

Press release: New gold-standard GCSEs prepare pupils for careers Britain needs

Updated: Now with comments from the CBI

- This week marks the start of exam season, where a further 20 new GCSEs will be sat for the first time

Hundreds of thousands of pupils are preparing to take new, more rigorous GCSE exams this week, which are on a par with the best performing education systems in the world, the School Standards Minister announced today.

The gold-standard qualifications for 20 new GCSEs – including the sciences, French, German, Spanish, history and geography – have been designed with employers in mind. These qualifications are underpinned by more rigorous content, preparing pupils for future careers in the industries that Britain needs. The new science GCSEs now include space physics and the human genome and the new Computer Science GCSE now includes a greater focus on programming.

Schools Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

These more rigorous, gold-standard GCSEs are helping to nurture the next generation of scientists, linguists and historians. Whatever pupils want to do with their lives, these qualifications will prepare them for future success and help deliver the skills Britain needs to be fit for the future.

Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, education standards are rising in our schools and last year, teachers and pupils responded well to the new English and maths exams. I wish pupils all the very best as they prepare to sit these exams and I look forward to celebrating their success in the summer.

CBI Managing Director for People and Skills policy Neil Carberry said:

A world-class education has the power to give young people the knowledge and character needed to navigate a rapidly changing world. CBI members welcome the Government's commitment to high educational standards in schools, of which the new GCSEs are part.

Just doing well in exams isn't enough though – firms want to see all young people leave education as well-rounded individuals. They appreciate what teachers and leaders are doing in schools to

develop great people – and are ready to step up and do more themselves. As part of today's important focus on knowledge, this partnership must also ensure we are prioritising teaching that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork.

The start of these exams follows the recent news of funding to train up to 8000 existing computing teachers to teach the new GCSE – that is enough to ensure every secondary school in England has a teacher who can support pupils to succeed.

The new GCSEs will be graded 9 to 1, with 9 being the top grade to allow more differentiation between the highest performing pupils and so that employers can identify the new, more rigorous qualifications.

It builds on the success of last year's changes to GCSE maths and English which saw 59.1 per cent of pupils achieving a grade 4 or above.

Standards are rising in schools thanks to these reforms and the hard work of teachers, which has resulted in 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than 2010.

The government's Industrial Strategy highlighted a shortage of STEM skills. There is a need to increase number of people able to study for STEM degrees to support the current economy and its growth. The reforms to GCSEs and A levels, as well as these teaching programmes are just two of the ways this is being achieved.

Press release: Custodial sentence for operating illegal waste site

Mr Bruce had pleaded guilty to these offences on an earlier occasion, and was referred to Worcester Crown Court for sentencing.

Mr Bruce received an immediate custodial sentence of 26 months. No order for costs was made at this stage, pending the outcome of confiscation proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, which will be resolved in due course.

The charges were brought by the Environment Agency under Regulations 38(1)(a) and 12(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010; Section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; Section 161D (1) of the Water Resources Act 1991; and Regulation 10 of the Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agriculture Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010.

Mr Bruce ran a waste disposal operation centred on a site at Ridgeway Park

Farm, Throckmorton Airfield, near Pershore, for 3 and a half years, between 2011 and 2014 without any permit. He brought waste onto the site and either dumped it, buried it or burned it.

Responding to complaints from local residents, Environment Agency officers met with Mr Bruce on a number of occasions, conducting site inspections and enforcing environmental regulations. Warnings were issued following evidence that burning had been taking place on the site.

Throughout March and April 2013, Mr Bruce treated and disposed of waste by burning large quantities of it at Ridgeway Park Farm. For several weeks fires were continually burning at the site causing misery for local residents, endangering health and polluting the air in the area. There was a major impact on the quality of life for local residents, as Mr Bruce burnt a large amount of plastic waste, causing plumes of putrid black smoke across the nearby village.

In April 2013, a fire at the site was attended by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency, yet Mr Bruce repeatedly ignored the interventions of the Environment Agency and the Fire Service.

The waste on site consisted mainly of construction and demolition waste, some of which included aluminium waste products, which is classified as a hazardous waste. In total, approximately 26,000 cubic metres of waste was brought onto the site by Mr Bruce during the offending period.

Mr Bruce kept his herd of cattle on site grazing amongst the waste and in conditions where polluting effluent was not contained. Environment Agency officers also noticed that waste gypsum powder was being used as animal bedding and advised Bruce that this practice was unlawful. They also noted that the cattle bedding also contained mixed waste, electric cables, drink cans and plumbing parts.

Brown liquid was seen seeping from storage areas, pooling and flowing in the direction of a small watercourse, approximately 100m away. Officers reported evidence of hazardous waste buried and the potential for discharge substances to enter the groundwater and the Piddle Brook.

In sentencing, the Judge commented that this was serious environmental offending and that there was a clear need for a deterrent sentence. Mr Bruce was given some credit by way of a discount on his sentence as he had pleaded guilty and avoided the need for a trial.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Waste crime is a serious offence with tough penalties. It can damage the environment, blight local communities and undermine those who operate legally.

Mr Bruce has shown a blatant disregard for the environment and local community, subjecting local residents to months of misery by

bringing on large quantities of waste and burning it on the site.

Everyone who disposes of waste has a duty of care to ensure their waste is handled correctly. Whether you are a business, local authority or householder you must make sure you know where your waste goes so it doesn't end up in the hands of illegal operators.

You can help disrupt and prevent waste crime activity by reporting. The Environment Agency urges people to report waste crime on their incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: Government doubles investment in brain cancer research with £40 million 'Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Research Mission'

The Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Research Mission covers several of Baroness Jowell's campaign requests, and will include a boosted research fund, an annual global symposium and new commitments to clinical excellence in her name.

This follows a meeting Tessa Jowell had with the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary in Downing Street in February.

Commenting, Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Baroness Tessa Jowell faced her illness with dignity and courage – and it was a privilege to host her in Downing Street recently to discuss what more we can do to tackle brain cancer. We send our sincere condolences to her family – and I hope that the actions we are taking now and in the future to improve care and research for those confronting a terrible disease will form part of the lasting legacy of an inspirational woman.

Announcing the Mission, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Tessa Jowell was one of those few politicians who could inspire and unite across party lines. We were all moved by her bravery and selfless campaigning in her final months, and are determined to honour her life and memory with the action on brain cancer that she fought so hard for. At this agonising time, I hope her family can

draw comfort from the fact that her legacy will be lives saved and heartbreak averted for thousands of other families.'

Health Minister Lord O'Shaughnessy will lead the work to implement these commitments. Lord O'Shaughnessy said:

We are deeply saddened by this loss – Tessa Jowell did more than anyone to shine a light on the need to improve research and care for people with brain cancer.

It is a great privilege and honour to take forward this work, which we hope will boost life-saving research and transform brain cancer care in the way that Tessa called for.

The research fund will initially consist of £65 million, and we will aim to increase it each year as high quality research proposals that can boost outcomes for people diagnosed with brain cancer emerge. £40 million in Government funding will be bolstered by £25 million from Cancer Research UK, on top of the £13 million it spends each year on research and development of cancer treatments.

This research will be backed by new clinical commitments – including a national rollout of one of the key brain cancer diagnosis tests, gold standard dye, which is used to identify tumours. This dye is currently only used in half of brain cancer centres in England.

There is also a new commitment to accelerate the use of adaptive trials – to test different treatments at the same time and speed up the process.

In addition, the UK Government will host a new Tessa Jowell global symposium, which will bring together the best clinical, scientific and academic minds on brain cancer, in order to identify gaps, best practice and priorities in research.

Each year around 11,400 people in the UK are diagnosed with a brain tumour and just 14% of people survive their disease for 10 or more years. It is hoped the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission will stimulate innovative new research and clinical practice to boost outcomes of people diagnosed with brain tumours.

Press release: PM call with President Rouhani: 13 May 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held a telephone call with the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani this afternoon.

The Prime Minister reiterated the UK's position that we and our European partners remain firmly committed to ensuring the Iran nuclear deal is upheld. She said it is in both the UK and Iran's national security interests to maintain the deal and welcomed President Rouhani's public commitment to abide by its terms, adding that it is essential that Iran continues to meet its obligations.

The Prime Minister made clear that the UK condemns the Iranian missile attacks against Israeli forces and called on Iran to refrain from any further attacks. She said it was important to avoid provocative actions to ensure peace and security in the region.

The Prime Minister also raised the issue of consular cases relating to dual nationals currently held on charges in Iran and called for further progress to be made so individuals could be released on humanitarian grounds.

Both leaders agreed the importance of continued dialogue between the two countries, and looked forward to the meeting of UK, German, French and Iranian foreign ministers in Brussels on Tuesday where they will be joined by the EU's foreign affairs High Representative Federica Mogherini to discuss the Iran nuclear deal and next steps.

Press release: Incident involving British Nationals in DRC

The FCO has provided consular support to both British Nationals and their families throughout.

The British Ambassador to DRC, John Murton said: « The UK would like to thank the DRC authorities and MONUSCO for their assistance in resolving this kidnapping. I would like in particular to praise the courage and commitment shown by the ICCN and the Virunga Park authorities over the past three days.

My deepest condolences are with the family, friends and colleagues of Rachel Makisa Baraka, the Virunga ranger killed during the kidnapping. I wish the driver injured during the incident a speedy recovery. The bravery and determination of all the staff of Virunga is vital for the conservation of animals in the park, and the protection of local communities. »