey Arts as a diverse leader of refugee background, supporting vulnerable children in Surrey.

Raghad Haddad is a viola player from Yabroud, a small town in the mountains north of Damascus. Since being granted asylum in the UK in 2018 she has performed at numerous charity events in London and Brighton and recently performed with Damon Albarn, The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and The Orchestra of Syrian Musicians.

On behalf of Surrey Arts Raghad has worked on multiple projects supporting vulnerable children including SEND and refugee children and has been the executive producer of a major international music project involving the United Nations and 120 participants from around the world.

After finding out she won the award, Raghad said: *"I was speechless when they announced my name as the winner of the Inspirational Music Leader at the Youth Music Award 2022 this week!*

"It's such an honour to have received this award and I'm so grateful to my colleagues at Surrey Arts for the support they have given me since I arrived in the UK from Syria.

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity, not only to rebuild my own life but also the privilege to help others affected by war, poverty, climate change and discrimination. Sadly, the need to support displaced communities is not getting smaller and I look forward to supporting more of your transformational projects in the months and years ahead."

Kavyan Hajirostami also won the Young Leader Award for their work with Big Leaf. Big Leaf support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) across Surrey and work closely with Surrey Arts on a range of music and arts projects. You can find more information about Big Leaf here: https://www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk/

Surrey County Council news

Anyone for tennis and computers?

4 May 2023



Pupils at Shawley Community Primary Academy **Epsom Downs** will put their racket skills to the test this half-term and take part in an exciting afternoon of tennis coaching and computer-based learning activities, with education charity, **Rackets Cubed**.

The unique initiative combines racket sports with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) lessons at the local Sutton Sports Village, rounded off with a well-deserved and nutritious hot meal for the budding athletes and computer whizzes.

Supporting all children to be healthy, happy and ambitious learners is at the heart of Shawley Primary Academy's approach. The school has partnered with Rackets Cubed to help widen access into sports and STEM learning for more

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children in the borough, empowering each pupil to realise their full academic and sporting potential.

The charity aims to improve the lives of children and young people across the UK and raise aspirations through its integrated programme of sport, education and nutrition learning. As part of the enriching afternoon, pupils in years 5 and 6 will be getting served with:

- Racket sports – a structured coaching session with a professional sports coach
- STEM activities – one hour of fun and engaging computer-based activities delivered alongside the sports coaching, to complement the core school curriculum
- Nutrition – A healthy and hearty meal will be provided at the end of the session to help the children re-energise, whilst learning about the importance of nutrition for classroom and sporting achievement

While tennis fans bid farewell to old legends such as Serena Williams and Roger Federer this year, the future is looking bright with newcomers such as Naomi Osaka and Emma Raducanu. This makes it a perfect time to introduce more local children to the sport and nurture the next generation of diverse tennis talent.

By providing pupils with the opportunity to try extracurricular opportunities that otherwise might not be easily accessible, Shawley and Rackets Cubed are working to help children dream bigger, develop their skills and discover new passions.

Sports Lead at Shawley Community Primary Academy, said:

"We are very excited here at Shawley to begin this partnership with Rackets Cubed and help break down barriers to sports and STEM learning. The positive growth and self-fulfilment of our pupils is central to what we do, so being able to align ourselves with a charity that is also driven by these aims was incredibly important to us. Sports can create an infinite number of opportunities and benefits when it's regularly engaged in, so it wonderful to work with Rackets Cubed and help our pupils access professional coaching and training, which all contributes to their wider success."

For more information about Shawley Community Academy, please visit: https://www.shawleyprimaryacademy.co.uk/

"Sorry" is not such a hard word for Surrey

4 May 2023



Surrey County Council's leader said the authority will "learn lessons" from problems which left 150 families without school transport. Issuing an apology on behalf of the council, **Councillor Tim Oliver** said the authority had to "hold its hands up" after children, many with additional needs, had to find alternative travel arrangements. The cabinet member for education and learning, **Councillor Clare Curran** (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West), echoed his apology to the "families who have had such anxiety and delays" since the start of term.

Image: Tim Oliver Surrey County Council leader – credit Surrey Live

In a full council meeting on Tuesday (October 11) Cllr Oliver (Conservative, Weybridge) said a change in policy, along with increased demand and driver shortages, led to a backlog in processing applications. He added: "This has been a very complex and difficult situation and we have to hold our hands up on occasions like this to say that we have let some people down. However, I know that the home to school transport team have been working day and night alongside our customer services team to help as many families as they can."

He committed to members that the authority would learn lessons from the beginning of the school year.
At the start of term, nearly 150 families were left without school transport as the authority attempted to work through more than 500 applications.

Parents came forward to the LDRS* with stories of long journeys on public transport and children who weren't able to stay for the whole school day because of sibling pick ups and drop offs. A council spokesperson at the time said there had been an increase in staffing as well as temporary financial allowances being given to families to make alternative arrangements.

Cllr Nick Darby (Dittons and Weston Green Residents, The Dittons) thanked local media for bringing attention to the issue and said there had been a "woeful lack of communication" with families when transport was withdrawn or delayed before the start of the school term. He added: "Lessons need to be learned, and quickly, to avoid any repetition. Sufficient resources in place well in advance, regular communication. This year [there was] none of that, the problem could have been identified months ago. Sorry may be the hardest word but here it is entirely appropriate, as you have said leader, addressed to our numerous left-behind children, their left-behind and stressed parents, our left-behind officers doing their best to sort out the problems."

Cllr Curran said it was not the intention that a new policy, which said individual transport would only be agreed in

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extenuating circumstances, would push more parents through the appeals process.

Meeting documents also showed that no SEND (Special Education and Needs Disability) children had had their solo transport removed since the new policy was implemented. She said: “I repeat and reinforce the leader’s apology to those families who have had such anxiety and delays in the recent weeks related to home to school travel assistance.”

Saying the council chamber had been turned into a “political environment”, Cllr Oliver admitted that though the authority’s ambition was to ensure that no one in Surrey was left behind, “that isn’t currently the case”. He added: “But it is our ambition and it will remain our ambition to make sure that we do look after every vulnerable member of this county, whether that’s a family or a child or any resident.”

Cllr Curran confirmed a review was being carried out into what had gone wrong.

See our earlier report: Families ‘in limbo’ as SCC fails on school transport

*LDRS BBC’s Local Democracy Reporting Service with which Epsom and Ewell Times is in partnership

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