

Embargoed to 09:30 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

# PROVISIONAL RESULTS BRIEFING: GCSE 2021, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021

- Derek Richardson, JCQ Chair & Responsible Officer, Pearson
- Elaine Carlile, Responsible Officer, WJEC
- Myles McGinley, Responsible Officer, OCR
- Kevin Phillips, Responsible Officer, AQA
- Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator, Ofqual
- Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, Ofqual



# Congratulations and thank you

***Congratulations to all students***  
*who worked hard in exceptional circumstances to complete assessments and assignments.*

Their work formed the basis of their grades. Teachers' professional judgements were supported by our guidance and validated by our quality assurance.

Students can have confidence that these results will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education.

***Teachers, exams officers, heads of centre and their colleagues***  
***have all worked exceptionally hard to decide grades this year and submit them, with the supporting evidence, in good time.***

JCQ and the exam boards thank all those involved



# JCQ Results Briefing

1. Welcome and introductions – Derek Richardson (Chair, JCQ)
2. The 2021 Context – Simon Lebus (Chief Regulator, Ofqual)
3. Key highlights
4. Support, QA and appeals – Kevin Phillips (JCQ)
  - Resources, support for quality assurance and appeals
5. Results presentation – Elaine Carlile & Myles McGinley
  - Population and Entries
  - GCSE Outcomes
  - Outcomes by Gender
  - Subjects
6. Ofqual analysis – Michelle Meadows, Ofqual
7. Q&A

*There is an addendum in the slide deck summarising some subject outcomes*



## The 2021 context

**Simon Lebus**  
Chief Regulator  
Ofqual

# Key highlights

- Teachers did an excellent job in determining grades during a difficult year
- Teacher assessed grades, based on their students' work, supported by our guidance and validated by the quality assurance processes, can give students confidence in their results and will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education.
- Entries have increased by 0.9% from 2020 to 5.75m
  - Spanish continues to be the GCSE subject with the largest percentage growth (+4.7% from 2020)
  - Geography is the GCSE subject with the second largest percentage growth (+4.2% from 2020); it has the largest percentage growth at A level
- Overall outcomes increased at 7/A and above, and 4/C and above:
  - 7/A increased by 2.7 percentage points (pp) from 2020
  - 4/C slightly increased by 0.8pp in 2021 from 2020
  - Pass rates declined slightly by 0.6pp from 2020
- Female students continue to perform better than male students:
  - Female students 7/A grades and above increased by 3.2pp and male students by 2.2pp
  - With female students only marginally increasing by 0.4pp at grade 4/C and above compared to male students which increased by 1.3pp
- Students have worked hard in a difficult year and will be able to progress to further study with the grades awarded



# Support for centres, students and parents

- **Guidance** on grading, centre policies, evidence, private candidates, SEN learners, special consideration, appeals
- **Templates** for centre policies, assessment records, grading checklists, appeals
- **Resources** with grade descriptors and guidance, worked examples, assessment materials and marking guidance for all subjects
- **Student and parent** guides
- **Links** to awarding bodies' sites across the UK are included in background briefing document



# Quality assurance in Summer 2021

- The Quality Assurance (QA) framework supported schools and colleges to determine appropriate and fair grades for both A Level and GCSE;
- Similar arrangements were followed in Wales and NI, but the following refers to the process in England
  - QA in centres
    - Teachers worked together, with double sign-off, to determine appropriate and fair grades;
    - Heads of Centres established Centre Policies to ensure fair process, and signed off on the results.
  - QA by exam boards
    - Initial contact – Support calls from exam boards to every centre;
    - Stage 1 – Review of all Centre Policies by exam boards coordinated by JCQ;
    - Stage 2 – Follow-up contact on Centre Policies;
    - Submission of student work from every centre;
    - Stage 3 – Review of student work from 1 in 5 centres; discussion with centres and exam board subject matter experts where required.



# Appeals

- Students who believe there is an error with their grade can appeal, first to their school or college and second to the exam board.
- There are a number of grounds on which a student can appeal including a review of whether the school or college's academic judgement was unreasonable.
- The process is designed to be as accessible as possible for students. They will only need to say what they believe went wrong and how they think it impacted their grade.
- Students' grades can go down, go up or stay the same as a result of both stages of the appeals process.

# Grades in England, Northern Ireland and Wales

Anchor points at:

- 7/A
- 4/C
- 1/G

England 9 to 1	Northern Ireland A* to G(NI)	Wales A* to G
9	A*	A*
8		
7	A	A
6	B	B
5	C*	
4	C	C
3	D	D
2	E	E
1	F	F
	G	G



# Population and Entries

- Overall, across UK there was a total of 5.75 million GCSE entries, up 0.9 % on 2020
- 16 year old population (in England, Wales in NI) increased by 1.5% from 2020
- 91.3% of GCSE entries came from 16 year olds, which increased by 2.2%
- Entries by 17 year olds and over declined by 11.8% following an increase in 2020 of 5.9%
- The average number of entries per student was 7.69 in 2021, the same as in 2020.

	All		16 yr. olds		17 yr. olds and over	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All Entries	5,745,945	5,692,464	5,245,570	5,134,235	385,395	436,938
Change in entries (%)	+0.9%		+2.2%		-11.8%	



# Ranking of largest increase in entries

- Top ten percentage increases in entries for subjects with >100,000 entries in 2021
- Spanish continues as the GCSE subject with the largest percentage growth
- Physics (+4.0%), Chemistry (+3.9%) and Biology (3.3%) all within the top 10 percentage increases in entries

2021 Ranking (2020)	Subject	% change	2021 Number of entries	2020 Number of entries
1 (1)	Spanish	4.7	114,795	109,594
2 (9)	Geography	4.2	281,741	270,311
3 (12)	Physics	4.0	175,371	168,563
4 (13)	Chemistry	3.9	176,950	170,260
5 (-)	Business Studies	3.8	102,542	98,802
6 (11)	Biology	3.3	184,008	178,088
7 (8)	English Literature	2.6	615,669	599,975
8 (4)	Art and Design subjects	2.6	210,091	204,855
9 (3)	Science: Double Award**	2.0	896,138	878,278
10 (2)	History	0.9	294,807	292,274

\*\*Note two entries are registered for Science: Double Award



# GCSE Outcomes at Key Grades (cumulative %)

- Increase in outcomes at 7/A by 2.7percentage points (pp) and by +0.8pp at 4/C
- Slight decrease in pass rates (at 1/G)
- There were 3,606 16 year old students studying seven or more GCSEs in England and receiving grade 9 awards in all of them

	7/A		4/C		1/G	
%	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All	28.9	26.2	77.1	76.3	99.0	99.6
Change pp	+2.7		+0.8		- 0.6	



# GCSE Outcomes by Gender (cumulative %)

- Female students continue to have higher outcomes in GCSEs than male students at all grades
- At grade 7/A the gap between female and male students has increased by 1%, but continues to decrease at grade 4/C, the latter declining from 7.9pp in 2020 to 7.0pp in 2021
- Pass rates (1/G) declined slightly for both male and female students

Cumulative %	7/A			4/C			1/G		
	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2020	Change pp
Males	24.4	22.2	+ 2.2	73.6	72.3	+ 1.3	98.7	99.5	-0.8
Females	33.4	30.2	+ 3.2	80.6	80.2	+ 0.4	99.2	99.7	-0.5



# English and English Literature Entries

- English entries decreased by 2.4% following the decrease of 1.4% in 2020.
- English Literature entries continued to increase, up by 2.6% (2020 saw in an increase of 3.0%).
- 16 year old English entries increased by 2.2% to 629,097 and English Literature entries were up by 2.6% to 573,646.
- 17 year-old and over entries for English decreased by 18.3% to 144,198 following an increase of 8.1% in 2020.
- 15 year-old and under entries for English declined 8.5%, but English Literature entries increased by 3.6%.



	All		17 yr. olds and over		15 yr. olds and under	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
English	780,231	799,473	144,198	176,515	6,936	7,583
Change in entries (%)	-2.4%		-18.3%		-8.5%	
English Lit.	615,669	599,975	5,729	5,849	36,294	35,034
Change in entries (%)	+2.6%		-2.1%		+3.6%	

# English and English Literature Outcomes (cumulative %)

- English outcomes increased at 7/A by +3.4pp, and by 2.4pp at 4/C
- Increase for English at grade 4/C for 16 year olds is 0.7pp and 2.9pp for students 17yrs and above
- Grade for English Literature at 7/A increased by 1.3% and 4/C increased by 0.2pp

Cumulative %	7/A		4/C		1/G	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
English - All	22.3	18.9	73.9	71.5	98.5	99.6
Change pp	+3.4		+2.4		-1.1	
English 17+yrs	4.4	2.5	44.2	41.3	95.6	99.4
Eng. Lit.	26.0	24.7	80.3	80.1	98.9	99.5
Change pp	+1.3		+0.2		- 0.6	



# Entries in Mathematics

- Maths entries marginally increased by 0.27%
- Entries by 17 yr olds and above decreased by 8.39% to 176,617 following the increase of 6.7% in 2020
- Entries by 15 yr olds and under marginally declined by 0.56% to 6,203
- Entries by 16 yr olds increased by 3.01% to 628,315



	All		17 yrs and over		15 yrs and under	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Maths	811,135	808,951	176,617	192,783	6,203	6,238
Change in Maths entries (%)	+0.27%		-8.39%		-0.56%	

# Mathematics Outcomes (cumulative %)

- Outcomes increased at 7/A by +1.9pp, and by 2.8pp at 4/C
- The increases at Grade 4/C for 16 yr olds was +0.8pp and +5.6pp for 17 year olds and over

Cumulative %	7/A		4/C		1/G	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Mathematics	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All ages	21.0	19.1	69.4	66.6	98.3	99.3
Change pp	+1.9		+2.8		-1.0	
17 yr olds & over	2.3	2.1	39.8	34.2	96.0	99.0



# Ofqual analysis

**Michelle Meadows**

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk & Research  
Ofqual

## Equalities analysis: student characteristics

- Generally, modelled gaps between different groups are stable from 2019 to 2021 (see equalities report)

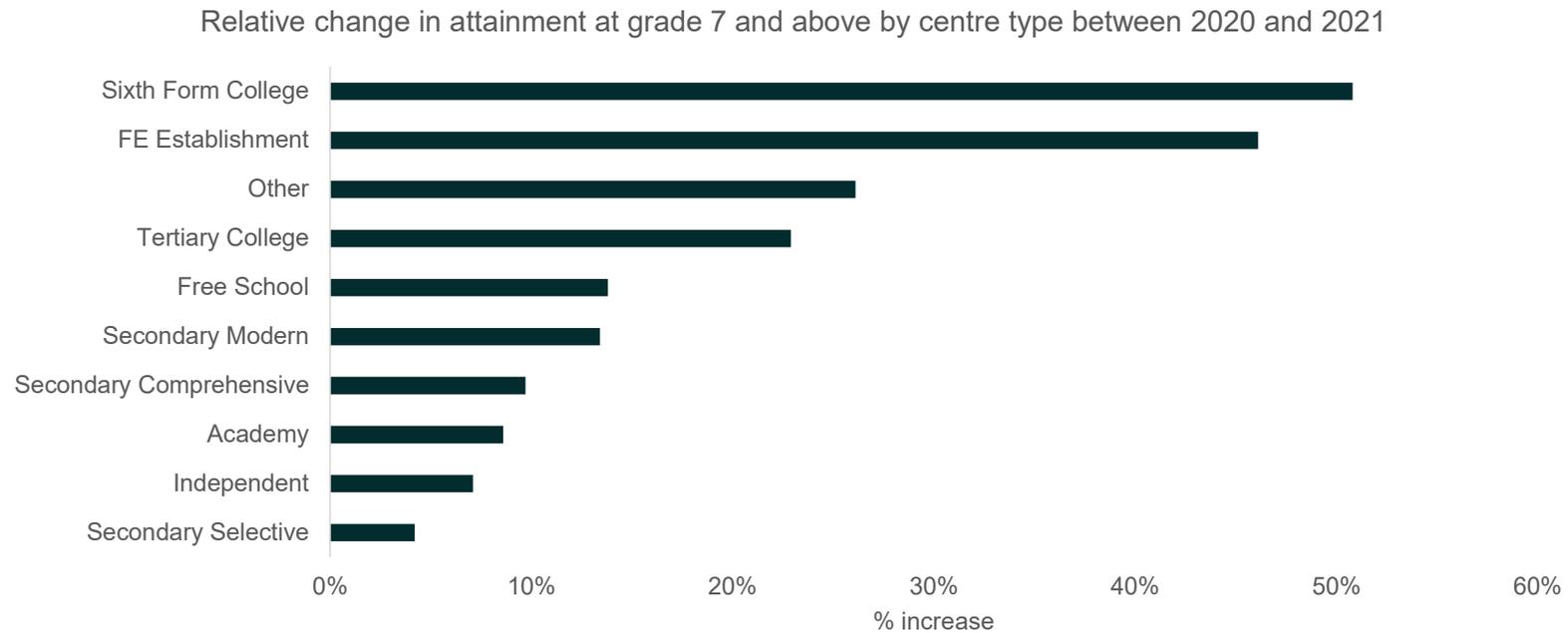
Characteristics	Findings
Ethnicity	Gap between white students and Gypsy and Roma students has widened, by 1/5 <sup>th</sup> of a grade, when controlling for prior attainment
Gender	Results gaps are stable
Free school meal eligibility	Gap between non-FSM and FSM students has slightly widened, by 1/10 <sup>th</sup> of a grade, when controlling for prior attainment
Deprivation	Results gaps are stable
Major language (EAL)	Results gaps are stable
SEND	Results gaps are stable

## Centre type – outcomes at grade 7 and above

- See results report for more detail

Centre type	Outcomes 2021	2021-2020 relative change	2021-2020 absolute change
Academy	28.1%	8.6%	2.2 ppt
FE Establishment	2.4%	46.1%	0.8 ppt
Free Schools	29.8%	13.8%	3.6 ppt
Independent	61.2%	7.1%	4.0 ppt
Other	13.1%	26.1%	2.7 ppt
Sec Comp or Middle	26.1%	9.7%	2.3 ppt
Secondary Modern	20.4%	13.4%	2.4 ppt
Secondary Selective	68.4%	4.2%	2.8 ppt
Sixth Form College	5.6%	50.8%	1.9 ppt
Tertiary College	6.5%	22.9%	1.2 ppt

# Grade 7 and above: relative change



## Centre type – outcomes at grade 4 and above

- See results report for more detail

Centre type	Outcomes 2021	2021-2020 relative change	2021-2020 absolute change
Academy	78.2%	0.5%	0.4 ppt
FE Establishment	38.2%	16.2%	5.3 ppt
Free Schools	79.0%	0.0%	0.0 ppt
Independent	95.5%	-0.1%	-0.1 ppt
Other	54.3%	8.2%	4.1 ppt
Sec Comp or Middle	77.3%	0.3%	0.3 ppt
Secondary Modern	71.5%	-0.7%	-0.5 ppt
Secondary Selective	98.7%	-0.2%	-0.2 ppt
Sixth Form College	50.3%	5.6%	2.7 ppt
Tertiary College	45.7%	12.1%	4.9 ppt

# Key highlights

- Teachers did an excellent job in determining grades during a difficult year
- Teacher assessed grades, based on their students' work, supported by our guidance and validated by the quality assurance processes, can give students confidence in their results and will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education.
- Entries have increased by 0.9% from 2020 to 5.75m
  - Spanish continues to be the GCSE subject with the largest percentage growth (+4.7% from 2020)
  - Geography is the GCSE subject with the second largest percentage growth (+4.2% from 2020); it has the largest percentage growth at A level
- Overall outcomes increased at 7/A and above, and 4/C and above :
  - 7/A increased by 2.7 percentage points (pp) from 2020
  - 4/C slightly increased by 0.8pp in 2021 from 2020
  - Pass rates declined slightly by 0.6pp from 2020
- Female students continue to perform better than male students:
  - Female students 7/A grades and above increased by 3.2pp and male students by 2.2pp
  - With female students only marginally increasing by 0.4pp at grade 4/C and above compared to male students which increased by 1.3pp
- Generally the inequalities gap has not widened.
- Students have worked hard in a difficult year and will be able to progress to further study with the grades awarded



# Questions & Answers

## Panel:

- JCQ

- Derek Richardson, JCQ  
Chair & Pearson
- Elaine Carlile, WJEC
- Myles McGinley, OCR
- Kevin Phillips, AQA

- Ofqual

- Simon Lebus,  
Chief Regulator
- Michelle Meadows  
Deputy Chief Regulator



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# ADDENDUM: PROVISIONAL RESULTS BRIEFING GCSE 2021 – ADDITIONAL SLIDES



# Rank of largest entry subjects

2021 Ranking (2020)	Subject	% of total entries	Number of entries
1 (1)	Science: Double Award**	15.6	896,138
2 (2)	Mathematics	14.1	811,135
3 (3)	English	13.6	780,231
4 (4)	English Literature	10.7	615,669
5 (5)	History	5.1	294,807
6 (6)	Geography	4.9	281,741
7 (7)	Religious Studies	4.2	243,071
8 (8)	Art and Design subjects	3.7	210,091
9 (9)	Biology	3.2	184,008
10 (10)	Chemistry	3.1	176,950

\*\*Note two entries are registered for Science: Double Award



# Science Entries: Double awards and individual subjects

- Shift towards Science Double Award continues with entries increasing by +2.03%:
  - 16 year old entries increased by 2.12%
- Biology, chemistry and physics entries saw increases of 3.32%, 3.93% and 4.04% respectively.
- While there are more female student entries for Biology, there is near parity in male and female student entries for Chemistry (male student entries were 640 more than for female student entries, reversing the trend in 2020)
- Similarly the gap between male and female student entries for physics has closed – the difference was 1,895 in 2020, but is only 343 in 2021 (female students just remain the largest cohort)

	2021	2020	Change in entries 2020-21
Science Double Award <sup>‡</sup>	896,138	878,278	+2.03%
Biology	184,008	178,088	+3.32%
Chemistry	176,950	170,260	+3.93%
Physics	175,371	168,563	+4.04%

<sup>‡</sup> Science Double Awards entries are twice the number of candidates, as two grades are awarded



# Science Double Award and Separate Science Outcomes (cumulative %)

- Improvement in outcomes at 7/A in the separate sciences as well as Science Double Award
- Female students had better outcomes in most sciences, but male students had better outcomes in Physics, with the following changes:
  - In physics, female student outcomes +3.1pp at 7/A, with male students +1.8pp
  - In biology, female student outcomes +3.8pp at 7/A, with male students +2.6pp
  - In chemistry, female student outcomes +2.1pp at 7A, with male students +1.2pp



Cumulative %	7/A			4/C			1/G		
	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2021	Change pp
Science Double Award <sup>‡</sup>	12.7	10.8	+1.9	65.1	64.7	+0.4	99.1	99.6	-0.5
Biology	56.0	52.7	+3.3	94.2	94.6	-0.4	99.7	99.9	-0.2
Chemistry	54.9	53.3	+1.6	94.4	95.7	-1.3	99.8	100	-0.2
Physics	55.6	53.1	+2.5	95.3	96.2	-0.9	99.8	100	-0.2

<sup>‡</sup> Note: for Science Double Awards two grades are awarded

# Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Entries

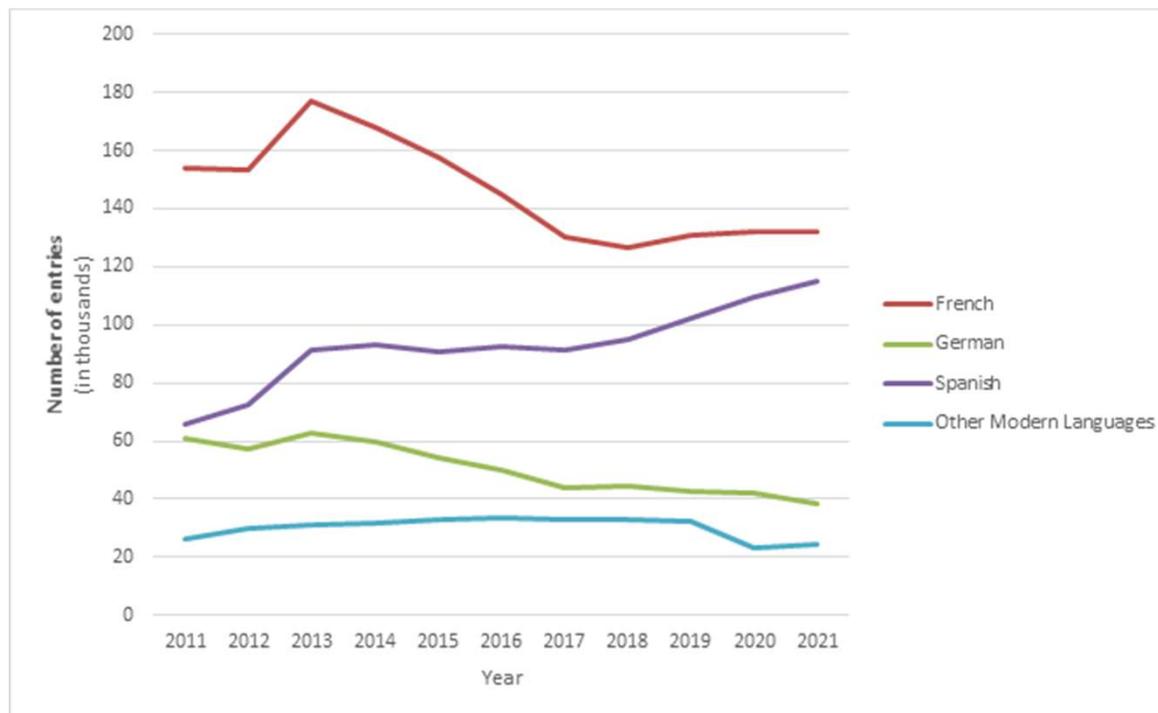
- French entries remained stable, German entries declined by 9.70% and Spanish increased by 4.7%
- French remains most popular MFL, although Spanish saw largest increase in entries, continuing its strong growth in recent years
- Overall female student entries comprised 56.9% of all MFL entries

	2021	2020	Change in entries 2020-21
French	131,887	132,036	-0.11%
German	38,272	42,384	-9.70%
Spanish	114,795	109,594	+4.75%
Other MFLs	24,714	23,076	+7.10%



# Entries in Spanish, French and German

- Trend in MFL entries shows sustained increase in popularity for Spanish
- French entries have levelled off, with German continuing to decline



# Modern Foreign Languages Outcomes (cumulative %)

- Increase in outcomes at key grades 7/A and 4/C
- Marginal decrease at key grade 1/G
- Female outcomes higher than males across all MFLs

Cumulative %	7/A			4 /C			1/G		
	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2020	Change pp	2021	2020	Change pp
French	33.8	30.7	+3.1	83.6	82.7	+0.9	99.6	99.9	-0.3
German	38.6	34.5	+4.1	87.8	87.0	+0.8	99.8	99.9	-0.1
Spanish	35.1	33.1	+2.0	83.8	82.4	+1.4	99.5	99.8	-0.3
Other MFL	73.0	69.0	+4.0	94.8	95.0	-0.2	99.6	99.5	-0.1



# Equalities analysis – what do the differences mean?

- Looks at the difference in mean (average) grade between two groups of students, from 2018 to 2021
- Interested in whether there are **change** in the gaps compared to previous years
- Generally we see stability over time; a small number where gaps have increased or decreased, often by around 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a grade on average.

What does a difference of 1/10th of a grade mean?

Group 1



Group 2



The difference in mean grade between the two groups is 0.1 (1/10th) of a grade

## 16-year-old students in England with all grade 9s, by centre type

Number of students and percentage of those students taking 7+ GCSEs at each centre type

Centre type	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Academy	444	0.2%	1410	0.5%	1814	0.6%
FE Establishment	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Free School	11	0.2%	32	0.4%	55	0.6%
Independent	134	0.9%	431	2.8%	679	4.4%
Other	1	0.0%	10	0.4%	15	0.5%
Secondary Comprehensive	142	0.1%	511	0.3%	644	0.4%
Secondary Modern	3	0.0%	22	0.3%	20	0.2%
Secondary Selective	102	0.9%	229	2.1%	376	3.2%
Sixth Form College	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Tertiary College	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.4%
Total	837	0.2%	2645	0.5%	3606	0.7%