

14<sup>th</sup> August 2020



**Chief Executive**

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Good afternoon,

A Level results are a regular fixture in the Council's calendar and a busy time for our education team as they support schools and students on results day and in the build up to it. This year it felt distinctly different, coming as it did without students being able to sit their exams. Yesterday these students collected their results and hopefully felt the same sense of achievement as previous year groups did. Exams may have been cancelled but these results are still the culmination of two years' hard work and should be held in equally high esteem.

It is not just A Level results of course, and students studying for vocational qualifications will be receiving those too. Whichever path students have chosen for their education, we wish them good luck as they move on to the next stage of their lives.

Whilst students are rightly recognised for their efforts, we want to also acknowledge the support given to them over the past couple of years; so thank you to all the parents, carers and school staff who taught, coached and encouraged students through their studies.

There has been widespread reporting across the country about the way exam results have been calculated this year and efforts nationally to ensure it is done as fairly as possible. Our education team has been full of praise for the care and attention given by our secondary schools in determining students' results. The schools have watched the students grow up, often since Year 7, and want them to leave school with grades which are fair and reflect the potential of each student. These are collected and standardised nationally and, ultimately, the result a student received yesterday may or may not have been the one proposed by the school.

Our education team has also been busy promoting careers advice services, apprenticeship opportunities and other support available locally. Emotional support for young people continues to be available not just in relation to results but also to help support those who are anxious about the wider situation with Covid-19.

In April our Emotional Health Academy launched a helpline for young people worried about the pandemic and the sweeping changes it was having on the way we live our lives. They dealt with a range of issues – from young people who were concerned about friends or teachers they had not heard from to those nervous about a return to school in September. The Emotional Health Academy and our Educational Psychology teams are fantastic and we know they will have dealt with each one sympathetically and done their best to help. The assistance they offer ranges from providing help over the phone and leaflets and other support materials through to referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, more commonly known as a CAMHS referral.

It won't be long until the new school year begins and that, too, will look different heading into autumn. Schools opened before the summer holiday to some pupils, but all pupils will be returning in September and arrangements are being made for them to do so safely. We're working with schools to support them in putting the appropriate social distancing measures in place and parents can be reassured that when pupils return to school it will be as safe as it can be for them.

This year is particularly exciting as we prepare to open a brand new school in Theale. It will replace a school which was ageing, oversubscribed, and no longer fit for purpose. The new building will provide a modern, spacious learning environment for pupils currently at the school and for future generations as well. School staff have been busy moving in over the summer and we're delighted for the whole school community in having such a wonderful new facility to enjoy.

Before then we have GCSE results day on Thursday and we send our best wishes to all the students receiving their results next week.

Yours sincerely,



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