



# Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

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## An Open Letter

The government has published performance data from the summer 2022 exams for all secondary schools, sixth forms and colleges. This is the first time that data has been published since the start of the pandemic. The Department for Education has been clear that, given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students, schools and colleges, this data should be treated with caution. We are writing to explain the data which has been produced, the changes in how it has been presented, and to provide some context about how the exams this summer were affected.

### What data has been published?

The data published today includes the following:

For secondary schools:

- Our school/college's Progress 8 figure (the relative progress of our students in eight subjects, compared to students with similar levels of attainment at the end of primary school).
- Our school/college's Attainment 8 figure (the raw score achieved by our students in the same eight subjects).
- The percentage of our students who entered the Ebacc (a government measure which means students took all of English, maths, sciences, a language, and history or geography GCSE).
- Our school/college's Ebacc average point score (our students' average score in the same Ebacc subjects).
- The overall figure for how many of our students entered GCSEs.
- How many of our students stay in education or employment after Year 11.
- The percentage of our students achieving a grade 5 or higher in both English and maths GCSEs.

For post-16 settings:

- Our school/college's average result in A levels, applied general qualifications (AGQs) and vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs).
- How many of our students stay in education or employment after Year 13.

### What's different this year?

The government has made a number of changes to the website where they display school and college results ([www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk](http://www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk)). These include:

- changing the name of the website from 'Compare school and college performance' to 'Find and check the performance of schools and colleges in England'
- removing the table of all schools' national performance
- removing the ability for users to create their own tables of selected schools and colleges
- removing the red / amber / green ratings on school performance measures

All of this is designed to discourage users from making direct comparisons between schools and colleges this year or comparing this year's data to previous years'.

### **Why can't data be compared this year?**

The government, and the schools' inspectorate Ofsted, acknowledge that the impact of the pandemic was not the same across all schools and colleges. Even within a local area or town, the impact of the pandemic was very different.

Therefore, they are clear that data can only tell us so much and should be used as the basis for a conversation rather than being used to directly compare one school or college with another.

### **How were results arrived at last year?**

In 2020 and 2021, exams were cancelled due to the pandemic, and grades were based on teacher assessments (with exam boards ensuring consistency). This different form of assessment led to grades, overall, being higher in 2020 and 2021 than they were in pre-pandemic years, when students sat exams.

Last summer saw the first return of exams since 2019, albeit with significant adaptations to recognise that students' learning had been significantly affected by the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall roughly halfway between 2019 and 2021. This would enable grades to gradually move back to pre-pandemic levels, while still being as fair as possible to students taking exams in 2022.

### **Why are there no progress figures for post-16?**

Normally, the Department for Education publishes progress figures for A levels and for post-16 students retaking English and maths GCSE. However, because the 2022 cohort received centre-assessed grades in 2020, and the government committed to not using these for accountability purposes, no progress data has been produced for last summer.

### **What is the context of our results?**

As we have communicated throughout the past three years, the pandemic context of our school has changed over time. When considering our results, it is worth keeping the following information in mind:

- We were heavily impacted by Covid-19 at some critical points during the examinations years, especially during December 2021 when we were forced into closing face-to-face education when most other settings were open due to significant numbers of staff and students with the virus. We were also impacted by significant staff losses for prolonged periods at key times.
- Whilst KS5 progress is not published, we use Alps data, a nationally recognised data set, to give us indicative progress and we are ranked in the top 10% for progress made by our students (Alps 2).
- Students were supported in getting onto appropriate university courses with many getting first choices including at Russell Group Universities, with others supported in taking up apprenticeships and work placements.
- We do not believe in forcing all students into Ebacc but allow those that wish to study this combination of subjects the opportunity to do so. We believe in a broad and balanced curriculum that includes at least one humanity or language alongside the other compulsory subjects. This free choice of options allows students to pursue interests and career aspirations.
- All of our students were able to leave Year 11 with an appropriate next step in their education with the majority staying on in our 6<sup>th</sup> form and others taking up places at college or on apprenticeships.

- The government recognised 'pass' grade of a 4 is a measure that continues to improve year on year:

	2018	2019	2022
Grade 4+ in English and Mathematics	66%	68%	<b>72%</b>
5 or more GCSE grade 9-4 including English and Mathematics	62%	60%	<b>65%</b>
Grades 9-4	72%	69%	<b>74%</b>
Grades 9-5	54%	51%	<b>57%</b>
Grade 4 or above in English	81%	80.8%	<b>84.7%</b>
Grade 4 or above in Maths	72%	72%	<b>73.3%</b>

- A number of students counted in these measures were still on our role but were not in front of us. They are either at alternative provision or specialist provision taking courses appropriate to them but are not fulfilling the full range of measures for performance tables. We are a fully comprehensive school and always work to do the best for these students, even if it counts against our official performance tables and measures.

#### **How will our results be used?**

The publication of results does not directly impact students at all. Students already received their own GCSE, A level and Vocational results in August. These results will be used by the government and by Ofsted if we have an inspection, with the context in which they were achieved taken into account.

#### **How do our results compare to local schools?**

As explained above, the ability to rank schools is no longer available, as the government is clear that schools cannot be compared this year.

I hope this explanation is helpful in enabling you to understand this year's performance data for our school.

Yours sincerely



Aston Smith  
Headteacher