

A parental guide to assessment in KS3 at Durrington High School

Nationally, levels have now been removed in both KS2 and KS3, so we have developed a way of assessing students in KS3, without levels.

The principles behind the approach are as follows:

- We want to let students and parents know the progress they are making, relative to their starting points from the end of KS2.
- We don't want to limit what students think they can achieve, so don't set them 'targets' – we want to raise their aspirations.
- We want to celebrate the progress of all students, from all starting points.
- We want students to understand that if they are currently not making expected progress, this doesn't need to be a bad thing. An important aspect of learning anything is to know what we are good at, but also what we need to focus on more, in order to improve further.

This is a relatively new system, developed at Durrington High School as a part of a DfE innovation project, that has since been adopted by many schools across the country. We fully understand that the rate of change imposed on us in education can be confusing. We hope that this document seeks to help parents understand the system.

How do we assess students?

When students come to us from primary school, we look at two key pieces of data on them – their KS2 maths standardised test score and their KS2 English (reading) standardised test score. These test scores, with outcomes between 80 and 120, have replaced KS2 levels. Levels had a very strong correlation to how students performed at GCSE.

While these scores provide some guidance for the most likely outcomes for students, learning and progress is not as straight forward as this. Some might make good progress and get a grade 6 at GCSE, whilst others might make exceptional progress and achieve a grade 8. Some, for a variety of reasons, might get a grade 3 or lower. At Durrington, we aim to support all students to make at least expected progress, with a large number making good or exceptional progress.

This information is then used by teachers in their planning, teaching and assessment. When planning their lessons, teachers think about the topic the class will be doing, by breaking it down into four thresholds:

Threshold Description Table

Threshold	Description
Excellence	Aimed at students with the highest starting points from KS2, these students should achieve an 8 or 9 at GCSE.
Secure	These students should achieve at least a grade 6 or 7 at GCSE.
Developing	These students should achieve at least a grade 4 or 5 at GCSE.
Foundation	Aimed at students with the lowest starting points from KS2 these students should achieve at least a grade 3, 2 or 1 at GCSE.

Teachers will then use the information that they have about the starting point of each student, to help each student move up through the thresholds – with the aspiration being that all students will aim towards excellence.

How do we use the KS2 data to judge the starting point of students?

- In maths, we use their KS2 maths test score.
- In English, we use their KS2 reading test score.
- In most other subjects we use an average of these two – as there is a high correlation between this and how students do generally at GCSE.
- In art, design technology, drama, music and PE we carry out baseline assessments of our own as we recognise that these subjects have specialist practical skills.

How do teachers use this data?

In two ways:

Formatively - In our day to day teaching we will look at the starting point of each student and look at the work they are doing. So for example, if a student achieved a test score of 98 in English at KS2, their English teacher will look to see if they are meeting the requirements of the developing threshold in English. If they are, they will give them feedback in the lesson to move them up to secure. If they are not, this feedback will focus on embedding the criteria in the developing threshold.

Summatively – Teachers will carry out regular assessments of all students. This may take the form of a test, an assessed piece of writing or practical work as appropriate to the subject. Following these assessments, the teacher compares their performance to their starting point and makes a judgement on their progress – this reported home to parents as:

- *Exceptional progress* – suggests that they are currently making excellent progress and will exceed expectations by the end of KS3.
- *Good progress* – suggests that they are currently achieving well and as a result could exceed expectations by the end of KS3.
- *Expected progress* – suggests that they are on track to achieve in line with expectations by the end of KS3.
- *Less than expected progress* – suggests that they are not currently at the expected level of performance, relative to their starting point.

How this will look in the report that comes home:

Subject	Effort	Homework*	Current Threshold	Current Progress
English	1	2	Developing	Expected
Mathematics	1	1	Secure	Good
Science	2	2	Developing	Expected
Art & design	2	3	Developing	Expected
Computing	2	1	Secure	Good
Drama	2	2	Developing	Good
Geography	2	2	Developing	Expected
History	2	2	Foundation	Less than expected
Music	2	2	Developing	Expected
PE	2	1	Developing	Expected
Performing arts	2	2	Developing	Expected
SME	2	2	Developing	Expected
Spanish	1	1	Secure	Good
Textiles	1	1	Secure	Good

Frequently asked questions

My daughter always achieved well in maths at KS2 and in her first tracking point at DHS is making 'less than expected progress. Why is she underachieving?

We believe that there is a very strong link between teacher expectation of what students can achieve and then how they achieve. With this in mind, when we reviewed our KS3 curriculum in 2014, we raise the bar of expectation across the whole KS3 curriculum – we wanted to stretch and challenge all students. Students with a high starting point at KS2 will then be assessed relative to this, when they join us – so the criteria in the secure and excellence thresholds will be deliberately hard. As a result, it will not be uncommon for them to not quite be there at DHS. What's important is how they respond to the feedback given to them by their teachers and continue to progress.

When my child gets their report and there is a red 'less than expected' box or two, it's not very motivational is it?

We want to be honest with our assessment of students. If anyone is going to move on with their learning, they need to know their weak areas, so they can address them. It would be unfair of us to give students a false impression of their performance in a subject, as that then wouldn't flag up to them that they had to improve.

Why can't my daughter be given a target threshold in KS3?

Whilst we can use data to look at how students with particular starting points usually perform at GCSE, we don't want to use this to set them targets. The main reason is that we don't want to put a ceiling on their expectations of themselves – we want all students to believe that with the right effort, we can all get that little bit better. Just because most students with a particular KS2 starting point end up getting grade 5 at GCSE, that doesn't mean that has to be the case for everybody.

What does the current threshold mean?

This is the threshold your child is currently working at based on the assessment of all their learning up to this point. This may have been through a single test which examined the skills and knowledge from what they have learnt up to that point, or the average threshold they have attained through several assessments.

How can my son be developing in two subjects but have different levels of progress reported for those subjects?

Depending on how secure a student is within a threshold teachers will assign different levels of progress. Therefore it is possible to be making expected progress in one subject and good progress in another, but be within the same threshold for both. Also as explained earlier English and maths set their baseline thresholds differently so the progress will reflect this.

As the year goes, why might the progress of my child change from one term to another?

There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. Some key factors to consider:

- In some subjects e.g. PE, the content that is covered each term will be very different. For example, in term 1 a student might be doing gymnastics and find this quite difficult, however in term 2 they might be doing football and perform really well with this.
- As the years go on, students consolidate their learning in a subject and so make better progress. For example, in term 1 a student may not be at the required standard, as they are getting to grips with the

topic/ subject. However, by term 2/3 they have had time to embed this learning and so their progress is better.

- We spend a great deal of time encouraging students to reflect on their effort. As they do this, and their effort improves, their progress should follow.

My child has 1s for effort, behaviour and homework but is still making 'less than expected' progress in drama and music. Why is this?

For most students, there should be a correlation between effort, behaviour and homework and their progress i.e. if these are all strong (graded 1) we would expect them to be making at least expected progress. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, a student with a high KS2 starting point may be making good progress in most subjects, but less than expected progress in drama and music. There might be a good reason for this e.g. they lack confidence when it comes to performance. Teachers will help them to develop this over the course of the year, but if you have any concerns with any specific subjects, you can always contact the teacher at school (details are on the school website).



If you have any queries/questions about your son/daughter's progress within a subject, please don't hesitate to contact their subject teacher. If your concern is more general i.e. across 3 or more subjects, please contact your son/daughter's Company Leader/ Deputy Company Leader.