

The Honours List focuses on the head of an Embridge college, a campaigning mum one of the UK's top young cops and some of the borough's Olympians

# Principal is awarded OBE for services to education

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THE principle of an Embridge sixth-form college has been honoured in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

Keith Blackwell, principal at Esher College in Weston Green, Thames Ditton, was awarded the Order of the British Empire in recognition of his services to local and national further education.

He trained as a teacher 25 years ago and worked at two sixth-form colleges in Hampshire before taking the post of principal at Esher College 11 years ago.

"During that time I've

been allowed to contribute to a wider arena by getting involved with advising the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families)," he said.

"I generally try to give some advice on behalf of sixth-form colleges.

"I am involved with the Association of Colleges, so I meet with DCSF officials and ministers and provide a viewpoint of what are the issues facing sixth-form colleges.

"In the Further Education world, there are some big colleges that have a different remit to colleges like Esher College.

"They are linked with employers and focus on getting people into jobs, whereas we are focused on getting

our students through their exams and into university."

He added: "Sixth-form colleges are going to be taken under the local authority's fold. We will become part of Surrey County Council as of 2010. So I talk to the DCSF about some of the issues colleges might be facing and some of the pitfalls."

Mr Blackwell discovered he had been awarded the OBE when he looked on the internet shortly after midnight on New Year's Day.

"I was stunned," he said. "It's not only a great honour for me but for the college as well because my college has allowed me to get involved with other things and I have faith that it will cope in my absence because of the great staff."



Keith Blackwell, principal of Esher College, has been awarded an OBE.