

GCSE pupils congratulated by Kirsty Williams

This year, for the first time, pupils are receiving their results for new 'made in Wales' English Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics GCSEs which are unique to Wales.

This year's results show:

- 62.8% of all learners, including early entry candidates, achieving A*-C grades.
- For 16 year olds only the figure rises to 66.7%.
- Results at A* have remained stable.
- There have been improvements in the summer results at A*-C in large entry subjects such as English Literature, History, Geography, and Welsh 2nd Language.

This year has seen a significant increase in the number of students entered before they have completed their full programme of study. A number of students who were entered early, either last summer or in November, have not returned to sit the exam again in the summer.

As a result, independent regulator Qualifications Wales have stated that "reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from direct comparisons between results in summer 2017 and summer 2016, or the comparison between summer results across the UK."

Visiting Cefn Saeson school in Neath, Kirsty Williams said:

"I would like to congratulate the thousands of pupils across Wales who are receiving their results today.

"These reformed qualifications are aimed at providing pupils with the right skills for the modern world. We can be proud of the way our pupils and teachers have handled the introduction of these new qualifications that are playing a vital role in raising standards.

"I am concerned about the high number of pupils being entered early for their exams. Many of these pupils, who are taking exams before they have completed their two years of GCSE study, have not had the opportunity to reach their full potential. This is putting unnecessary pressure on pupils, teachers and also puts an extra strain on school budgets. I will respond to Qualifications Wales's rapid review of this issue when I receive it in October, but the current situation is unsustainable and all options are on the table.

"Our radical overhaul of our education system is about raising

standards and the aspirations of our learners. As well as reforming GCSEs, we are introducing a new curriculum and new professional teaching and leadership standards to make sure our pupils have the skills they need to succeed in life.”

GCSEs in Wales are changing; six GCSE subjects have been reformed – English Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics. The summer 2017 exams reflect these new qualifications, while other GCSEs are due to change.