

West Sussex Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

25 February 2019

Results in Public Examinations, Summer 2018

Report by the Director of Education and Skills

Summary

1. The overall number of students achieving a GCSE Full Course qualification in RE has decreased this year but remains relatively high.
2. Standards in the GCSE full course were broadly in line with the national average in 2018 for 9-1 grade passes, and below the national average in grades 9-4.
3. The number of students studying for the A Level remains high, however standards continue to be below the national average.

Background

The publication of the full examination results was delayed this year and we were unable to report them in the autumn meeting. The data given in this paper is the validated data .

1. Entry Patterns

- 1.1 Table 1 below shows the numbers of students taking GCE and GCSE examinations over the past 11 years. In West Sussex a cohort of 7,578 students sat GCSE examinations in 2018 with 2,574 of these students taking religious studies full course, and a further 275 taking the short course. The number of students taking the full course GCSE fell by 516 student entries. As was predicted a few years ago the short course GCSE numbers continues to fall.

The figures in table 1 include all maintained schools in West Sussex including Academies.

	GCE 'A' Level		GCE 'AS' Level		GCSE		Short Course GCSE		Total GCSE
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Students
2008	13	120	15	230	26	1,425	29	3,118	4,543
2009	16	142	17	54	23	1,354	26	2,551	3,905
2010	13	133	16	54	21	1,498	26	2,819	4,137
2011	15	140	13	47	25	1,768	26	2,545	4,313
2012	16	166	14	53	25	2,008	29	2,904	4,912
2013	15	157	14	209	27	2,245	27	2,745	4,990
2014	14	131	14	54	29	2,820	n/a	n/a	n/a
2015	16	115	14	179	29	3,055	14	776	3,831
2016	15	136	17	67	31	3,362	11	427	3,830
2017	16	135	11	79	31	3,090	6	297	3,387
2018	15	112	10	138	28	2,574	4	275	2,849

Source: West Sussex 2018 from NOVA

Table 1 – Numbers of students studying RE and the number of schools entering students

- 1.2 The number of students studying for the short course in GCSE has declined as expected. Nationally the number has dropped down to 8,870 entries in state-funded schools (9,730 in all schools).
- 1.3 The number of students studying for the GCSE examination Full Course in religious studies declined again this year after a number of years of growth. There are 37 schools with Year 11 students of which 12 are church schools and 16 are Academies. This year, 10 schools entered the majority (90%+) of their students for the full course GCSE examination and a further 2 schools entered over half their students for this examination. Of these twelve schools eight were church schools. Overall these 13 schools made up 79.7% of the entries.
- 1.4 Whilst we are seeing a changing entry pattern of entry with schools entering students for a variety of examinations, some schools enter all or most students for the examination while the others entered small numbers. Fluctuations in results are usually more marked in those schools where only a limited number of students are entered for the examination. There were 9 schools in the county who did not enter any students for religious studies examinations.
- 1.5 The number of students who go on to study 'A' level is small but the figure for 2018 has fallen slightly from the numbers in 2017, in contrast to AS Level numbers, where the figure has risen. The number of schools with students studying A Level and AS Level is similar.

2. GCSE Trends

- 2.1 The percentage of students achieving grades 9-1 (before 2018 A*-G) in 2018 in the full GCSE course have remained broadly the same since 2014 and are broadly in line with the national average. Since 2016 results have been a little under the national average for students achieving grades 9-4 (before 2018, A*-C). It is important to note that these are not exact equivalents.

For the full course ten schools entered most of their students while the rest entered a proportion through the option system and the results in these schools are more volatile from year to year.

	% achieving grade 9-4 (2018) or A*-C (Before 2018) thresholds					% achieving grade 9-1 (2018) or A*-G (before 2018) thresholds				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
West Sussex	72.0	77.0	69.0	69.9	66.0	98.0	98.8	98.2	98.0	98.0
National	71.6	72.1	71.6	71.5	71.8	97.6	97.9	97.8	97.9	98.0
Difference	+1.6	+4.9	-2.6	-1.6	-5.8	+0.4	+0.9	+0.4	+0.1	0.0

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-and-multi-academy-trust-performance-2018-revised>
West Sussex 2018 from NOVA

Table 2 – Percentage of students gaining higher grades and grades any grade compared to the national picture in RE in full course GCSE.

- 2.2 Girls perform better than boys at GCSE in general and this gap is larger in religious studies than in other subjects and larger in West Sussex than nationally. The 2018 gap between boys and girls achieving grade 9-4 or A*-C

thresholds in Religious Studies nationally is 15.6% (girls 79.0%; boys 63.4%) while in West Sussex it was 23.8% (girls 77.3%; boys 53.5%).

- 2.3 2018 was the first year of the new RE syllabus. It is generally considered that the new syllabi are more challenging. For example, one of the exam boards requires the students to write an extended and evaluative essay in the RE examination (AQA). This is a change from the previous specification.

3. 'A' Level

- 3.1 The percentage of students in Year 13 gaining the higher grades at 'A' Level has dropped slightly this year and is broadly in line with the national figure. Comparison with previous years is difficult because of the entry arrangements that leave the choice to individual students. It was possible to achieve an A* grade at "A" Level and nine students achieved this award. 20.5% of students achieved an A or A* grade compared with 22.9% nationally.

A-level	A* - C				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
West Sussex	69.0	73.0	80.0	77.2	73.2
National	79.1	80.1	80.4	80.9	77.8
Difference	-10.1	-7.1	-0.4	-3.7	-4.6

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2017-to-2018-revised>
West Sussex 2018 from NOVA

Table 4 – Percentage of students gaining higher grades at A Level

- 3.2 Girls perform similar to boys at A-level, in general, however this gap is larger in West Sussex than nationally. The 2018 gap between boys and girls achieving an A*- C grade in Religious Studies nationally is 0.2% (girls 77.9%; boys 77.7%) while in West Sussex it is 1.6% (girls 73.6%; boys 72.0%).
- 3.3 70.3% of students gained a higher grade (A-C) in their AS Level compared with 60.5% nationally. This reports only the AS Levels that were reported at the end of Year 12 and excludes students who sat the exam in Year 11. Due to the ways that AS levels are reported, at this stage it is difficult to compare it with previous years. The number of entries nationally has fallen dramatically from 28,865 in 2016 to 4,091 in 2018 (and this is reflected across other subjects).

AS-level	A* - C				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
West Sussex	42.5	50.5	49.3	65.8	70.3
National	64.5	66.4	65.9	63.2	60.5
Difference	-12.0	-15.9	-16.6	+2.6	+9.8

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2017-to-2018-revised>
West Sussex 2018 from NOVA

Table 5 – Percentage of students gaining higher grades at AS Level

- 3.4 Girls perform better than boys at AS-level, in general, however in 2018 this trend was reversed in West Sussex. The 2018 gap between boys and girls achieving an A*- C grade in Religious Studies nationally is 4.4% (girls 61.7%; boys 57.3%) while in West Sussex it was -3.7% (girls 69.3%; boys 73.0%).