

As a governing body we take our role, helping to lead our school very seriously. We have huge ambition for this school and have developed a culture of high expectation and rigour. We are extremely proud of the progress our school has made in recent years and know that students get a good education here, in a safe and friendly environment for learning. We support all associated with school and hold the leadership team to account systematically and relentlessly. It is because of this we have every confidence in the school staff and leaders to prepare students effectively for external exams. It is with dismay that we've learnt that a significant change to the pass mark for the English language IGCSE exam has led to nearly 50% of our students achieving a U grade in the exam. In addition, 15 of our students missed a C grade overall by 5 marks or less, further indicating the devastating impact the change in grade boundaries for this exam has had on overall results. Given our remit as the governing body to hold school leaders to account, we could call into question staff judgement when predicting results as they stand in stark contrast to our internal predictions. However, it should be noted that both coursework and speaking and listening marks were deemed accurate by the board and mock examination results were verified by both internal and external moderation using assessment material provided by the board. The English department has always been accurate at predicting their outcomes. We cannot believe that the 70% they were predicted, after impressive results of 80% and 90% in the previous 2 years is actually possible. We have sanctioned all scripts to be remarked and returned at significant expense to the school because we have little confidence in these results.

The stark difference in grade boundaries and variability in exam marks leads us to a conclusion of collusion within the exam board to cap grades. Such action undermines the hard work by both students and staff, as well as calling into question the integrity of the assessment itself. GCSE exams are pivotal to the life chances for our students and such outcomes will disadvantage children who were adversely affected by the change in grade boundaries, failing to achieve a C grade. It should be noted that 41 of our students achieved an A-B grade in English literature and a U-D grade in English language. This discrepancy supports our submission that it was due to the unreliability of the exam, rather than poor standards in the classroom, that has led to a larger than anticipated number of students failing to achieve a C grade in the English language exam.

The integrity of the exam board is further called into question by the random nature with which marks for the English language exam seem to have been allocated. For example, a motivated high achieving student achieved an E, B and an A in the exam, coursework and speaking respectively. In contrast, an

EAL student with a similar level of attendance achieved a C in both the coursework and speaking, but only 2 marks lower in the exam. An international exam board that prides itself on excellence and rigour in a country striving towards a world class education system, wouldn't produce a scheme of assessments that result in such variability within and between

candidate profiles. How can school staff be expected to predict accurately and prepare students for exams thoroughly in a climate of such volatile unpredictability?

As identified above, it is our responsibility as the school's governing body to hold leaders to account. We submit that the manipulation of pass marks by CIE has created a situation where both staff and students are distraught over results and demoralised by a seemingly unjust education system that has allowed this climate of uncertainty to occur. Parents, who have loyally supported the school, are questioning the professional judgement of staff, and future teachers are considering whether this is the right profession with suitably high, transparent standards for them. As governors how can we hold staff to account against such varying standards? How can we attract new students to the school when seemingly standards are not high? And how can we train and recruit future generations to the profession when such levels of dissatisfaction and uncertainty exist around the exam boards? These are not the hallmarks of an outstanding, rigorous and fair education system – and the people who will suffer are going to be our future generation.