

## Inquiry is launched into pupils 'vanishing'

THE council has asked the Education Funding Agency to investigate why pupils at "one or two" academy chains in Croydon vanish ahead of their exam year.

The Advertiser revealed last week that council officers had raised concerns about falling pupil numbers at several schools.

Paul Greenhalgh, director of children, families and learning, told a scrutiny meeting on Tuesday that his office had written to one academy chain after analysing data about pupils who took GCSEs last summer.

Tim Pollard, cabinet member for education, later told the Advertiser the council had contacted "one or two" organisations, but refused to identify them.

Both the Harris Federation and Oasis Community Learning, which run a total of nine academies in the borough, featured in a Guardian investigation last month. Both then denied being contacted by the council.

It has since emerged that the academy chains in question have not been contacted directly.

The council confirmed last Friday that it contacted the Education Funding Agency – a branch of the Department for Education (DfE) created to manage funding for academies and free schools – to discover where the pupils went.

The Harris Federation had six schools on the Guardian's list of those whose 2013 GCSE year group shrank the most between 2010 and 2013.

### Dropped

At Harris Academy South Norwood, pupil numbers in the year group that took GCSEs last summer dropped 22 per cent, from 197 in January 2012 to 169 a year later.

The Advertiser requested details from Harris about pupil movement this week but was told that the information was unavailable because it was half-term.

Cllr Pollard said it was not uncommon for pupils to leave in Year 10 or 11 but there was evidence it was happening "disproportionately in one or two places".

Local authorities do not have access to information about pupil movement for academies.

Addiscombe councillor Sean Fitzsimons, who raised issues highlighted by the Guardian with the council, has called for the investigation to be "transparent".

A council spokesman said: "On the basis of the partial information we have, we have written to the Education Funding Authority. We now have to see what action they take."

A DfE spokesman said: "We have received a letter from Croydon Council and we will respond shortly."

# Hundreds pay respects to admired former Para

## Stuart 'Ginger' Meade served his regiment for more than 40 years



**EXEMPLARY:** Stuart Meade, aka Ginger Meade, long-serving secretary of the Croydon branch of the Parachute Regimental Association died on February 1

By Rachel Millard

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SOME 200 former and serving soldiers turned out to pay their respects to a man who dedicated much of his life to their regiment.

The Parachute Regiment soldiers (Paras) lined up outside Croydon Crematorium on Friday to honour former Para Stuart "Ginger" Meade, who died on February 1 after a long illness.

Mr Meade had served in the regiment for more than 40 years, first as a soldier then as secretary of the Croydon branch of the Parachute Regimental Association



**HONOURED:** Serving and former Paras pay their respects to Mr Meade

(PRA). More recently he was also regional secretary for London.

PRA branch president Colonel John Power paid tribute to the 65-year-old, with whom he served 42 years ago.

### Devoted

He said: "Ginger would invariably be the first to visit any ill or injured comrades, however far away, and had led the way in rais-

ing substantial amounts for regimental charities.

"In short, Ginger devoted his life to the parachute regiment and the association that he loved and that he had contributed so much to over the years, continuing to lead from the front and to display the courageous and exemplary qualities in his personal life for which the regiment is renowned.

"His many friends are full of

admiration for the brave and forthright manner in which he has coped with his illness, whilst maintaining a robust military sense of humour."

### Eulogy

Colonel Power delivered the eulogy at the funeral, attended by about 200 friends and family members alongside the Paras.

He said afterwards: "He was

selfless and courageous to the end, and well known and liked throughout the PRA [which has branches throughout the UK and abroad], as evidenced by the numbers at his funeral, some of whom travelled from abroad."

Mr Meade leaves behind his wife Maureen, two sons, Andrew and Stephen, and one grandson, Henry, also known as "Little Ginger".



**IN THE FINALS:** The winning team from Coloma Convent Girls School at The Oval cricket ground

## Girls show head for business

PUPILS at Coloma Convent Girls School recently triumphed in the London finals of the Real Business challenge, held at The Oval cricket ground.

More than 750 schools entered the competition. Coloma is now down to the last 10.

The team is made up of Year 10 pupils Kate Clancy, Tunu Brown, Alicia Sullivan, Emily Rowe, Rebecca Di Natalie, Fallon Tambini, Louise Bonnici and Mia Fernandos.

The girls put together a promotional campaign for a charity called Street Games, advertising an event at the Olympic Park in August.

They created a video, mobile phone app and poster and presented their campaign to a panel of judges, who named Coloma the overall winners for their "diverse and inclusive campaign".

The girls have also been rewarded with a night in a London hotel, a restaurant meal, and tickets for a West End show.

## Musician's short film soundtrack scores win at the Bafta awards

A FORMER Whitgift School pupil was "thrilled" to be involved in an animation that won a Bafta award this week.

Matt Kelly composed the music for *Sleeping With The Fishes*, which was recognised as the Best British Short Animation at the awards ceremony on Sunday.

The Whitgift alumnus, who also won a student Oscar last year, credited the South Croydon school, which he left in 1994, for his success.

He said: "Whitgift had a strong music department and really encouraged my development.

"It was while I was there that I got involved in music production, which then developed at university and into my working life."

*Sleeping With The Fishes* is about a fishmonger called Sonja who falls in love with a man who looks like a rainbow trout. It was produced by the National Film and Television School.

Mr Kelly, who now lives in Hackney, added: "I found it



**SUCCESS:** Matt Kelly composed the music for a short animation that won a Bafta award

really easy to compose for it. "I actually wrote the music within three hours, which is incredibly short. It all happened really quickly and was a real joy to work on."

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