

Owen Smith MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lynne Neagle AM  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our Ref: CB/OS6362

28 September 2018

Dear Lynne,

**Y Pant School, Cowbridge Road, Talbot Green, Pontyclun, CF72 8YQ**

I have recently been contacted by the head at Y Pant School here in Pontypridd regarding a number of errors made by the WJEC and the impact this has had upon students and their families.

Given the remit of your committee, I thought you might be interested in the problems encountered by Y Pant; which is unlikely to be confined to just one particular school or one local authority area.

Copies of my correspondence with the WJEC and the school are enclosed for your information and, if the committee's forward work schedule allows, perhaps you might consider holding a brief evidence session on the topic?

Thank you for giving this matter your attention and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Owen".

**Owen Smith MP**  
Member of Parliament for Pontypridd

Enc.

Cc Mrs. Cheetham – Y Pant School, Pontypridd, CF37 2ST  
10 Market Street, Pontypridd, CF37 2ST  
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24<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Ms Melhuish,  
WJEC,  
245, Western Avenue,  
Cardiff.  
CF5 2YX

Dear Ms Melhuish,

**Further concerns surrounding the Unit 2 AS English – Summer Series**

Thank you for your response dated 20<sup>th</sup> September.

Unfortunately I feel the need to place another complaint about the Quality Assurance process for the above qualification.

We entered 21 candidates in the summer series for AS Literature. WJEC identified 2 clerical errors which you contacted us about earlier this month.

In receiving this communication I was under the impression that all checks for our 21 scripts were, whilst three weeks late after the results date, completed. It would appear however that this was not the case.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> September, as a result of a different pupil requesting a re-mark a clerical check was completed where a 10 mark error was identified changing the grade from a B to an A.

I have to point out that this candidate [REDACTED] has been part of the Seren Network and this summer attended the [REDACTED] School. She wanted to read [REDACTED] and has been distraught at her 'B' grade which was totally unexpected. As a result of her initial result her application to [REDACTED] has been placed on hold. She simply did not feel she would secure a place with a 'B' at AS level in her key subject area.

I respectfully ask for reassurance of two things:

**Pennaeth / Headteacher:**  
Mrs Bev Cheetham

- Confirmation that the examiner's marking is within tolerance and correct.

Given that the marks have been entered incorrectly on three papers one has to wonder whether the marking itself is up to standard. Our English department have expressed a number of surprises at the results. Our English department has an excellent record of accurately tracking pupil outcomes. Many of them are examiners themselves.

- That **all** clerical checks for **all** our candidates have now been completed.

Why did it take a remark application to pick up yet another clerical error? When would this clerical error, which is pivotal to this young person's future, have been detected? Surely a batch of same centre scripts are checked together?

The service we have been provided with this summer is simply not good enough. I know we are not alone in our concerns and am aware of other cases within the LA where the board has failed students by losing papers or simply not completing QA checks.

At Y Pant three young lives are in turmoil by the lack of diligence and due care in your QA processes. As the only exam board in Wales it is imperative that the pupils, parents and educators of Wales have faith in the system. Recurring problems such as these, currently prevents us from having this.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs. B. Cheetham  
Headteacher

Kirsty Williams AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref CB/OS6362  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/02062/18

Owen Smith MP  
Member of Parliament for Pontypridd  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
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SW1A 0AA

[Owen.Smith.MP@parliament.uk](mailto:Owen.Smith.MP@parliament.uk)

26 September 2018

Dear Owen

Thank you for your letter of 06 September on behalf of your constituent regarding the incorrect GCE AS English literature results issued by the WJEC.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Education, and as a parent myself, I understand the concerns and frustration felt by Mrs Cheetham, the learners and parents involved. However, as you are aware, the Welsh Ministers have no powers to intervene in this matter. The Welsh Ministers' functions relating to the regulation of qualifications and the qualifications system in Wales were repealed in 2015 with the establishment of Qualifications Wales as the independent regulator for Wales.

There are established arrangements in place through the WJEC and Qualifications Wales and I note that Mrs Cheetham has followed these procedures and has lodged a formal complaint with the WJEC.

If after following the WJEC complaint's procedure, your constituent still has concerns there is also the option of bringing the matter to the attention of Qualifications Wales as the regulator. Qualifications Wales can be contacted by e-mail on; [enquiries@qualificationswales.org](mailto:enquiries@qualificationswales.org) or by telephone on 0333 077 2701.

Further information on the process for making a complaint to Qualifications Wales can be found at:

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswilt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400  
[Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

<http://qualificationswales.org/english/our-work/regulating-awarding-bodies/complaints-about-awarding-bodies/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education



245 Rhodfa'r Gorllewin, Caerdydd, CF5 2YX  
029 2026 5000 gwybodaeth@cbac.co.uk www.cbac.co.uk

245 Western Avenue, Cardiff, CF5 2YX  
029 2026 5000 info@wjec.co.uk www.wjec.co.uk

Mr Owen Smith MP  
10 Market Street  
Pontypridd  
CF37 2ST

21 September 2018

Dear Mr Smith MP

Thank you for your letter dated 6 September which included a letter from the Headteacher of Y Pant School. I attach a copy of our response to Mrs Cheetham which addresses the issues raised in the letter.

I deeply regret that WJEC did not provide the candidates and the school with a better service this summer, and that our error caused distress for the candidates and the school. Our aim is to ensure that we always issue correct results to all candidates. Our quality assurance measures did not identify the transposition error for the two candidates at Y Pant School which led to the candidates receiving the incorrect marks and grades.

It was an extremely difficult decision to change the mark and grade of the candidate whose grade was amended from an A to a C. In all circumstances we aim to ensure that all candidates have the grade they deserve based on the evidence we have. We always consider the adverse effects a decision may have on a candidate. In this instance, we believe that it is important that the candidate has her correct mark and grade as the result may be used in making important life-decisions.

We are currently reviewing our quality assurance measures in respect of this error, to ensure that such incidents do not occur again.

Yours sincerely

Roderic Gillespie  
Chief Executive

cc **Kirsty Williams, AM – Cabinet Secretary for Education**  
Mike Evans, Chair, WJEC  
Mrs Bev Cheethan



Mrs B Cheetham  
Headteacher  
Y Pant High School  
Cowbridge Road  
Talbot Green  
Pontyclun  
CF72 8YQ

14<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Dear Mrs Cheetham,

I would like to reiterate our sincere apologies for the error in reporting incorrect grades for two of your candidates studying GCE English Literature this summer. I fully understand the stress that this will have caused your students, and we are disappointed that we have not been able to provide a better service to your centre this summer.

I would like to address each of the issues you have raised in turn:

**1. Quality assurance measures for issuing results**

WJEC has quality assurance procedures in place to check each and every script once it has been received from the examiner. Where there are discrepancies between the marks input onto the electronic mark input system by the examiner and what is written on the script, these are corrected prior to the issuing of results. Each year, there is a small number of scripts that are not returned to WJEC on time either owing to examiner issues or delays with the post. Each examiner is provided with a Parcel Force 24 hour label to return their scripts to WJEC after the completion of marking. This is considered a secure and trackable system. Despite numerous communications between us and the examiner the scripts were unfortunately returned late to WJEC.

The examiner should have returned two parcels to WJEC on 6<sup>th</sup> August but in fact only returned one. The second parcel was not collected by Parcel Force until Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> August at 15:56, which was GCE results day. This parcel, which contained scripts for your centre, was delivered to WJEC on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August at 10:15.

With GCSE results day on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, our clerical checkers did not have capacity to check these late GCE scripts. Following the bank holiday we contacted your centre on 3<sup>rd</sup> September when the error became known to us through our script checking process.

It is a difficult decision to take whether to withhold candidates' results when the scripts have not been returned in sufficient time for these important quality checks to take place. In the vast majority of cases of this nature, grades remain the same. However, we fully acknowledge that even one error is not acceptable. The examiner is fully aware of the transposition error, the delay in returning the scripts to us and the severe consequences of these actions.

## 2. & 3. Pupil well-being and communications

At WJEC every candidate matters. Our aim is to get the right grade, first time, on time, every time. We apologise if you felt that we were insensitive in conveying the message regarding the transposition error and the consequences for the two candidates at your centre. That certainly is not what we intended. While the decisions taken in this case have meant that two candidates' grades have been changed following the publication of results, we do believe that it is important that all candidates are issued with the correct mark and grade that they achieved as they may be making important life-decisions based on the result. The adverse effects of errors are always carefully considered.

When WJEC needs to contact a centre regarding an issue, the official notification procedure is via the examinations officer (EO) as the EO is the first point of contact. It was never our intention for this issue to go unnoticed within your centre. With regards to why we contact the centre rather than the candidate, our standard procedure is to deal directly with centres. We are able to provide letters for candidates when requested to do so by the centre.

WJEC has a managing adverse effects policy which deals with such incidents. However, incidents such as these are rare and are considered by the Special Case Review Group. As a result of your feedback we will review within this policy how we communicate incidents such as these to centres, heads of centres and to candidates.

## 4. Post results services

The Post Results Service is an important aspect of the quality assurance procedures for all qualifications. Marking errors discovered as part of the post results services are publicly reported and monitored by the regulators after each examination series. When an adverse effect occurs which is not related to the quality of marking, we are duty bound to notify the relevant regulator with full details of the incident and consideration of the actions to correct the error. I can confirm that we did notify Qualifications Wales of this incident on 3<sup>rd</sup> September.





**Qualifications & Assessment  
Cymwysterau ac Aseu**

WJEC, 245 Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YX  
029 2026 5000 exams@wjec.co.uk www.wjec.co.uk

CBAC, 245 Rhodfa'r Gortlewin, Caerdydd CF5 2YX  
029 2026 5000 arholiadau@cbac.co.uk www.cbac.co.uk

It is with deep regret that despite the quality assurance processes WJEC has in place to safeguard against a transposition error leading to issuing an incorrect result, on this occasion the safeguard failed. On behalf of WJEC, I would like to apologise again for the distress that this has caused your centre and the candidates concerned. Following this incident, we will strengthen our procedures and processes as part of our cycle of continuous review and improvement. If you would like to discuss the matter further, either in person or via letter, please do not hesitate to contact myself again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'S Melhuish', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely,' text.

**Sally Melhuish**

Cyfarwyddwraig Gynorthwyol (Aseu, Ansawdd a Dylunio)  
Assistant Director (Assessment Quality and Design)

## Owen Smith MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Roderic Gillespie  
Chief Executive, WJEC  
245 Western Avenue  
Cardiff  
CF5 2YX

Our Ref: CB/OS6362

6 September 2018

Dear Mr. Gillespie,

**Mrs. Bev Cheetham, Y Pant, Cowbridge Road, Talbot Green, Pontyclun, CF72 8YQ**

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter I have today received from my above-named constituent regarding the poor quality of service the school and its pupils have received from the WJEC.

I was deeply concerned to read about the error that occurred with two AS English papers and the impact this has had upon the students involved. I am even more concerned to read of the lack of action and attention given to the problem by the WJEC.

As such, I would greatly welcome your comments on the content of my constituent's letter and the issues raised therein.

Thank you for giving this matter your attention and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Owen Smith".

**Owen Smith MP**

Member of Parliament for Pontypridd

Enc.

Cc Mrs. Bev Cheetham  
Kirsty Williams AM - Cabinet Secretary for Education  
Mike Evans – Chair, WJEC



Cowbridge Road, Talbot Green,  
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Gwefan/Website: [www.ypant.co.uk](http://www.ypant.co.uk)  
Ebot/E-mail: [enquiries.ypantcomp@rctednet.net](mailto:enquiries.ypantcomp@rctednet.net)

6<sup>th</sup> September 2018

WJEC,  
245, Western Avenue,  
Cardiff.  
CF5 2YX

Dear Sir / Madam,

### Summer Examinations AS English

I would like to register a formal complaint.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, Mr Andrew Williams of the WJEC contacted our Examinations Officer by phone. He advised her that there had been an error on the recording of marks for two of our pupils - both with the surname [REDACTED]

The examination officer was advised that the marks for the candidates had been mixed up and therefore one grade was going to go up and the other was going to go down. As WJEC had found the error they had to act upon it and make the changes. Our examination officer asked that he put this information in an email.

On 4/9/18, I rang and spoke with Mr Williams. Mr Williams explained that after scripts have been marked they are returned to WJEC and then the script is checked against the online mark. In this instance WJEC had not completed this check prior to the examination results being issued to candidates on the 16<sup>th</sup> August.

When this quality assurance check was eventually made, some weeks after the release of the examination grades, they had discovered that the marks had been entered for the wrong candidates meaning one candidate [REDACTED] saw her grade plummet from an A to a C and the other, candidate [REDACTED] moved from a C to a B.

We were instructed to check the system and reissue the grades.

As you can imagine we are totally dismayed at the whole affair. The candidate herself was heartbroken. WJEC had no regard for her mental health or wellbeing in ANY aspect of dealing with this. Indeed on Tuesday upon speaking to an Assistant Director the whole 'episode' was described as being 'unfortunate.'

**Pennaeth / Headteacher:**  
Mrs Bev Cheetham

I have several points I wish to raise:

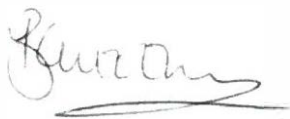
- Clearly the Quality Assurance measures in place at WJEC are not fit for purpose. How often do you issue results to students without all checks and measures having been carried out?
- WJEC have no regard for pupil wellbeing when such events happen. It was only when I spoke with the Assistant Director on Tuesday and suggested that a letter be sent to the candidate that this was even thought about by your organisation. What policy do you have in place to deal with such an occurrence?
- As a head of centre I have an official communication when anything unusual occurs within an examination series. At what point were you intending to officially notify me or were you hoping a phone call to the Examinations Officer would have resulted in this error going unnoticed within our organisation?
- How many more mistakes have occurred which have impacted on pupils lives? Indeed an older sibling of the pupil involved saw her mark change on a remark. This had a direct effect on the university she now attends.

WJEC has the monopoly as an exam board in Wales. Yet again we are disappointed with the service and dismayed at their neglect of procedures and management of this error.

This is an organisation in which the nation's educators, children, and their parents, have to put their trust. Currently that trust is not there.

I await your response and wish to advise that I am also forwarding a copy of this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. B. Cheetham  
Headteacher