

A parental guide to assessment in KS3 at Durrington High School

This year we have made some changes to the way we assess and report student achievement at KS3. The main change is that we are now reporting attainment (how students have achieved on a particular assessment) rather than progress (students' achievement relative to their KS2 data). Having previously reported both measures we had feedback from parents/carers and students that they found this confusing and wanted greater clarity regarding their achievement in each subject. After listening to this feedback we have decided to only report attainment from this point on.

How do we now assess students?

Essentially we assess the learning of students in two ways, which act as two separate layers of assessment. These are as follows

Layer 1: Formative – on-going, ungraded and focused on smaller chunks of the curriculum.

Layer 2: Summative – roughly 3 times per year. Knowledge included will build cumulatively through the year. For most subjects this takes the form of test and would involve the assigning of a threshold.

The formative assessment is what we want teachers to focus on most. This is because research evidence tells us that this has the greatest impact on learning. It does not involve the grading of work but instead the teacher identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and then adapting their teaching to help students improve.

Some examples of formative assessment are:

- **Quizzes**
- **Multi-choice questions**
- **Reading or observing student work (either during or after a lesson)**
- **Live marking (marking students' work as they are completing it)**
- **Breaking a complex task down into several smaller parts and assessing one part at a time.**
- **Spelling and vocabulary tests**
- **Filling in blank knowledge organisers**
- **Written plans**
- **Questioning**

Some of these forms of assessment do not involve written marking and as such you may not see large amounts of written marking in students' books. However, this does not mean teachers are not assessing your child's work and helping them to improve.

When we do summatively assess students (which for most subjects will be three times per year) we will assign students a threshold, to give them, us as teachers and you as parents/carers guidance as to how they are performing in that subject at that time. This may take the form of a test, an assessed piece of writing or practical work as appropriate to the subject. Staff will then assign students a threshold which will be reported home as a current working threshold.

Threshold Description Table

Threshold	Description
Excellence	The highest level of attainment, students achieving this threshold would be aiming for a 9 at GCSE.
Good	We would expect students reaching this threshold to aim for grade 7 and above at GCSE.
Secure	We would expect students reaching this threshold to aim for grade 5 and above at GCSE.
Developing	We would expect students reaching this threshold to aim for grade 4 and above at GCSE.
Foundation	We would expect students reaching this threshold to aim for grade 3 and above at GCSE.
Entry	Aimed at students with the lowest starting points from KS2.

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

We do not assign target thresholds to students as we do not wish to put any limits on their aspirations. However we do use their KS2 data, along with the scores from their CAT tests and some baselining we do in individual subjects to assign each student a starting point. We tailor this to the individual subject as followings:

- In maths, we use their KS2 and CAT maths test score.
- In English, we use their KS2 and CAT reading test score.
- In most other subjects we use an average – 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.

We also use this data to colour code our reports to give you as parents/carers an idea of how students are performing in relation to their starting points. Blue subjects will be focus subjects, which are those where students have the greatest amount of progress still to make.

How this will look in the report that comes home:

Subject	Effort	Homework*	Current threshold
English Miss Morgan	2	3	Developing
Mathematics Miss Treleven	2	1	Developing
Science Mr Reene	2	2	Foundation
Art & design Mrs Gray	2	2	Developing
Computing Mr Griffiths	2	2	Secure
Drama Ms Graney	2	2	Developing
Geography Mr Crockett	2	2	Good
History Mrs Eastment	2	2	Foundation
Music Mr Stathers	2	2	Secure
PE Miss Head	2	1	Foundation
SME Mrs Nixon	2	2	Secure
Spanish Mr Gilbert	1	1	Developing
Textiles Mr Bloomer	1	1	Developing

Frequently asked questions

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 a guide to your child's current attainment based on the assessment of all their learning up to this point. This may have been assigned through a single test which examined their knowledge of what they have learnt up to that point, or in some more practical subjects such as art, the threshold may have been attained through on-going assessment. The hierarchy of six thresholds gives students, teachers and you as parents/carers a guide as to their relative learning and performance in each subject.

What GCSE grade is the threshold equivalent to?

It is extremely difficult to predict GCSE grades during KS3 due to the amount of learning that has to take place before students eventually sit their exams at the end of year 11. As a result we have designed a KS3 assessment system that deliberately avoids connecting our thresholds too closely to GCSE grades. We feel to do so would be misleading and may lead to unnecessary anxiety for our students. We want our students to focus on getting better in every subject during KS3 rather than their eventual GCSE grades.

Last year my son was getting Excellence in geography, this year it has dropped to Good, is he getting worse?

The answer is not necessarily. Firstly the challenge will increase year on year so it may be that a reflection of an adjustment to this higher level of challenge. Secondly, because we now have 6 rather than 4 thresholds, students who were regularly towards the lower half of Excellence last year, may well find they attain in Good this year. This does not necessarily mean they have got worse. Excellence in particular is being reserved for only the highest attainment.

Why might the threshold for 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 attainment improves. 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 attainment 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 attainment should follow.

How important is the current working threshold when choosing options?

We would certainly advise taking this into account when choosing options, however it should not be the only consideration. Students' enjoyment of the subject should also be considered as should the opinions of their teachers. We would suggest using the threshold as a starting point for discussion rather than an absolute guide as to which subjects to choose.

My son has a Foundation threshold colour coded blue in one subject but not for another, why is that?

Starting points will be different for different subjects. For example a student may have a higher starting point in maths than in PE. Therefore we would reflect this in our colour coding.



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.