

PUBLIC EXAMINATION RESULTS

The summaries of examination results are set out in accordance with DCSF circular 8/98. It is hoped that the following introductory notes by the County Education Officer will be helpful by way of background:

Public examination entries and results are related both to the ability level of the pupils and the stage of education which they have reached. The numbers of pupils of various ability levels differ from school to school and from year to year within each school. It should be noted, therefore that no valid comparisons can be made on the basis of a summary of total results. The most commonly taken examinations are referred to in the following sections.

1 General Certificate of Education - Advanced Level (A-Level)

This examination is usually taken in Year 13, when the majority of candidates either are or are about to be aged 18.

2 General Certificate of Education - Advanced Supplementary Level (AS-Level)

Since September 2000 this examination is usually taken in Year 12. The new AS-levels are considered to be between GCSE and A-level in standard.

3 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)

This examination was introduced in September 1986 to replace the GCE O-Level and CSE examinations. The majority of pupils attempting this examination do so in Year 11 when they either are or are about to become 16 years. Some candidates sit the examination either earlier or later than this stage, and results from any such entries are shown separately.

This examination is designed for the same range of ability for which the GCE O-Level and CSE examinations catered.

4 Key Stage 3 Assessment

These assessments are made at the end of Year 9. There are teacher assessments in all subjects.

The Hertfordshire Perspective On The Analysis Of Examination Results

Students and parents often see examination results as the most important measure of a secondary school's effectiveness. However, reading examination results for their real significance is not a simple business. It is easy to look at tables of raw data and to draw misleading conclusions. Many factors should be borne in mind when scrutinising these sheets.

First, the essential point is that children and schools are not all coming from the same starting points: they differ in terms of ability, catchment area, levels of parental support and facilities for children's learning.

Secondly, the exam results from one year should be seen in the context of a school's results over a number of years. Only then does a pattern of improvement or decline emerge, and only then can the various factors, which influence school effectiveness, be weighed against each other.

Thirdly, there can be factors quite beyond the control of a school which appear to affect the 'quality' of results - unexpectedly heavy staff turnover, for example in a particular year or a particular subject. Similarly, a school with a 'selective' intake and good facilities or a catchment area with high parental involvement may be capable of still more in terms of 'value-added' for its students whereas a school which is achieving seemingly less good results may well be stretching students to the limits of their potential.

Finally, a school is far more than the sum of its examination results. These sheets show one measure of effectiveness - a very important one, certainly, and never to be underestimated - but examination results should not be seen in isolation.