

On line meeting with Schools Minister

I dialled in to Nick Gibb's briefing yesterday about the forthcoming exam results. He set out the position as I did on my blog yesterday. He agreed it would have been better for all pupils to be able sit the exams, and for these to be marked by independent teachers who do not know the pupils as before. Instead we have a second best system where compromises have been made by the Examining Boards to try to award meaningful qualifications to pupils who have done the work but not taken the exam.

The Exam Boards and their Regulator have decided they do need to adjust the results proposed by teachers. They stressed to teachers they want them to concentrate on getting the right order in their list of student results, so the Board knows who they think would have done best and who would have done worst in the exam. The general adjustments to the teacher scores will not affect the rankings of pupils school by school. The Examining Boards are going to adjust some school results downwards, keeping the proposed order, as in aggregate teacher's assessments can produce considerably better results than past years.

This of course can produce injustices for pupils and schools that are improving on previous years. In some cases it may favour the school or pupil and will go unchallenged. The appeals and exam options allow individuals and their schools to bring evidence that the adjusted grades are not fair because they are too low. Any constituent who is worried about their grade or their children's grades should talk to their school about the possibility of an appeal or the exam option.

The truth in each case is we can never be sure how well that student would have performed in exam conditions on the day. There will remain a degree of approximation in some cases. The important thing is for pupils to get a sufficient grade to go on to the next stage. Those who move from GCSE can prove they are better in their A levels if they feel their grade was wrong, and those who move to university can prove themselves better in University exams when they get there.