

PRESS RELEASE
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Truly well-deserved 2021 A Level results

Inspirational students celebrated well-deserved success as they secured the exam results they needed to take the next step in their development.



Students at Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust's three sixth forms – Carmel College, Darlington, St John's Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Bishop Auckland, and The English Martyrs Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Hartlepool – achieved their goals against the backdrop of the global pandemic.

Chief executive of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, Dame Maura Regan added: *“This really is a great day to celebrate given the disruption to their education over the past two years.*

“The Press keep talking about grade inflation but I challenge this in the strongest terms. These grades reflect both the ability and the hard work of students and staff and should be acknowledged as such.”

Carmel College principal Mike Shorten agreed saying: *“We are really pleased that the results have reflected the hard work of the students and commitment of the teachers to work through the challenges we have all faced. It is always a privilege to celebrate students going onto the next stage of their lives.”*

St John’s headteacher Lisa Byron said: *“We are delighted with our students’ results and achievements. It has been a very difficult year for young people in education but our students have been resilient and committed to their studies, despite all of the challenges they have faced.*

“Their excellent results are a testimony to their dedication, hard work and determination to do well. We are so very proud of them and are delighted with their success. Our staff have worked tirelessly to support our students during their time at St John’s, particularly with remote learning during the extended periods of lockdown and self-isolation, and we are all excited to see how they grow from strength to strength in the next chapter of their lives whether that be in education, training or employment.”

English Martyrs headteacher Stephen Hammond added: *“We are extremely proud of all of our students. We are pleased that they are able to pursue their intended pathways, which includes places at some of the most prestigious universities, on highly competitive degree courses, including medicine. I want to take this opportunity to thank the students and staff for all of their hard work throughout their time at the college and I wish them good luck in the future.”*

At Carmel College a teenage sports star struck down by a mysterious illness celebrated after gaining the results she needs for university to research her neurological condition.

Lydia Shale was on track to be a professional footballer representing Darlington and County Durham when she suddenly found herself unable to walk, lying in a hospital bed with a paralysed arm, aged just 14.

“I should have been the last person to be ill as I was ridiculously fit and healthy,” said the 18-year-old. *“Instead I was in a hospital bed with no one telling me why – it was mad.”*

Lydia was eventually diagnosed with FND – functional neurological disorder – a condition where the brain struggles to send messages to the muscles.

“It’s a life-long condition and for seven months I could not walk,” said Lydia. *“My brain scans showed no damage so no one really knows why this happens. I missed the whole of Year 10 and had to do two years in one for my GCSEs at Wyvern Academy. Then, when I came to Carmel College for sixth form I knew I was in the best place to study because I am so passionate about my subjects.”*

Lydia gained the highest grades of D* in her Btec subjects of sport and human biology and a B in her maths A Level. She will now read a sport and exercise science degree at Leeds University and already has four research projects lined up looking into FND.

"There isn't that much research into the condition," she said. "My consultant and specialist physiotherapist were in London and I used to have to catch public transport down there which was very difficult.

"I want to raise awareness and research the causes of FND to help others particularly as it seems to be on the increase because of long-COVID and reactions to the vaccine."

Lydia is already working with the DfE on a video on the condition, talks about the issue regularly on social media and campaigns to raise awareness. *"I could just feel angry about developing the condition but it really interests me and I am going to use it as a driver to learn more."*

Mr Shorten said: *"Lydia is an inspiration to us all. After a year where everyone has had to face challenges Lydia is a great role model. She is focussed, optimistic and determined to help others."*

She shared the limelight with a linguistics student who overcame her stammer and will continue her fascination with languages at Cambridge University.

Anna Harding, a student at Carmel College, Darlington, secured two A*s and an A in history, French and English literature, respectively, to read Asian and Middle Eastern studies, specialising in Chinese, at Cambridge.

"I developed a stammer when I started secondary school for some reason," said Anna, of Sedgefield. "I always talked really fast and had to have speech therapy at school, which really helped. It gave me an interest in linguistics.

"Going to Carmel also helped me discover Chinese, we studied Mandarin instead of some French lessons and I did a Chinese GCSE. I love it and am really looking forward to it being my degree. China is so up and coming and there are so many companies wanting to work with it who need people who can speak Chinese."

For student Elliot Nicholson results day will be a launch pad into the global industry of e-sports.

The 17-year-old, of Darlington, will now read a degree in e-sports at Staffordshire University as a means to enter a billion dollar a year gaming industry.

With an online competition name of Flower Boy, Elliot thrived in Carmel College's popular e-sports club, which takes part in a host of national and international competitions.

"My aim is to develop my skills on the project management side of an industry that his absolutely huge," said Elliot.

E-sports attracts thousands of players from around the globe with weekly cash prizes totalling up to £500,000 a competition. One of the pioneers in the sport is reputed to be worth more than £30m at the age of just 26. *"I'd like to organise and host contests and am really excited to be going to Staffordshire," he said.*

Dental student Erin Flynn will be able to pursue her dream of becoming an orthodontist thanks to securing two As and a B in her A Levels.

She will read dentistry at Newcastle University with her friend since nursery and fellow Carmel student Jude Blackmore, who both transferred from St Michael's Catholic Academy, Billingham, to study at Carmel College sixth form.

"I have absolutely loved my two years at Carmel and they were so supportive with my studies during lockdown" said Erin, who is also a lifeguard. "I have always loved biology and dentistry really suits me. I used to have braces when I was at primary school and know the impact it can have on your self-confidence if you hate your teeth. I want to be an orthodontist specialising in reconstructive surgery and cleft palates."

At St John's, artistic gymnast Mia Scott will take the next step, stretch and tumble towards fulfilling her dreams after securing grades that will take her to America.

Mia achieved three A*s at A Levels and will head off to the University of Illinois.

"My results have absolutely exceeded expectations and I'm really excited to start," said Mia, 18, from Shildon.

"We have had online lessons, online exams, mock exams and a lot of disruption but St John's has been so supportive, especially during my training, allowing me to attend after school sessions to catch up on work. I am going to Illinois on a scholarship so I can continue my gymnastics at the college alongside a psychology degree."

Mia has represented the GB Development Team, the Espoir England Team, the Junior Great British Team and the Senior England Team.

Fellow artistic gymnast-turned tumbler Elisha Yorke, 18, is heading to Manchester to read Spanish and Business Management after achieving A*, A and B in her A Levels. Elisha, from Bishop Auckland, competed for Great Britain in Portugal whilst at St John's.

"I'm really happy with my results and I'm excited to go to Manchester," Elisha said.

Theo Hunt, 18, is heading to Manchester to read Politics and Modern History after achieving three A*s in History, English Literature and RE (Philosophy and Ethics).

"Going back into lockdown in January was difficult but the school was brilliant, all the teachers worked hard to ensure we had the support we needed," said Theo, of Bishop Auckland, who has goals to work within politics.

Heading for a fresh start at Cardiff University is Sophia Dunn, 18, from Newton Hall, Durham.

"This year has been so all over the place so I am absolutely over the moon with my results and am in shock; I couldn't be happier," said Sophia.

Ben Richmond, 18, from Bishop Auckland achieved two Bs in Criminology and Psychology and a D* in Btec IT.

"I'm really pleased with my results; I'm taking a year out and I'm going to have to learn how to drive," said Ben. *"Then I'm hoping to do a degree apprenticeship with the police."*

Ben completed his education remotely from March 2020, including his entire Year 13 year.

"There's lots of avenues to explore career-wise in the police but I'd love to be a detective one day," he said. "I've been working at Grant's Gym too to earn some money and am a keen powerlifter; my total is 535kgs."

With a love of Biology and animals Phoebe Dempsey, 18, from Bishop Auckland is attending the University of Glasgow to study Zoology having achieved two Bs and a C in Physics, Biology and Chemistry.

Ross Alderson, 18, from Shildon studied Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry and Physics and has achieved four A*s.

"I'm going to the University of York to study physics; I did a research project with Nuffield and York and the professors were really friendly, even during my interview they offered to show me around the campus so it was the obvious choice for me," said Ross.

Achieving four A*s in English Language/Literature, Media Studies, Spanish, and an EPQ, Jasmine Bark, 18, from Crook is heading to the University of York to read English Literature.

"I love writing and my goal is to become a ghost writer," said Jasmine. *"I know that might sound silly and I'm sure nobody says that's their goal because it's kind of writing with none of the credit, but I think it'd be really interesting and you'd get to meet some cool people."*

Daniel Avery McAleese, 18, from Ferryhill is attending the University of Nottingham to study Veterinary Medicine. Daniel achieved three A*s in Biology, Physics and Chemistry.

"We've got horses at home and I love them so maybe I'll become an equine vet."

With a Northern Irish mum and having lived in Northern Ireland when he was little Connor Machin feels almost like he's heading back home to attend the University of Ulster to study Counselling and Communication.

"I'm excited to go back to Northern Ireland. I know some people there and my degree, although not a full psychology degree, will allow me to join the NHS to follow a career in counselling."

Also celebrating success are Kieran Allen having achieved an A* and two As in Maths, Further Maths and Product Design. Kieran is attending the University of Durham to read Maths.

Twins Beatrice and Harriet Caulton are also celebrating and they are heading to the University of Durham and University of York respectively. Beatrice achieved two A*s and a B in Sociology, Psychology and Chemistry. Harriet achieved two A*s and a B in Sociology, RE and Psychology.

Students at The English Martyrs Catholic School and Sixth Form College took inspiration from the pandemic to pursue careers in healthcare and medicine.

There was joy and excitement as they found out they had secured the A-level grades they needed to follow their dreams.

Among those collecting their results were several students who had taken inspiration from the unpredicted challenges of the pandemic to pursue careers in healthcare and the NHS.

Head girl Anjalee Dhaliwal, 18, from Hartlepool, achieved three A* grades and an A.

She will now study Medicine at Liverpool and hopes one day to be a surgeon.

"I'm over the moon and so excited. I always wanted to go into medicine but through the pandemic I have realised it is now my calling. The last 18 months have been very challenging — you just didn't know what was going to happen next."

Her friend Jakiah Khan, 18, from Hartlepool, got two A* and an A and will now study Medicine at York.

"It's been very stressful, but it has been worth it. I've always wanted to go into medicine and the pandemic has highlighted the need for more doctors and health care professionals."

Jack Davey, 18, from Hartlepool, got an A* and two Bs, and will now study Pharmacy at Brighton. He too has been partly inspired by the pandemic, and Jack achieved the grades he needed despite the challenges of studying at home with four siblings, including three who are younger than him.

"It's been a real challenge — there has been a lot of crying and a lot of screaming in the house, but I got it done!"

Others pursuing a career in health care include Marley Jo Wood, 18, from Hartlepool, who leaves the school to follow her dream of a career in Mental Health Nursing.

Alongside its academic success, the school aims to nurture creative, musical and theatrical talent. Rose Allen, 18, from Hartlepool, has starred in six school musicals and is a member of The English Martyrs Chamber Choir, Orchestra and Woodwind Group. After achieving two As and B, she has secured a place at the Leeds Conservatoire to study Musical Theatre.

She said: *"I'm absolutely over the moon. I think it's the pick-me-up we all needed after the challenges of the last 18 months. It's been tough, but the school has been so supportive. I think everybody at the school can be so proud that they made it through and came out the other side."*

Head boy Max Strelitz, 18, from Hartlepool, also praised his fellow students for how they had coped with the challenges of the pandemic.

Max got two A* and two A grades and will now study Engineering at Durham.

He said: *"Students have put the hard work in and achieved the results they deserve – I think everyone deserves a pat on the back."*

After his hard work, Luke Stokle, 18, from Hartlepool, has achieved three A* grades and an A, securing a place at Cambridge University to study Modern and Medieval Languages. He said his overriding emotion was one of relief.

"It's been an unprecedented situation and I'm delighted to secure the grades I needed; I am very excited to be able to study in Cambridge."

University is not the right pathway for everyone and our specialist careers team support students to choose other rewarding career options.

After completing his A-levels, Ellis Cairns, 18, from Hartlepool, is already on track to achieve his goal of becoming a paramedic after starting work with Stockton-based company, Cipher Medical.

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