Message

From: PS, Sec-OF-STATE [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=DF9CFBF8272C484194E674B8ADA5221B-SECOFSTATE-]
Sent: 21/08/2020 9:31:56 AM
To: DYSON, Michelle [michelle.dyson@education.gov.uk]; MCCULLY, Andrew [andrew.mccully@education.gov.uk]; Name Redacted @education.gov.uk]; Name Redacted @education.gov.uk]; SAXTON, Jo [jo.saxton@education.gov.uk]; Name Redacted @education.gov.uk]
CC: PS, Sec-OF-STATE [sec-of-state.ps@education.gov.uk]; PS, Advisers [advisers.ps@education.gov.uk]; PS, Gibb [gibb.ps@education.gov.uk]; GODSMARK, Hollie [hollie.godsmark@education.gov.uk]
Subject: OFFSEN Readout: SoS, NG, call with Ofqual (14th August, 1245)

All,

Please see readout below from SoS / Minister Gibb's call Friday 14th August (pm) with Ofqual (Name , Sally Collier and Michelle Meadows).
Jo, Name Redacted and I were DfE attendees.

On appeals

- NG noted schools really not clear on process as to how they can appeal. Essential that they can understand this.
- NG discussed that no schools he had spoken to, had had approaches from exam boards to signal that their results might be anomalous and therefore should consider appealing – had Ofqual done work on this? SC confirmed yes, understood exam boards to have spoken with schools. No exact numbers on which schools/how many calls, but she could go back to verify.
- NG asked Ofqual after progress in respect of the publication of guidance on the new mocks element, and whether can be published Friday. NR confirmed working to do so, but yet subject to board agreement – meeting scheduled at 3pm. Jo asked if could be brought forward – Ofqual unable to do, papers are being finalised, [redacted] Subject to board agreeing the guidance, Ofqual should be in position to publish this evening. NR outlined Ofqual's position for the guidance, in incorporating a form of NEA into the process and the valid mock exam being up to and equal to the CAG element. NG thought this ok.
- [*SoS joined the call*]. SoS also asked if guidance would go out today – he feels strongly it should. Noted intention for the minister to write to all schools to set out the practicalities around appeals by 5pm. Would like include Ofqual's guidance, but won't hold the letter for it.
- Also SoS raised the new taskforce element to help keep appeals on track. SC welcomed the taskforce and thought this good.

On standardisation model

- NG raised significant concerns over anomalies in the algorithm – centres he trusts, had reported to him that data looked completely off. His view was that this is evidence of the model not working. He cited particular concerns from sixth form colleges - students dropping 4-5 grades down from CAG.
- SC maintained that the algorithm was working. MM asked for specific examples to be shared. Where examples have been shared, she has looked into each one, and found no evidence that the algorithm has not worked. Explanations for the apparent anomalies in these cases were differing prior attainment, or inflated CAGs. Feasible for there to be anomalies, and also reasons why significant drops in grades would be feasible outcomes.
- SoS – accepted impossible to look at every case but maintained that for a pupil to drop five grades from their CAG, that teachers had awarded, was not feasible – NG agreed. NG noted he was aware that outliers were possible in a statistical model, but was not anticipating at this scale/to this degree.
- SoS' view – the algorithm has shown flaws. Can Ofqual look at methods of correction? MM noted changes would raise questions of fairness and how could work operationally. SC said Ofqual would have to take that away and noted SoS would need to direct Ofqual on this. SoS confirmed he was open to doing so.
- [*SoS broke off the call*] NG – interested re GCSEs in how many CAGs downgraded from 4->3, wondered if there was to be big increase in number of resulting fails – Eng/Maths. SC didn't have numbers to hand but would be happy to look into it – asked if resists policy being considered. MM thought DfE had data on this point already, but to be confirmed.

The call with Ofqual ended here, but DfE stayed on the line and SoS rejoined the line. Further steer was as follows:

- SoS wanted everything possible doing to get Ofqual to get their mock appeals guidance out Friday – he wants NG's letter to centres to help precipitate it. He asked if anything else that can be done? NR suggested further call with Roger. NG happy to speak with Roger again and SoS too. Call was also scheduled for Sat morning with SoS/RT/SC to discuss next steps.

Many thanks,

Name Redacted Senior Private Secretary to Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP, Secretary of State for Education I&S
I&S