

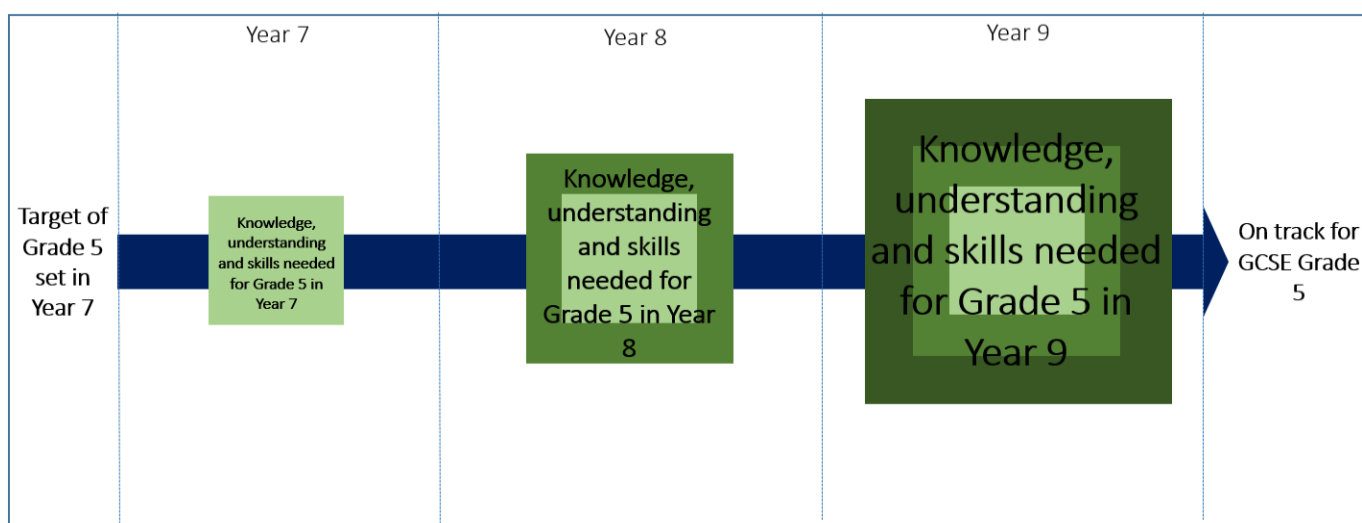
Assessment Procedures – Information for Parents/Guardians

Introduction:

Up until recently schools were expected to report ‘levels’ at certain key points of a child’s education as they moved through Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). The government’s decision to abolish the levelling system has meant that all schools are now free to re-invent their assessment procedures. We have deliberately taken our time to better understand the requirements of new Key Stage 4 qualifications before devising our own assessment system. The model we have adopted attempts to ground assessment in the following basic principles:

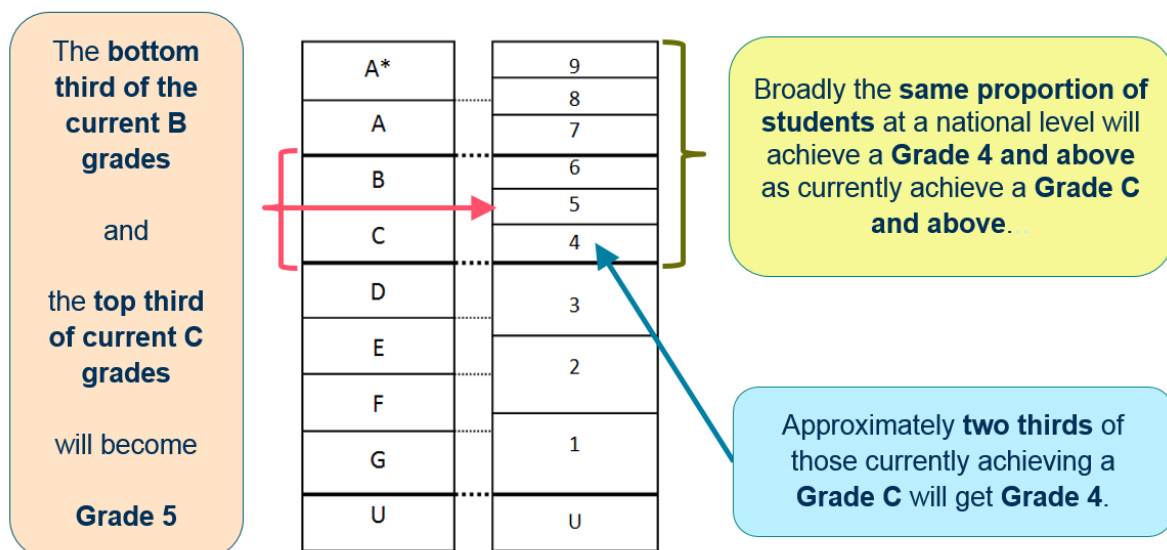
1. High quality teaching
2. Feedback and feed forward to enable pupils to understand fully “what went well” (WWW) and how to make their work “even better if” (EBI)
3. Robust GCSE-style assessments at mid-year and year end
4. Results of these assessments define pupil attainment and progress against GCSE targets, expressed in GCSE terms

The new model will define a pupil as making expected progress if they consistently achieve an attainment grade in line with their GCSE target grade, regardless of the academic year. However, the requirements necessary to achieve expected progress increase with each successive year. This is illustrated in the diagram below:



GCSE grades:

The new GCSE grading scheme extends from Grade 1 to Grade 9, and replaces Grade G to Grade A* in stages, starting with English and Mathematics in examined in 2015, and then most other subjects for teaching from September 2016. The scheme, is best explained in a diagram, where the old scale is on the left, and the new one on the right.



- Ofqual announced in September 2016 that the awarding of Grade 9 will occur as follows: “A formula will be used that means that about 20% of all grades at 7 or above will be a Grade 9,” whilst “the grade 8 boundary will be equally spaced between the grade 7 and 9 boundaries”.

Targets:

Replacing ‘levels’ has not been easy for any school, and each school will have devised their own methodology. However, at NTS, we continue to set subject targets using prior attainment outcomes, baseline test outcomes, and indicators of future performance. The objective is for all targets to be aspirational and to set high expectations for each pupil. All targets are now expressed as GCSE grades.

Current Grades:

1. In the Progress Review (or Full Report for Year 9), the subject Current Grade will be a combination of:

- the outcome from the mid-year exam, moderated using teacher professional judgement against other assessed work
- homework records
- classwork records.

2. In the end of year Full Report (or Progress Review for Year 9), each subject Current Grade will be based **solely on each pupil’s end of year examination outcome**. This puts greater emphasis on exam technique, and tests the effectiveness of revision strategies as well as a pupil’s ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, as well as to apply skills in exam conditions.

If a pupil exceeds their target grade at the end of the year, then the target grade will be increased. However, if a pupil does not meet their target grade, then the original target could remain (at the school’s discretion), because it represents our minimum expectations for future performance.

For mid-year and end of year examinations, we have devised a mathematical model that replicates the historical pattern for determining grade boundaries, and applied it to all subjects. This will be fair and equitable across all subjects. The first cohort of pupils sit the new GCSE exams in the Summer of 2017, and this will enable us to validate our data and adjust the system if required.

Subject Standard Descriptors:

To help parents/guardians understand the required standard for each grade in each of Years 7 to 9, all subjects taught under the National Curriculum have devised a Subject Standard Descriptor. Each Descriptor gives the following information:

- The core subject content to be covered in the year, shown term by term
- The key skills that pupils will be expected to master and use appropriately
- The standard of work teachers will expect pupils to produce

These have been devised using information about the revised Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, revised Key Stage 3 National Curriculum, and new GCSE examination specifications. This means that we understand what pupils should know, understand and be able to do upon arrival in Year 7 if they are 'secondary ready', and understand what pupils need to be able to know, understand and show they can do so that they are 'GCSE ready' at the end of Year 11. The intervening years are now all part of that five year journey within secondary education.

Conclusion:

This is a time of transition where schools turn their back on almost a quarter of a century of established procedures for assessing pupil outcomes at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and head into a realm of relative uncertainty. However, please be assured that as always, all teachers will continue to use their best professional expertise and judgement when assessing any pupil's work. The school is pleased with the performance of the new system, and teachers and pupils are adapting well to the concept of new GCSE grades. However, it remains an on-going process of evolution with 'tweaks' being made in the light of experience gained from the first round of new GCSE examinations.

If you have any queries or concerns about the new assessment procedures, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Head of Department (for subject specific enquiries) or myself (for general enquiries).

Mr. N. Parker

Deputy Head – Curriculum

Amended January 2018