



Winterton Community Academy

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Headteacher – Mr K Rowlands

Ref: KR/ AW

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Dear Parents / Carers,

It is important that we are ambitious for our young people, your children. Whilst we believe that school life is about so much more than the grades that they leave with in year 11, we would also be letting our students down if we did not stress the importance that those grades have in opening as many doors as possible for them in the future. It is impossible to ignore the fact that employers and those who are selecting young people for college courses, university applications and apprenticeships will always look at those grades as a first point of reference when deciding who to take forward to an interview or offer an opportunity to.

You will be aware that in recent years, the way in which grades are awarded has changed with the old-fashioned grades of A*- C etc. being replaced by a numerical scale of 9-1, with 9 being the highest.

The reason for writing, is to further explain what this means in terms of the perception of a pass. Since these changes were made, the term pass has been split into either a standard pass (4) or a strong pass (5).

We would always want our students to achieve the very best that they can and we will always encourage them to aim as high as possible. For many students, there is no reason why they should not be aiming for the very top grades in the 7-9 category and we are delighted to report that this year, we saw more students than ever before achieve this standard.

Too often however, there is a misperception of that term, 'pass'. In particular, when entry requirements for post-16 stress that 'only a pass' is required, it can have a detrimental effect in terms of raising aspirations and allowing our students to be ambitious.

To explain further, if a young person were to receive a level 4 in their Maths and English, then they will have achieved a standard pass. On average, around 2/3 of young people achieve this standard each year nationally and so effectively, you would be in the top 66% qualified young people within that particular cohort. If they were to achieve a level 5 in Maths and English, then they will have achieved a strong pass. That one grade difference is hugely significant. On average, they would then be in the highest 1/3 of young people qualified, the top 33%. This can make a life changing difference and as they progress through college, they can become one of the top 20% of young people in terms of their qualifications and by university, they are in the top 5-10% nationally. It is important that they know the difference that a strong pass can make in comparison to standard pass and we would strongly encourage all young people to aim as high as they possibly can. The majority of people achieve a standard pass, whereas for a strong pass, they do not.

It is equally important to stress why it is important for our students to work hard across all of their subjects and not to 'give up' on some of their options. All students will achieve an 'average grade' which is a reflection of their wider ability across a full range of subjects. Prospective employers, colleges and universities are all interested in this a wider measure of the individual, reflecting their broader range of skills and their attitude to work. Please therefore always encourage your child to do the best that they can, in every subject. We appreciate they will like some subjects more than others, however, there is a cross over in the skills and knowledge that they learn and what they learn in one subject will be beneficial in others. Simply put, they will benefit from always trying their best.

We are asking for your help in terms of helping the young people in our community to be more ambitious. We accept our responsibility in doing everything that we can to support them and to show them what is required however it is important that they buy in and are motivated to aim higher.

Young people who achieve a 5+ are those who revise frequently and effectively at home as well as engage in their lessons in school. They read independently and take the time to go back through their work, asking questions and taking on feedback. They put that little bit more work in to secure a deeper level of knowledge and understanding because, ultimately, they are motivated to achieve it. Often, the biggest barrier for a young person is the belief that they can do it and the desire to work that little bit harder. The difference between a 4 and 5 can come down to fine margins, a small number of marks that could be achieved, with just a little bit more effort.

In school, we are going to emphasise this approach, with the ambition of going 'one grade higher' than their target grade. One grade higher can make a huge difference and in particular, when it is the difference between a 4 or a 5.

Please encourage your child, support them with their revision and homework, encourage them to do a little bit more each day, ask them to explain what they have been learning and help us to help them celebrate their successes.

The potential within our community is enormous. There is no reason why any student cannot aim higher and with the right support, encouragement and guidance, they can do it.

If you would like to talk to us in further detail about how you can help your child achieve more, please contact Mr Gallacher at Gallacher.k@wintertonca.com

Thank you as ever for your faith and support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mr Rowlands', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr Rowlands