

A GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT

Welcome to KS4!

Students moving into year 10 are embarking upon a 2 year journey! They have chosen their options and are now aiming to achieve their best in a number of GCSE courses, NVQ courses and in some cases, a college course such as a Diploma or BTEC. This guidance sheet aims to explain how we assess at these levels and how we make a professional judgment about the grades and levels your child should be aiming for.

Target grades ... what do they mean and where do they come from?

Every student has a target grade for each subject. This is the grade we think they should aim to at least meet, at best beat! It is important that your student knows from the outset what their potential is and our target-setting process helps us to set up a 'destination'. We use two methods to arrive at that target:

FFT data – This data comes from a National database maintained by an organisation known as Fischer Family Trust. The data base gathers data on KS2 and KS3 level for every child in England. It then calculates the percentage chance of each child achieving each grade and estimates the most likely grade they will achieve, if they continue to work at their best. We use this to select a realistic target grade, in some cases negotiating this with the individual student.

CATS data – This data comes from a Cognitive Abilities Test given by the school in years 7 and 9. It gives a broader picture of a student's ability and learning style as it gives us scores for verbal reasoning, non verbal reasoning and quantitative reasoning. As a school, we use this information to make sure the targets are suitable for each individual. We also use the information to plan suitable learning activities that play to the students' strengths as identified in the test.

You can be assured that these are the best available methods, proven to be accurate. However, we always have a few students each year who out perform their targets!

GCSE Grades explained...

Any grade A*, A, B, C, D, E, F, G are all a pass at GCSE. A* is the highest. All students will take the equivalent of at least 8 GCSEs. For a college course at Level 2 or above, students require at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A* to C. For a course at level 1 students require at least 4 GCSEs at Grades D to E. Some students will take a course at Entry level and at least one GCSE at Grade G or above is desirable.

What does Assessment look like in KS4?

Examinations - Many of the KS4 courses involve a formal examination at the end of year 11 and the mark achieved there forms a percentage of the final grade. Each subject shares the breakdown of examination to coursework with their students and you should make sure your child knows this for every subject on their timetable.

Modular tests - Mathematics, Science, History and English courses involve students sitting 'modules' throughout the 2 year course. These are formal GCSE examinations and matter just as much as the end of year 11 exams! Students should be revising and completing practice questions to prepare. The marks from each of the modules are carried forward and the student builds up their final GCSE grade as they go along. In some cases they will be required to re-sit because their modular test is not 'on target'.

Controlled conditions - In History and English, students are placed under controlled conditions to produce essays which will be assessed for GCSE. Controlled conditions is a method used to ensure the work submitted for assessment is the students' own. It will usually involve the students writing a timed assignment in test conditions in-class and may run over a course of 3-4 lessons during a defined period. Each completed assignment contributes to the final GCSE.

Coursework - This is work which will be set by the teacher to comply with the exam board regulations. Students will be given a deadline by which they must complete assignments. Grades will be awarded and students will be given an opportunity to improve that grade following advice from their teacher. We generally advise students to aim for one grade above their target in coursework as we know students who manage this often go on to achieve or exceed their targets at the end of the GCSE course. Coursework catch-up and development sessions are run by all departments and students are encouraged to attend. It is school policy that all final pieces of coursework should be submitted by the end of December of year 11.

So how can you help and support your child?

Ask them: **“What is your target in?”** and **“What are your next steps in reaching your target?”** If they don't know, task them to find out!

Take an interest in what they are doing each evening. It is recommended they spend one and a half hours on home learning. They may need support to plan that time. Is it coursework they are doing? Or revising the day's learning ('Over-learning'), making revision cards, or producing mind maps as they go along? Are they using the internet (BBC bitesize or a site recommended by their teacher) to research a topic? There is never an evening when they can say they have nothing to do, even if it looks like there is nothing in the planner!

How will I know how my child is doing?



We hold a target sharing day in early December. Appointments are arranged between the parents/carers, student and form tutor so that target grades and levels can be discussed, reviewed and understood by everyone. Careful steps and learning goals can then be negotiated for every student.

Students' progress is monitored on a continual basis by staff. GCSE grades are recorded for every student, in every subject, every half term and will be made available to students. Mock exams will be held in year 10 and year 11 and the results of those will be made available to parents/carers and students.

You will hear about your child's progress in subjects at least once a term through our formal reporting process. We have 3 ways of communicating this: the annual written report, the progress review and the parents' evening. At present these are as follows:

Year group	Progress review	Written report	Parents' evening
Year 10	November	May	9 th February 2012
Year 11	March	November	22 nd March 2012

*a further progress report will be issued a few days before parents' evening.

If a member of staff is concerned about any aspect of a student's progress or welfare, they may contact you more regularly to ensure that potential problems can be dealt with promptly. We also encourage parents and carers to contact the school if they are concerned about any aspect of a student's progress or welfare. In this way, we can work in partnership to achieve the best possible outcome with every child.

