



# No fears of changing standards with International Baccalaureate



**As students celebrate their exam successes at GCSE this weekend many will still be undecided about what to do next.**

But at Tollbar Business and Enterprise College students are signing up to join the Sixth Form Centre from September to begin a two-year International Baccalaureate qualification.

And, one year on since IB replaced A-Level courses at the college, students who joined up in September 2008 are about to begin their second year of IB studies.

Both intakes reflect the international flavour of IB, which is a recognised and highly-acclaimed qualification, and is welcomed by universities and businesses around the world. This year's applications include local, national and international students.

Professor Alan Smithers of Buckingham University has recently compared A-level results with IB, producing evidence of devaluation. He says:

"In 1993 the pass rates of both were about the same, but a gap of 20% has since opened up, with A-Level passes nearing 100%.

"IB passes have fluctuated from 70-80%, as you would expect if standards were being maintained. We are fooling ourselves if we believe these A-Level rises mean education is getting better."

Facilities at Tollbar BEC are among the best in the region, but the Sixth Form has still undergone a major transformation this summer to ensure that students have the best teaching environments and technology available.

A brand new teaching block has been added, comprising 10 classrooms, which include two state of the art ICT suites, three digital language labs and three offices. In addition, the Sixth Form library has been extended to accommodate additional IB text books, there is Wi-Fi access, and all students now have their own lockers.

Staff at Tollbar trained intensively for two years prior to the college being accredited for the International Baccalaureate, and its continued links with long-running Swedish IB School Aranasgymnasiet ensures that staff are abreast of any new developments and that their marking system is consistent. A further 20 teachers have completed an IB training course this year, bringing the total number to 52.

Tollbar Business and Enterprise Sixth Form College is the first college within a 50-mile radius to introduce the International Baccalaureate for students and recent studies have shown that universities agree that the IB is a global qualification that provides a quality education and enables students to compete with the world's best. It is expanding so rapidly that by next year an estimated 10,000 schools will be delivering IB.

Testimonials from universities around the country show the weight given to students who achieve the International Baccalaureate.

**Andrew Lee, from the University of Hull, says: "We have for a number of years recognised the International Baccalaureate for general entry purposes. We value diverse qualifications."**

**Helen Charlesworth of Oxford University Admissions Office, says: "We certainly welcome applications from International Baccalaureate candidates."**

But it is the comments from current Tollbar IB students which are the most encouraging.

**Kieran Bjergstrom says: "Although daunting at first the IB pushes your abilities without rest - it takes a while to get used to but in retrospect the benefits are clear. It helps make you a person knowledgeable in many areas, and prepared for the deadlines and sudden bursts of work the world of both university and employment relentlessly provide."**

**Eleanor Stanhope adds: "I have enjoyed the variety of subjects that the IB has been able to offer, where I would have been limited with A levels, and through recent visits to universities, I have discovered that the IB is often valued higher than A levels and other qualifications, because of its diversity and universal syllabus."**

**Andrew Brooking concludes: "I believe that Tollbar 6th Form is heading in the right direction. At the moment there is always something happening to improve the education whether it's a new building being put in place or the installation of wireless internet. I think the switch from A-levels to the IB was a good move as it is very well recognised and really is a fantastic thing to have done before heading to university."**

IB students will have a further advantage come next summer's exam results. The IB results are released in July, a whole month before the A-levels - giving students the opportunity to secure their university places before the summer break.

**Interested? Call Tollbar Business and Enterprise College on 01472 500505 to find out more.**

## GCSE results phenomenal"

Sheer hard work and determination led to 86.2%, or 275 out of 319 students at Tollbar Business and Enterprise College gaining 5 plus A\* - C grades, including English and Maths, this week.

This is a phenomenal 5% increase from last year and following the release of results nationally, Tollbar is now ranked 27th of all the comprehensive schools in the country. This shows just what can be achieved when a comprehensive school with an average intake entry continues to push the boundaries.

Tollbar focuses on traditional subjects and this year basic skills are being seen as the most

important measure of school performance for employers and further education providers. In this respect the college's students have surpassed expectations with an incredible 99.7% achieving 5 or more grades at A\*-C across all GCSE subjects.

Students at the college were jubilant on receiving their results.

Top performer Nadia Butt (16) who achieved 11A\*, 4As and a B at GCSE said she owed some of her success to the "tremendous support offered to her by all the staff at Tollbar, who give up their time to offer us revision classes at weekends and Bank Holidays to ensure that we achieve our best."

Beth Hudson (16), who is one of many students who signed up to study IB at Tollbar Sixth Form immediately after receiving her results, said: "I really feel that A-Levels aren't worth what they used to be and that IB will give me a better education. The school has supported me so well this far so why would I go anywhere else."

Beth achieved 4 A\* grades and 8 As, and may one day become a doctor.

Friends Lewis Taylor (16) and Marc Bruford (16), who achieved 11 GCSEs each, were also in the queue signing up to study IB.

Lewis, from Waltham, whose results included 7A\*, said: "I did look around but my heart was set on the International Baccalaureate from the start. It gets you a lot of UCAS points and offers a lot of community activities, similar to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which really attracted me to it.

"I know a lot of students who are signing up for it too and we are all looking forward to coming back to Tollbar."

Mum Joanne Taylor said she and Lewis had considered all of the options at post-16 and decided that IB looked the best. "I am so proud of him and I know he is looking forward to starting this course," she said.

Marc, from Holton-Le-Clay, whose results included 2A\* and 2A grades, said: I am really interested in the IB course and the way that it works. It is a whole new way of learning, and once I found out that the universities all approved of it my mind was made up."

Mum Julie Atkins added: "I am very proud of him today. We talked it over and Marc did a lot of research into IB before deciding on his options. This looks to be the best way forward for him as he is very inquisitive and this will stretch him because of the diversity of the courses."



**Tollbar BEC**  
Foundation College

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