

MGS Examination and University Entrance Results 2011

Parents were sent a summary and provisional report on examination results during the Michaelmas Term. This year, the Annual Report (which normally contains details of examinations and university entrance) will be published early in February, so I have provided advance information below:

A-Levels

We have now received notifications from the relevant examination boards for all re-marks and appeals for A-Levels. Our detailed results for summer 2011 are now as follows:

A-Level	Number	A*	A	B	% A*- B	C or lower
Art	6	3	0	3	100	0
Biology	50	15	16	15	92	4
Chemistry	59	18	27	10	93	4
Classical Civ.	7	0	3	2	71	2
Economics	37	10	21	6	100	0
Electronics	9	5	3	1	100	0
English Lang	1	0	1	0	100	0
English Lit	29	9	10	8	93	2
French	16	1	10	5	100	0
Geography	30	10	12	8	100	0
German	2	0	1	1	100	0
Greek	2	0	2	0	100	0
History	48	15	19	12	96	2
Latin	6	4	1	0	83	1
Maths	81	40	26	10	94	5
Further Maths	23	8	8	6	96	1
Music	3	2	1	0	100	0
Philosophy	4	1	0	3	100	0
Physics	35	10	13	6	83	6
Politics	27	5	8	11	89	3
Religious Studies	18	2	10	4	89	2
Russian	9	4	4	1	100	0
Spanish	6	4	2	0	100	0
Total	508	166	198	112	94	32

Entry: 157 students

This is the second year in which the top A* grade has been awarded in A-Level examinations. The national average is some 8% compared with 32.5% here at MGS. The average for selective state (grammar) schools is 12% and that for independent schools is 18%.

National statistics indicate that the achievement of an A* grade appears to be more problematic in some subjects than in others. Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish in particular) seem to be far more severely graded nationally.

It is pleasing to note that two subjects relatively new to MGS, Economics and Electronics, have established themselves extremely well, both achieving 100% A*AB grades.

This is the sixth year in succession that the School has achieved greater than 90% for A*AB grades and the third year in succession we have been close to or above our 'target' of 95%. This is a distinction shared by fewer than 20 UK schools.

Extended Project Qualification

Once again, a significant number of students chose to write extended essays as entries for the AS Extended Project qualification.

The quality of these essays remains very high indeed, with 17 (of 22 candidates) achieving A* and A grades.

International Baccalaureate

This year our second cohort of IB students received their results: 29 students gained Diplomas, with an overall points average of 38.1. This placed the School firmly within the top ten of the 200-plus IB schools in the UK.

Eleven students achieved scores of 40 or more, with one gaining the (most remarkable) maximum of 45 points. The results for individual subjects are as follows:

IB-Higher		Scores				
<i>29 Diploma Students</i>	Entries	7	6	5	%7,6,5	4 or lower
Art	1	0	1	0	100	0
Biology	14	2	9	1	86	2
Chemistry	13	3	9	0	92	1
Economics	9	6	2	1	100	0
English	11	2	6	3	100	0
French	4	1	3	0	100	0
Geography	8	1	6	0	88	1
History	16	7	8	0	94	1
Mathematics	8	0	1	3	50	4
Philosophy	3	0	1	2	100	0
Physics	2	0	1	0	50	1
Russian	2	0	1	1	100	0
Spanish	2	1	1	0	100	0
Total	87	23	49	11	95	10
IB-Standard	Entry	7	6	5	%5+	4 or lower
<i>All subjects</i>	87	32	38	11	97	6

It is not a straightforward matter to compare performances in A-level and IB subjects. Even so, leading universities now tend to equate 7 IB points to the A* grade and 6 points to the A grade. Just as severe grading occurs nationally for some A-Levels, it is clear that a similar situation arises for IB, with Higher Level Mathematics and Physics in particular subject to harsher marking than noted in other subjects.

Performances in Economics and History were very strong indeed, with Biology, English, and Geography also producing strong (larger entry) results.

GCSEs and International GCSEs

Results for all GCSE and IGCSE subjects other than Drama have now been received and agreed with the relevant examination boards.

The results for GCSE Drama are still in dispute with the examination board concerned (AQA), despite a modest number of upgrades, and are subject to appeal: MGS is one of many schools nationally taking issue with what appears to be a systematic failure on the part of AQA with respect to Drama. Hence, Drama results (with less than 50% A*A grades) are not included in the table of confirmed results on the following page.

GCSE and IGCSE (I)		No.	A*	A	%A*-A	B	C	'Pass' %	D or lower
Art and Design 3D		8	5	3	100	0	0	100	0
Biology	I	182	88	66	85	23	3	99	2
Chemistry	I	183	111	43	84	19	8	99	2
Chinese		17	17	0	100	0	0	100	0
Classical Civ.		34	13	11	71	8	2	100	0
English Language	I	208	155	36	92	16	1	100	0
English Literature	I	208	117	67	88	22	2	100	0
Fine Art		40	23	12	88	0	2	93	3
French	I	184	94	55	81	27	6	99	2
Geography	I	114	41	40	71	20	11	98	2
German	I	12	10	2	100	0	0	100	0
Greek		9	5	3	89	1	0	100	0
History	I	162	75	48	76	27	10	99	2
Italian		9	9	0	100	0	0	100	0
Latin		35	19	9	80	6	1	100	0
Mathematics	I	208	126	64	91	17	1	100	0
Music	I	17	7	6	76	3	1	100	0
Physics	I	164	101	36	84	22	4	99	1
Religious Studies	I	87	68	13	93	4	2	100	0
Russian		30	27	1	93	2	0	100	0
Science: Combined		4	0	2	50	1	1	100	0
Science: Electronics		30	21	8	97	1	0	100	0
Spanish	I	51	26	13	76	10	2	100	0
Totals		1996	1158	538	85	229	57	99	14
<i>208 boys</i>									

Our boys have been entered for International GCSEs in Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics for several years now. We continue to achieve relatively high numbers of the top A* grade in these subjects, compared with the levels achieved before the move to IGCSE.

This year, a number of other subjects entered candidates for IGCSE. In most of these cases there was a significant rise in the percentages of A* grades achieved. Four subjects, new to IGCSE for us, performed very strongly indeed: English Language, English Literature, German and Religious Studies. In our first year of Mandarin Chinese GCSE, every boy achieved the top A* grade: a remarkable achievement.

Although the results overall were not quite as exceptional as those for 2010 (with an arguably very strong year group achieving a record 88.8% A*A grades), they compare well with those in 2009 and other recent years. We have now achieved 85% or higher for A* and A grades together for six years in succession.

Universities 2011

With the number of applications to UK universities very much higher in 2011, this was an extremely competitive year for all students. The outgoing Upper Sixth was regarded as not being quite as strong on the Arts side historically and the number gaining places at Oxford and Cambridge (19) was down on recent years. London was a popular destination, with UCL, Imperial, King's and LSE together attracting some 30 students to a broad spread of degree courses. Successful applications to study medical subjects (arguably just as high a hurdle as Oxbridge, UCL, LSE or Imperial) reached a record high: Medicine (27), Dentistry (5) and Veterinary Science (1).

Russell Group and equivalent leading universities continue to dominate amongst our boys' choices. Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester account for a third (59) of our successful applications this year. Durham, Warwick, Bristol, Edinburgh and York together accounted for 20% of our successes.

History, Geography, Business/Finance and Economics remain favoured areas of study for many of our departing sixth-form students. This year there was also an increase in the number of applicants for Law (7).

Mathematics (6), Sciences (18) and Engineering (12) continue to attract considerable interest demonstrating (with medical subjects) the enduring strength of the School in these fields.

Further details will be provided in the 2011 Annual Report.

Examination Results and League Tables

MGS, like many other of the 240 Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference Schools (HMC: the organisation of leading independent schools), does not publish its examination results directly to newspapers. Even so, many journalists trawl through websites (and other sources) in order to compile their various league tables.

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, to his credit, understands the dangers of simplistic tables. He has pledged to amend the Government's own tables published in January each year, so that they are less likely to promote erroneous judgements.

Some of the standard objections to league tables are as follows:

Those published immediately after the release of results (eg by *The Times* and *Telegraph*) in August do not take into account the very large number of grades challenged by schools and their pupils.

Even those published later (such as by *The Sunday Times*) do not take into account on-going disputes between schools and examination boards which, although few in number, can and do have a dramatic impact upon individual schools.

In such tables, dominated by schools in London and the South East, MGS is typically placed alongside the top 20 or so schools.

Most tables do not compare like with like: for example, relatively straightforward subjects like Information and Communications Technology, Media Studies and Business Studies are considered as exactly equivalent to more demanding traditional subjects like Mathematics, Chemistry and German.

Depending on the methods employed, not always made clear and sometimes obscure, the positions of schools can and do vary by 50 or more places in apparently similar tables.

Few tables pay attention to the 'value added' by a school: however, it is interesting to note that independent schools tend to do extremely well when value-added is taken into account.

Only one table (other than that for IB schools) appears to judge academic schools like MGS alongside similar schools: that published by the *Financial Times* in February/March each year. This focuses upon achievement in the more demanding subjects. Schools which tend to avoid such subjects may do deceptively well in other tables but tend to perform poorly when compared against schools which focus on the challenge of those 'tough' subjects favoured by leading universities. This table is compiled from official 'government' data which all schools and examination boards are obliged to provide.

However, perhaps the most telling objection to league tables is that they do not fully measure the overall educational worth of any school. What happens outside of the classroom in any school is just as important as what happens within: activities, clubs, societies, sports, the creative arts, trips and visits ... all play a vital part in educating young people.

We know that results are indeed important, and it is gratifying to note that MGS continues to impress on this front. However, we also know that parents ask us to prepare their sons not just for university but also for successful careers and lives. It would be so much easier to focus upon mere results, as some schools do, in order to give the appearance (but not the reality) of genuine success.

Dr Christopher Ray
High Master