



Hinchingsbrooke School

Inspiring excellence Fulfilling potential
A DfE Academy with a Specialism in Sport

Our Ref:AEG/CAP

11 October 2013

Dear Parents,

As many of you will be aware through recent news reports, the Government have now issued a directive regarding the policy for early entry of students to GCSE examinations. The directive states that where students are entered twice for the same examination, then only the first result will count as the students' grade in that examination. I am writing to let you know how this will affect us here at Hinchingsbrooke.

We had planned for a number of students to sit their Maths and/or English examination in November, and then to have a second attempt next June. If we proceed with this plan, then clearly the result the student gets in November will be their final grade in Maths and/or English. Their second attempt at the same examination in Summer, which we had thought might help some students learn from previous mistakes and improve their grade, will no longer count. Thus we have taken the decision not to enter students in November, as we do not want to place your son or daughter's chances of achieving the very best grades they can in these subjects at risk.

We are immensely frustrated by this, as it is the third time in the last two years we have had to alter our plans for GCSEs because of a sudden announcement from the government, and we know how important these exams are to you and your sons and daughters.

Early entry can serve many good purposes, including vital 'live' preparation for later exams but without any notice and with immediate effect, the government has limited schools' ability to enter students early for GCSEs - after we had already planned entries for the year.

It seems that barely a term goes by without another sudden change to GCSE examinations. Worst of all, these changes are often made in the middle of students' courses of study, making it impossible to plan properly or to focus on learning rather than constant administrative changes. Grade boundaries have been changed between exam sittings; the vital skills of speaking and listening from English have been dropped mid-course; and now we have this latest announcement. I am sure you can see why we are frustrated!

These changes are often timed to coincide with party conferences or similar events, leading educational leaders to fear that students and schools are just collateral damage in party political squabbles.

In my experience, Head teachers and other leaders are ambitious for every child in their school. They are the first to admit that our education system must constantly improve. We have achieved much over recent years nationally and our schools are unrecognisable compared to 10 years ago. We also recognise that we have far to go. The educational leaders see no reason, other than the date of the next election, why change needs to be rushed without consultation or planning and feel that it is ultimately the students who suffer.

I feel it is only right to explain to you the parents, our position on these reforms: we believe they are potentially disrupting your children's education and undermining their hard work. We will, of course, continue to help students navigate the system as best we can. I would encourage you to contact politicians and let them know how the changes are affecting you and your family. Ministers are distant from the front line and the realities of teaching. They often cannot see the confusion and chaos being created; nor do they appear to have much respect for the views of the profession. They may listen to you however if there is a barrage of letters from parents.

For information there are 140 Maths students and 80 English students affected at Hinchingsbrooke. Your support in registering our collective frustration would be much appreciated.

Kind regards,

Andrew Goulding ~ Principal

Further information on this announcement can be found on the DfE website at the following address;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-to-early-entry-at-gcse>

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