

25<sup>th</sup> January 2018

### High Tunstall Statement regarding 2017 GCSE Performance Tables

The High Tunstall College of Science 2017 GCSE results were not as strong as we had predicted and do represent a dip following 4 years of continuous improvement. We fully understand the concerns that you may have as parents and want to reassure you that we have put in place significant actions to address this issue. The performance tables obviously provide an overview of the year group and are not designed to focus on individual successes, of which there were many. Indeed the students on results day were pleased with the grades they achieved.

We have extensively explored the factors that have led to the published outcomes, but do urge caution when reading them as there are a number of issues beyond our control that lead to our Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores appearing lower than other schools. A significant contributing factor is the use by schools across the country of qualifications such as the European Computer Driving License which can be taught in a very short space of time (as little as 6 days) with students achieving grades equivalent to Grade B or A/A\* with very little teaching involved. The reason why schools tend to deliver these types of qualifications is to boost the number of points each student achieves thereby leading to stronger Attainment 8 Scores (the collective number of points gained by an individual student). This does mean that any attempt to compare schools using these measures is unreliable.

We choose not to deliver these qualifications as we do not feel they are appropriate or necessary for the vast majority of our students. We know that this will have a negative impact on our performance as shown in performance tables, but we believe that a broad curriculum with GCSE and Vocational Courses that are recognised and valued by employers is the correct and moral approach to take. Indeed, OFSTED are looking closely at schools that have delivered qualifications such as ECDL as they do not perceive full cohort entry for these qualifications as a valid curriculum.

Another decision that we made in 2015, that causes our progress scores to be below expectation, was that we chose to continue delivering BTEC Science to a small number of students as this was the appropriate pathway for them. The vast majority of schools dropped this qualification at this time as it would no longer count on performance tables even though it was still a recognised Level 2 qualification at further education institutions – our decision was based on our students and their needs and we do stand by that decision as we are determined to deliver a curriculum to meet the needs of our students rather than the needs of performance tables.

Our results were also adversely affected by other factors such as student transfers into the school and we would be more than happy to discuss these with parents, but we

should remember the tremendous successes for the majority of our students for example, English Literature outcomes were better than the national average, Science continues to perform well compared to schools in the region and Humanities subjects performed very well in comparison to other local schools.

I would again like to reassure you that we have reflected upon our performance and are working with the Local Authority and other external partners to ensure that the rigorous measures we have put in place will dramatically improve performance for High Tunstall and Hartlepool in 2018.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss our results and our subsequent actions in more detail.

Mr Heath  
Deputy Headteacher