

Exam results

There may be a row in England, as there has been in Scotland, over this summer's GCSE and A level results.

The first thing to stress is the award of grades to students has nothing to do with Ministers and the government. Normally students take exams set by independent Examining bodies, advised and moderated by teachers, with all the work marked by teachers. The Exam body then awards grades based on the marks awarded, seeking to moderate standards between years. Ministers rightly do not get a say in any individual's papers or marks, or in the decision each year on where to set the grade boundaries.

This year the decision was taken to abandon exams but to award grades and passes based primarily on teacher assessment of the individual's course work and achievements at school in each subject. The Exam Boards will still moderate the results fed to them by each of the participating schools. There are issues over how this will be done.

If all worked well each school would come to a perfect judgement of each pupil it teaches, and across England this would produce a fair set of outcomes without moderation or adjustment. However, life is not that simple. The Examining Boards want the schools to ensure they have placed all their pupils in the right relative order to each other, reserving to themselves the ultimate right to decide how marks translate to grades awarded by the Examining Board. The Examining Boards are alert to the possibility that teachers will naturally see the best in their own pupils and might collectively mark up producing some grade inflation compared to previous years. They need, however, to be alert to other possibilities as well. For any individual pupil there is the danger of adverse marking if they planned to leave much of their study and revision to close to the exam and did not do so well in the early months of the course, or if their conduct and attitudes did not lead the teacher to see their academic strengths fully.

The toughest cases are for schools or subject teachers who are lifting standards year by year or lifting them for the first time this year who may encounter a general downgrade of their forecast results owing to the Exam Board wishing to moderate grades in relation to past experience at that school. There is also the unspoken danger that a school or subject area on the slide will secure more favourable outcomes than if their pupils had had to undertake the exam. The Independent Regulator is also involved in requiring Exam Boards to moderate standards.

Most people would agree it is better and fairer to let pupils sit exams and to have these marked by teachers at other schools to a prescribed marking scheme. In this CV 19 damaged year all involved will doubtless do the best they can to come to fair judgements, but there is likely to be more unhappiness both by some individuals and by some individual schools and teachers given the occasional rough justice which will be delivered. The good news is a student can appeal and can ask to sit a proper exam to improve

their grade.

[More money for school transport for Wokingham and West Berkshire](#)

The government has announced a new £40 m fund to help with the costs of school transport from September for English local government. I look forward to Wokingham Borough and West Berkshire getting some benefit from this, which is in addition to extra funding for walking and cycling policies which the government recommends to pupils where appropriate.

[Letter to the Health Secretary](#)

I would like to follow up on my questions to you concerning the search for treatments that help CV 19 patients. You rightly replied that a number were in clinical research under your Recovery Trial, as well as with the WHO's Solidarity trial and elsewhere. It was good news that Dexamethasone was shown to have helpful effects for some serious cases.

How are the trials both in the UK and abroad going for

1. Other immune moderators and Interferons?
2. Anti virals including Remdesivir and Hydroxychloroquine?
3. Anti coagulants?
4. Convalescent plasma?
5. Vitamins C and D? 6. Nitric Oxide, zinc and Ozone?

Some of these treatments some doctors say might be best used in the early stages to prevent the disease taking hold, and some may have beneficial effects in serious cases needing oxygen treatment, as with Dexamethasone. Clearly finding more ways of combatting the different features of the serious versions of the pandemic would be of great help in taming it.

Your stated policy of getting the NHS back to work on everything not related to CV 19 is now crucial. New contracts with the private health Sector should be based solely on buying stated procedures, treatments and operations for patients on the NHS waiting list. Buying capacity with no known patient in

mind will be wasteful and will not incentivise the NHS to use the private capacity fully, as we saw during lock down.

It is also important that the policy of handling CV 19 cases in isolation hospitals or in clearly sealed off units in District General hospitals is properly enforced and advertised so patients are not put off attending surgeries, clinics and hospitals to have other serious conditions treated. With best wishes to you in getting the NHS fully back to work after the heroic efforts made by some to tackle the dangerous and difficult CV 19 surge.

Stopping illegal migration

As there is great support from many writing in for this, why not set out your proposals for the Home Secretary in your postings as she clearly shares this aim.

The new Planning system

Let us welcome the idea of a simple map setting out general uses for land in each designated area of a Local Plan. Let us also agree the government needs to cut inward migration and prevent people trafficking.

The government suggests 3 categories on a map. One is Growth, the second is Renewal and the third is Protection. Growth implies more or less any development is fine in principle, though subject to design and density requirements to be set in the Local Plan. Renewal we are told implies rebuild, change of use or some "gentle densification". Protection implies keeping areas green with little or no building.

Maybe the government should look at three other use categories instead. They could demark land for housing, land for commercial development be it retail or industrial estate, and land for green gaps, farming and outdoor leisure for sports fields and other green spaces. I am all in favour of eroding the current complex uses classes and allowing greater freedom for building owners to flex from retail to homes or to industry. There do need to be special controls on the location of industrial businesses or leisure businesses that create noise or other nuisance, so they do not conflict with housing areas. Adjusting their categories, they could make it clear Growth includes employment sites as well as housing sites, whilst Renewal might like to stay more in keeping with current uses and styles of development.

The big issue to be resolved is the process of forming the Map, and the extent to which local wishes will be fully reflected in the results. The present system is deeply distrusted and disliked for the simple reason that the compromise which is a local Plan is soon broken by appeal decisions, forcing fast growing communities to absorb more housing development than they wanted. In communities that lack growth and investment the same process fails to lift the area to attract the new people and new investment they need to boost living standards and enterprise.

There is enthusiasm for levelling up both in the fast growth areas suffering from too much building, and in the slow and no growth areas desperate for new investment. How will this new system level up? What does it bring to the areas without investment that will drive a better distribution of building around the country? The government needs to make sure this is not just a new variant of systems to increase the pace of housebuilding in areas that are already relatively well off.