

# SOUTHEND HAVE ‘MOST IMPROVED’ TEST RESULTS IN WHOLE COUNTRY



James Courtenay, outside Darlinghurst Primary School

JUBILANT council bosses are celebrating a remarkable turnaround after Southend achieved record results in school tests for 11-year-olds this year.

The figures mean Southend is now in the top tier of councils for Key Stage 2 results, jumping from 105th position to 32nd.

It means Southend is the most improved authority in the country, after more 11 year olds than ever before – 80 per cent – achieved the expected level 4 or above in reading, writing, and maths.

It is now hoped its improvement will see more Southend children go to the area’s grammar schools, after concerns were raised last year that only just 184 of 2013’s 772 places went to Southend’s children – less than 24 per cent.

Grammar schools argued they were in a difficult position as it would not be right to lower standards.

Tory councillor James Courtenay, who was responsible for education until the Conservatives were ousted in May, said: “It has a knock-on effect as Key Stage 2 progress will see more Southend children go to the borough’s grammar schools.

“Me and my officers have had to ruffle a few feathers and make difficult decisions along the way, but I’m delighted with these numbers.

“We have been tenacious in our challenge to schools and they in turn have worked in a strong partnership with us to address under-performance.”

On Friday, it was revealed that Leigh North Street Junior School had come out of special measures in record time, with the council’s relationship with the school cited as a reason for the swift turnaround.

In 2013, 74 per cent of students attained level four or above in their Key Stage 2 exams – which was a record at the time.

Labour’s Anne Jones, councillor responsible for education on the new administration, said: “These are magnificent figures and thanks to the hard work of everyone involved from the teachers and staff to council officers who have shown such strong leadership in this area.

“This is about getting the basics right and as a council we are showing great attention to detail.

“We have boosted attendance at all levels through a number of initiatives and programmes and things like that have had a positive impact on these results. This is combined with our continued drive to improve our local schools and make them rated good or better.

