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## **Press release: Ponteland High School GCSE and vocational results (2020)**

This exam results season has been unlike any other in my 30 years experience as a teacher and Headteacher but I am very pleased that the results for our Y11 cohort have been awarded based on their Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and not through the blunt tool of Ofqual's statistical standardisation model and algorithm that created so much anger and frustration when used to set A-level grades last week.

It is worth explaining what CAGs are and what they are not. They are not teacher assessments but rather the result of a detailed process that initially starts with a teacher assessment and rank order at a class level. Teachers have used their professional experience to make a fair and objective judgement of the grades they believed a student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year. This starting point then had to be reviewed at a subject-wide level by curriculum leaders to ensure that recommended grades were consistently applied by teachers across all classes (within that subject) and an overall rank order agreed. The next stage was for senior leaders to review subject level data in light of historical performance in that subject over the last 3 years to ensure that the final grades were broadly in line with previous performance. For example, if a subject achieved 5% of grades 9-7 in each of the last 3 years it would be difficult to justify recommended grades suggesting 35% this year.

The main difference between the algorithm and CAGs is that we have been able to account for individual prior attainment of students to offer a more nuanced and accurate final grade. In the subject example above, we would not limit the 9-7 grades to 5% just because that has been the previous performance but we would look carefully at the students to discern what was the most appropriate and fairest outcome.

We know that our Y11 cohort has been a brilliant year group and we have been predicting for some time that they would achieve better results than any previous year group. If applied, the algorithm would have limited their successes due to the historical performance of previous year groups whereas the CAGs have enabled us to reflect the potential and high expectations we have always had for this cohort.

In broad terms, this means on two of the key school performance measures we have seen an expected rise:

1. Proportion of students achieving Grade 5 or better in English and Maths
  - a. 2020 results: 60%
  - b. 2019 results: 54%
2. Proportion of students achieving Grade 4 or better in English and Maths
  - a. 2020 results: 81%
  - b. 2019 results: 72%

Headteacher, Kieran McGrane commented:



“This summer has proved to be a very anxious time for our Y11 students following the cancellation of their GCSE exams. This will have only heightened as they watched the debacle surrounding the release of A-level grades.

“I am pleased that Centre Assessment Grades are being used to award final grades to our students as I feel this is the fairest decision under the circumstances. Staff have acted professionally in order to arrive at grades we feel are justified and fair. I know that not everyone will be completely satisfied with their results but I hope that the awarded grades allow all of our students to progress to their next destination.

“We look forward to welcoming the vast majority of our students back to our 6th form as indications are that more are considering this option than might have been the case before the pandemic. This is very pleasing as I know this will be a great option for them.”