

# Students' special recognition for passing their exam a year early

By **ANDY KERR**  
News Reporter

THIRTY high achieving students at Erasmus Darwin Academy received special recognition for showing that they are "some of the brightest students in the country".

In the summer, these students managed to gain a Grade 8 or 9 in their English Literature examination - a year early!

As a reward for their "amazing achievement", they were served breakfast with the principal and vice principal and they received a special certificate and prize.

The academy claims that one of reasons for this early success is the three-year Key Stage 4 programme (called the Qualifications Stage) which gives GCSE students an extra year in which to study and prepare for reformed GCSEs which, the academy maintains, are now much more challenging than the old GCSEs. This extra year of study also means that there is scope for some students to take a



Year 10 students celebrate GCSE success

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Mark Maydew

qualification early if they are judged to be to be ready.

Therefore, in the summer, the whole of the Year 10 cohort took their English Literature GCSE a year early and the results "were incredibly strong".

The proportion of students gaining Grades 4-9 and 5-9 were significantly above the national standard and the thirty students who gained a grade 8 or 9 amounted to over 20 per cent of the cohort (compared to the national average of 8 per cent).

Principal of Erasmus Darwin Academy Mark Maydew said: "I am incredibly proud of all those students

who took their English Literature in the summer when they were at the end of Year 10.

"And it is important to note that they have not just gained a high quality qualification; they have gained a timely confidence boost as they enter Year 11. Furthermore, they now have one fewer subject to worry about at the end of Year 11, which should help

reduce the pressure of Year 11 exam season.

"In particular, I must mention those who gained the Grade 8 or 9. To perform in a way which places you in the top few per cent of the country, when you are a year younger than everybody else, is a phenomenal achievement and they all richly deserved their special celebration."

## Olympian joins celebration as school hands out prizes to high achievers

ERASMUS Darwin Academy in Burntwood held its presentation evening recently and the guest of honour was Olympic silver medallist and former world champion badminton player Gail Emms MBE.

As well as presenting the prizes, she gave a "truly inspirational speech",

urging the students to believe they are capable of achieving more success than they think is possible, as long as they keep on believing in themselves, aiming high and working hard.

Academy principal Mark Maydew said there was a real air of celebration at the event which followed "excellent" GCSE results, "cementing EDA's status as one of the highest performing schools in Staffordshire".

He said that despite the reformed GCSEs "proving to be tougher than ever", Erasmus Darwin Academy recorded their "best ever GCSE results".

Mr Maydew paid tribute to EDA's "amazing staff, for whom going the extra mile is the norm" and EDA students who "continued to show real maturity, remarkable focus and an incredible work ethic, even though they had to face real uncertainty, volatility and scaremongering with regards to reformed GCSEs".

Amongst the many prize-winners were the highest performing GCSE and A Level students of 2018.

The highest achieving A Level students were: Benjamin Frondigoun, who gained Mathematics at grade A\*, Further Mathematics (A) and Physics (A) and Elliot Jones who gained Mathematics at grade A, Further Mathematics at A\* and Physics at grade A.

At GCSE level, Lewis Crook and Charlie Tuddenham were the highest achieving students. They both received the Jean Ashcroft Prize for Academic Achievement.

They averaged a Grade 9, the new elite GCSE grade, for all of their subjects.

Other prizes were presented for a wide range of achievements in and out of school and students were recognised for succeeding in the face of challenge.

One student, Charlotte Bleakley, received a special award for never missing a day's compulsory education since entering Nursery class in September 2004.

Mr Maydew said: "Competition for prizes was particularly fierce this year because we have so many fantastic students who achieve incredibly high standards in all areas of school life.

"Therefore, all of the prize-winners should feel really proud of themselves, because they are the students who have really shone, stood out and caught the eye for being truly exceptional in some way.

"The evening finished on a really positive note, with the recently appointed head boy and head girl sharing their closing remarks in a really confident manner - no mean feat when you are addressing an audience of over 600 guests."



Head boy James Kelford and head girl Hannah Kately with (centre) Gail Emms MBE

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