

## Bog Standard Comprehensives

Written by David Watts

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### BOG STANDARD COMPREHENSIVES?

Following on from the publication of two articles relating to student levels of attainment in the Island's primary schools, parent David Watts has turned his attention to the secondary schools – focussing on Key Stage 4 GCSE/IGCSE attainment.

The author believes this new article contains some thought-provoking material. As with his previous work much of the data in this document was sourced from Freedom of Information requests and is information he resolutely believes should be in the public domain so that parents and other stakeholders can determine for themselves the relative academic strengths of our secondary schools.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, some school Departments shine; others most certainly have room for improvement. Not only does this new article critically examine GCSE results and so called pass rates over the previous three years it also highlights some important related areas namely:

- The value added by the schools (how much actual progress is made by pupils through their 5 years of compulsory secondary education?);
- Whether the Island's schools are "gaming the system" by concentrating on a particular group of pupils in order to score as highly as possible in the Department's key performance measure (5 GCSEs at A\*-C including English and maths);
- Are some IOM KS4 pupils effectively "off-rolled" for examination statistics purposes and if

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so, what is the actual data for all students completing the KS4 in terms of gaining a Level 2 qualification (the traditional pass) in English and maths?

- Some notes on the performance of King William's College (the Island's only public school) and broad comparisons with other areas of the UK notably Wales and Northern Ireland – the latter jurisdiction returns some particularly impressive results in comparison to the Isle of Man;

- The DESC U-turn in choice of examination board for GCSE mathematics with some shocking statistics on reading ages required to access papers and exceptionally low grade boundaries. According to e-mails released under the FOIA at least one Secondary head has “serious concerns” over certain subjects “and the whole exam set up” and articulated such to the DESC CEO in December 2018 – some 5 months before students sit examinations crucial for their future.

You can access the work by clicking on the link below.