



**Kieran McGrane - Headteacher**

Callerton Lane Ponteland Newcastle upon Tyne NE20 9EY

Tel: 01661 824711 E-mail: [phs@ponthigh.org.uk](mailto:phs@ponthigh.org.uk) Website: [www.ponthigh.org.uk](http://www.ponthigh.org.uk) Twitter: @PontHigh

13 August 2020

## **Press release: Ponteland High School A-level and vocational results (2020)**

This year we want to pay tribute to our wonderful Y13 cohort whose last year with us has been so blighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in school closures since mid-March and the cancellation of public exams; this was not the way we would have wished them to finish their five years with us. They have been fantastic ambassadors during their time with us and have added greatly to our school community and culture. They have been excellent role models for our younger students particularly this year when we welcomed Y7 and Y8 into our school.

We know that this year group was set to have a brilliant year and predicted to achieve better than any previous cohort; it is so disappointing that they were not able to do just that by sitting their exams and proving this beyond any doubt. In putting together Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and rank orders, staff were well aware of how well we expected this year group to perform and this was reflected in the data submitted to the various exam boards.

Staff worked diligently and professionally to provide CAGs and rank orders that would do justice to our students and reflect the outcomes we felt confident in predicting for them. This process has been understandably time consuming and has included many professional conversations between colleagues before grades and rank orders were finalised and submitted to exam boards by senior leaders.

The overall picture this year for the school is in line with previous years with 25% of all grades awarded A\*-A or equivalent; 50% A\*-B and 70% A\*-C. On one hand this is welcome but it also means that the national standardisation process has failed to take account of the strengths of this particular cohort. Our experience has been that where individual subjects have had small cohorts there has been little or no change to the CAGs submitted by the school whereas subjects with more than 6 students have experienced changes, often significant changes. In larger subject cohorts we are left with the feeling that CAGs were simply ignored with final grades being awarded based on a statistical model that considered the rank order and not the CAGs.

The late decision to include Mock Exam grades within the appeal system is bizarre but will be welcomed by a number of our students as approximately 55% of them will see an increase in at least one subject grade, assuming that the appeal system, as yet unclear, affords them this reprieve. The concern about using Mock Exams is that they are conducted in very different ways across schools. For example, some schools have 2-3 Mock Exams in Y13; some have open book Mock Exams; some have external invigilators, some don't; some have strict exam conditions, some don't. To suggest that these grades are somehow more relevant than the CAGs that have been submitted is an affront to schools.

We know that many of our Y13 students will be celebrating today, deservedly so, but these celebrations will also be tempered by concern for their fellow students who may have to deal with some initial disappointment. We know that they will all overcome any obstacles in their path and go on to achieve great things. We wish them well in their future careers and lives.



National Support School  
designated by  
  
National College for  
Teaching & Leadership



Proud to be a  
**Schools North East**  
Partner School



**Headteacher comment following the government decision to use Centre Assessed Grades.**

“This whole episode has been poorly handled and it is now obvious that those in charge were all too aware of the large scale downgrading that the statistical standardisation model had arrived at.

“Schools with very small 6th form numbers benefitted as their Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) were accepted without question whereas schools with larger 6th form cohorts such as ours were penalised as CAGs were completely ignored in favour of using the rank order combined with an algorithm. This same algorithm did not account for individual prior attainment, which meant that it was a blunt tool. As a result of these decisions a number of our students experienced a very disappointing day; first with their results and secondly with failing to secure their firm university choices. All of this could and should have been avoided.

“As a Trustee of Schools North East it has been great to see the way the organisation has lobbied for justice along with the voices of individual headteachers and thousands of students across the country. The government decision to finally agree to use CAGs was very welcome as our students will now receive grades that reflect their ability and enable them to take their next steps.

“My remaining concern relates to the fact that the problem has now shifted, without much notice, to universities as many students will now wish to revisit their initial firm offers but their courses may be full. I hope that the universities can provide additional capacity for this year to honour as many offers as possible; we need to see deferral for a year as an option but not the default position.”