

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Decision Maker</b>	Executive Member for Education & Skills
<b>Date:</b>	13 January 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Attainment of Children and Young People in Hampshire Schools 2020
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name:** David Hardcastle, County Education Manager (Secondary)

**Tel:** 0370 779 6795      **Email:** david.hardcastle@hants.gov.uk

#### **Purpose of this Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive Member with information about attainment outcomes in 2020 in Hampshire and how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the process used to allocate grades to students so that they could successfully transition to the next phase of their education.

#### **Recommendation**

- 2 That the contents of this report are noted by the Executive Member for Education and Skills.

#### **Executive Summary**

- 3 This report explores the issues that arose due to the cancellation of formal testing arrangements within schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It sets out the history of DfE decision making which led to students receiving grades based upon teacher assessment and an algorithm created to predict grades from historic performance. It analyses the issues that arise from adopting these methodologies. Finally, it examines whether students living in circumstances of relative disadvantage were negatively affected by the process used compared to their peers.

#### **Contextual information**

- 4 In March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that schools would close and that both the Key Stage 2 (KS2) tests and GCSE public examinations would be cancelled. Ofqual was tasked with developing a process that would enable individual pupils to receive grades for the subjects that they had studied to enable access to their next stage of education or training.

- 5 As the purpose of this process lay with supporting individual pupils with their 'next steps', the Department for Education (DfE) announced that there would be no national reporting of finalised Key Stage 4 (KS4) results at a school or local authority level. No steps were taken to replace the KS2 national tests.
- 6 Consequently, it is not possible to report on the attainment of pupils across the Hampshire school system to the same degree as has been the case in previous years. This report instead explains some of the issues related to awarding grades this year and draws some conclusions about issues worthy of note.

### **The Ofqual Process (the 'algorithm')**

- 7 Following the cancellation of the GCSE public examinations, Ofqual was tasked with devising a process that would enable GCSE grades to be accurately and reliably assigned to pupils through a process that whilst fair, would be appropriately rigorous.
- 8 At that time, concerns were expressed about solely relying on teacher assessed grades. Ofqual quoted research that indicated significant discrepancies between teacher assessed grades and those awarded through examinations. It is perceived to be easier to maintain a level of reliability across a team of examination markers than it is to ensure it across the large number of teachers across the country.
- 9 Ofqual proposed a process that made use of pupils' KS2 performance along with teacher assessments in an attempt to bring greater reliability and accuracy. The thinking was that by using the historical patterns in the progress that pupils make from their starting points along with teacher assessment, grades could be assigned in a way that meant that similar proportions of pupils would receive similar grades in 2020 as in the past given their starting points, thus maintaining reliability.
- 10 Pupils' attainment on entry (AoE) data (i.e., their average KS2 level in mathematics and reading) for entire cohorts in schools has been used successfully for a number of years now to predict the headline performance of schools on the basis of historical patterns of performance. This fed the thinking that it would be possible to determine the distribution of grades in subjects nationally.
- 11 However, AoE data is less successful at predicting the final grades of individual pupils in individual subjects. The table below shows the range of grades in a range of subjects that pupils who entered secondary schools nationally at level 4B (i.e. the then KS2 national expectation) achieved in 2019.

12 So, 20% of the 4B pupils who entered art and design achieved a grade 3, 22% a grade 4, 21% a grade 5 etc.

%4B pupils attaining each grade	GCSE grade									
	U	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Art and Design	0	3	9	20	22	21	15	6	3	1
English Literature	2	4	10	22	25	21	11	4	1	0
English Language	1	2	8	30	26	20	9	2	1	0
Mathematics	1	5	13	25	34	16	4	1	0	0
French	1	5	17	35	19	15	4	2	1	0
History	5	12	19	24	16	12	8	4	1	0
Geography	2	8	20	30	18	12	6	2	1	0

13 This data exemplifies the challenge in using AoE data to assign grades in specific subjects to specific pupils. In subjects such as French, the most likely grade that level 4B pupils would be awarded across a wide range, was grade 3. In art and design, level 4B pupils were awarded grades across a similar range. However, the figures show that they had the same chance of achieving a grade 3, 4 or 5.

14 Ofqual proposed to use a combination of the teacher assessed grades, the overall ranking of the pupils in the subject in each school based on teachers' knowledge and the AoE data to determine a grade for each pupil. Ofqual's view was that none of these single data sources would produce reliable pupil level grades on their own but this could be achieved through a combination of them.

### **Centre Assessed Grades (CAG)**

15 Schools were tasked with using the information they had about the standard of pupils' on-going work to determine a grade for each pupil in each of the subjects that they sat. Schools were explicitly told that they should not require pupils to sit tests or exams or complete any other work during lockdown to feed into this process. Grades were to be assigned on the basis of the work completed to date. This presented a number of challenges, particularly in situations where pupils might not have produced significant volumes of written work and in subjects in which the new GCSE grading process had only recently been introduced.

16 Through the period of lockdown, the local authority worked with schools to support them in developing processes that would produce the most reliable centre assessed grades based on the evidence that was available. Concern was expressed nationally that disadvantaged pupils might be further disadvantaged by this process. In our work with schools, particular note was given to help schools address any 'unconscious bias' that might creep in. Unconscious bias is the term given to making intuitive judgements that affect our attitudes and behaviours towards other people.

## Outcomes

17 Shortly ahead of the publication of pupils' individual results, the DfE announced that the grades would be based upon the higher of the CAG or the algorithm grade. Anecdotal information shows that a small number of pupils in Hampshire schools were awarded the algorithm grade rather than the CAG. There appears to have been no particular pattern concerning which pupils or subjects or schools in which this happened.

18 Schools have reported their attainment 8 figures to the local authority for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils for 2020. This was done to provide clarity on the performance of disadvantaged pupils given the concerns that had been expressed nationally.

19 A8 is a measure of the average grade pupils achieve across a group of 8 subjects. Again, this is not a qualification but is designed to enable the government, and parents looking at school league tables, to measure and compare school performance. There is a complexity to it as only certain combinations of subjects are eligible. Pupils must study an English qualification, mathematics, three EBacc subjects and have three other qualifying subjects.

20 The table below sets out the figures against those for last year

	A8 (2020)	A8 (2019)
All pupils	51.5	48.5
Disadvantaged pupils	40.5	35.9

21 The 2020 figures cannot be compared directly to those for 2019 as the assessment methods are different. Furthermore, the 2020 figures are school reported rather than from the national dataset. As there is no official national dataset for 2020, we cannot compare the figures against the rest of the country.

- 22 However, it is legitimate to compare the difference in A8 for all pupils between 2020 and 2019 with the difference in the A8 for disadvantaged pupils between 2020 and 2019. Comparing these two differences helps us understand whether disadvantaged pupils have, or have not, been disadvantaged further this year.
- 23 Whilst the performance of disadvantaged pupils still lags behind that of all pupils, the gap has closed. The difference between years for all pupils is 3.0, whereas the difference for disadvantaged pupils is 4.6. Whilst there might have been fears that disadvantaged pupils might 'lose out' nationally because of the process, this has not been the case in Hampshire
- 24 With pupils being awarded higher grades this year, it is conceivable that they might now be following more demanding courses post-16 than might have been the case in previous years. There are concerns that there might be a higher level of pupils 'dropping out' from post-16 courses this year in part due to this, but also as a result of the lack of formal education since March. For example, there is anecdotal evidence that pupils who are following a modern foreign language at A level have found this first term more challenging than similar pupils have previously due to the lack of practice they have had in speaking the language over a significant time frame. However, the data at this stage does not indicate pupils are "dropping out" from courses. However, we will continue to monitor closely the figures for pupils who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) for this cohort over the coming two years and address any concerns that might be raised as a result of them.
- 25 Finally, in our work with schools through the annual visit programme, we have been discussing the lessons learned from the 2020 GCSE series and helping schools to plan ahead of the 2021 examinations. In particular, we have worked with schools to ensure they have a larger portfolio of evidence to assess attainment across the different subject areas. Additionally, we have advised schools to undertake mock examinations early so that the results of those are available to inform any assessments that might need to take place. It is also worth noting that we have increased the number of subject network meetings with school based subject specialists to share the latest advice being promulgated by the examination boards and to share best practice between schools.

## **Performance**

26 There is no national data that can be used to judge GCSE performance this year. The process used to derive grades means that comparisons with previous years are not valid.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

27 **N/A**

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	No
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u> N/A	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u> N/A	<u>Date</u>

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This report sets out the national decision making process regarding the awarding of grades to enable children to transition to their next phase of education. It reports to members on the information that has been reported by schools to the Local Authority. There are no changes to policy proposed and therefore the report will not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.