

Written evidence submitted by Thornden School

Summary

- Impact of late changes to GCSE assessment and use of Centre Assessed Grades
1. We are writing to you on behalf of the Year 11 students at Thornden School, who we believe have been disadvantaged by the Government's U-turn on Centre Assessed Grades. As a centre who issued Centre Assessed Grades broadly in line with prior attainment patterns and other schools have not, our students have not benefited from the rampant grade inflation that this practice in other schools has caused. This is inequitable and unacceptable.
 2. We have followed advice throughout from major education support providers including SSAT, ASCL and FFT predictors, closely aligning ourselves with their processes that came directly from the Ofqual guidance. We paid particular attention to the guidance stating that schools should submit grades that will be broadly in line with previous years and that schools who overinflate grades are at risk of exam malpractice.
 3. Therefore, we believe that in the interest of fairness, schools, such as Thornden, should be able to resit submit their Centre Assessed Grades without having to consider previous years unrepresentative performance in the calculation. The opportunity to submit only the grades provided by teachers and departments, prior to the school standardisation would provide a level of equity to schools that discounts the school's prior performance. Although this would not see the overinflated outcomes experienced nationally, it would allow some students to achieve the grades that they were capable of, including on some occasions, the grades they achieved in their mock exams.
 4. When considering the national levels of grade inflation that occurred as a result of the U-turn, this significant increase has not been reflected in the outcomes for Thornden students. We are concerned to hear of the significant increases in grades across almost all measures, that we were assured would not occur at the start of this process.
 5. Having looked at a range of material following the GCSEs, it is evident that this concern has been raised by a number of schools that have approached this process with honesty and integrity, who have now found themselves having to justify this approach to parents and students. We have had to make some challenging and difficult decisions, which have caused distress to some students who may have had the opportunity to achieve higher grades if they had sat the exam. We are aware that these concerns have been raised and publicised by a member of Ofqual's Advisory Group, who has seen this approach causing similar concerns in his own school.

6. Thornden, and I am sure other schools, have the teacher grades ready to send to the exam boards for processing at short notice. This would reassure a group of students who have been impacted by the school following the clear guidance given to them.

We look forward to your response.

Your sincerely

Head of School

Chief Executive Officer

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