

MEDIA RELEASE

ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL HARPENDEN

MONDAY 30th JANUARY 2012

SUMMER'S SUNSHINE KEEPS ON WORKING !

**SCHOOL BASKS IN LAST YEAR'S GLORY-
IT'S OFFICIAL NOW !**

**SCHOOL'S EXCEPTIONAL EXAM
PERFORMANCE RECOGNISED NATIONALLY**

**LEAGUE TABLES PLACE ST GEORGE'S
FOURTH IN COUNTRY**

All staff, pupils and parents at Harpenden's 1300 strong St George's School basked in the warm glow of recognition last week when Government published national League Tables last week confirmed their 2011 exceptional performance.

By all national benchmarks the Sun Lane School scored just below the top three medal winners for state, comprehensive, non selective schools in England with 96% of all their 188 students achieving 5 A*-C at GCSE.

Headmaster Norman Hoare explained

"We were delighted with official confirmation of our leading position because it reflects the hard work of so many people and students. But we should remember of course using this national benchmark it is very hard for any none selective school, (which does not take children through testing or aptitude criteria) to get into the top range. There will always be genuine cases of children for whom exams are a serious and seemingly insurmountable challenge. For them GCSEs are a great hurdle although it is so rewarding that intense support by specialist help and parents can boost performance in many subjects.

Only a small handful of pupils did not reach at least 5 A-C although if you look carefully at the 230 measures for our school you will see that no one left without GCSEs and of course most got at least 9 or 10 at one sitting and we shone in so many accountability measures.*

continued.....

*Despite Government attempts to remove anomalies from the League Tables there are still problems with categorising schools. **Some claim to be non-selective but you only have to browse their Admissions criteria to see that a significant percentage are taken on ability.** Also some qualifications have been given GCSE status and count, as four GCSE passes and that has an impact of these figures. This ‘wheeze’ will soon be removed from the tables which are constantly being revised.*

A new development which we hear of so much is Mr Gove’s infamous English Baccalaureate which encourages all schools to ensure that History and/or Geography and a Language are included in a ‘respectable’ collection of exam passes at 16. This is at the expense of other subjects which may be equally as important for their aesthetic, practical, social or cultural value. Religious Studies is not included for instance or a Technology.

It is one person’s limited view of the menu we should be offering our students at 14-16. The tables show that at St George’s 46% achieve this so called collection of subjects because not every one at St George’s is forced to do History or Geography. It is fascinating to see how the leading independent schools fare on this so called measure – one of the most famous listed in the complete tables has a number lower than we do because they too value a greater breadth in the curriculum and allow students options. There may be something more sinister up ahead for schools as Mr Gove continues to peddle this !

Ben Cullis, Assistant Head commented

“It is a challenge as a school to remain above the 90% mark as every cohort of year 11 students is different and it only takes disappointments for one or two students to affect this overall figure. However, we always remember that GCSE results act as currency in the ‘real world’ and that they are much more important for those individual students than for our school data.

What really matters is what we deliver is enjoyable, rewarding and valuable to our pupils. We believe in educating the whole child and providing many different opportunities for fulfilment and progression.

We don’t tinker with early entry to boost results or force feed pupils to collect GCSEs like postage stamps at 16+. It is an approach we believe in and have practised for years.”

However, Headmaster Hoare expressed his concern that funding cuts for the most successful schools with large sixth forms already in the pipeline will inevitably affect everyone’s budgets.

“We had to reduce costs over £100,000 last year and from April we expect at least another £200,000 to be saved. Inevitably with staffing costs the major part of any school budget – and we are not alone in spending 80% of our income on people. There are some tough decisions to make if we are to continue to maintain standards. There will be not alternative to hard decisions and inevitably good schools where they will if they are able to, to rely more and more on fund raising to continue to provide things like school minibuses, computers and extra textbooks.