

A parental guide to assessment in KS3 at Durrington High School

How do we 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 – every-day in-class assessment, which is ungraded and focused on small 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 a test and involves the assigning of an Attainment Group based on the score your child achieves.

Formative Assessment:

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 and Multi-choice questions
- Reading or observing student work (either during or after a lesson)
- Live marking (marking students' work as they are completing it)
- Filling in blank knowledge organisers
- Written plans
- Questioning

Many 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.

Summative Assessment

When we summatively assess students (which for most subjects will be three times per year) we will assign students an Attainment Group to give them, us as teachers and you as parents/carers guidance as to how they are performing in that subject at that time. For parents of students in year 8 and year 9 this is a change to our previous system with the intention of making our KS3 assessment and reporting system clear and easier to understand.

After each summative assessment parents/carers and students will receive a report outlining their performance, in lesson effort and homework quality. Please see below a table outlining what each Attainment Group means in regards to student performance.

Attainment Group	What each Attainment Group (AG) actually means (this is the same for all subjects)
AG1	Your child has achieved a score in their assessment that was within the top 30 marks in the whole year group.
AG2	Approximately 30 students scored better than your child, 30 students around the same and 270 lower than your child in this assessment.
AG3	Approximately 60 students scored better than your child, 30 students around the same and 240 lower than your child in this assessment.
AG4	Approximately 90 students scored better than your child, 30 students around the same and 210 lower than your child in this assessment.
AG5	Your child has achieved just above the average score for the year group in this assessment.
AG6	Your child has achieved just below the average score for the year group in this assessment.
AG7	Approximately 210 students scored better, 30 students around the same and 90 students lower than your child in this assessment.
AG8	Approximately 240 students scored better, 30 students around the same and 60 students lower than your child in this assessment.
AG9	Approximately 270 students scored better, 30 students around the same and 30 students lower than your child in this assessment.
AG10	Your child's score in their assessment was in the lowest 30 scores for this assessment in the year group.

Attitude to Learning

The report includes a number between 1 and 4 for their commitment to learning through effort and homework.

	Attitude to learning	
Grade/	Effort (perseverance)	Homework
1 Excellent	<p>Your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is self-motivated to succeed and shows a determination to get better, by seeking out and responding to feedback. ● Takes great pride in their work. ● Shows high levels of perseverance even with challenging tasks. ● Shows a genuine interest in the task by actively participating in all tasks, thinking hard about questions and asking inquisitive questions themselves without prompting. 	<p>All homework completed with care, attention to detail. Some evidence of going beyond the task set so as to widen & deepen their learning.</p>
2 Good	<p>Your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has a positive attitude to learning shown by their consistent completion of classwork. ● Responds to feedback given to them so as to improve their work. ● Generally perseveres with their work even with challenging tasks. ● Takes part in class discussion and questions when prompted to do so. 	<p>Homework is completed on time. Occasionally more time and care is needed to improve the quality of the work, but in general homework meets the expected standard.</p>
3 Requires improvement	<p>Your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completes classwork but at times the quality and/or quantity does not meet expectations. ● Sometimes fails to take pride or care in the work they produce. ● Responses to questions may often lack detail and clarity. ● Often makes little effort with or avoids challenging tasks. 	<p>Homework is inconsistent (either not handed in on time or often appears rushed/incomplete). More time and pride needs to be taken on their homework.</p>
4 Poor	<p>Your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regularly fails to put in the necessary effort in lessons despite support from their teacher. ● Regularly produces work which is limited in quality and/or quantity, and shows little pride in its presentation. ● Is regularly involved in behavior during lessons that disrupts the learning of others and/or themselves. ● Is making progress significantly below what is expected of them due to the above concerns. 	<p>Homework is often not completed. If/when homework is handed in the quality is not to the expected standard (incomplete, poor quality or rushed). This is creating gaps in their learning.</p>

A 'P' in the effort column is awarded to the student in the class who has shown the most perseverance. A student will be awarded 25 perseverance points for each "P" award they receive as part of our KAPP rewards scheme.

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

We do not assign target Attainment Groups to students as we do not wish to put any limits on their aspirations. However, we do use their KS2 data and some baselining to assign each student a starting point. We tailor this to the individual subject as follows:

- 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 – 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.

Frequently asked questions

Why can't my daughter be given a target Attainment Group 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 GCSE grade is the Attainment Group 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 Attainment Groups 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 he is in Attainment Group 2, is he getting worse?

The answer is not necessarily. The challenge will increase year on year so it may be that a reflection of an adjustment to this higher level of challenge. In addition to this the previous system put students into 6 thresholds meaning that each threshold covered a wider range of students than the new system of 10 Attainment Groups.

Why might the Attainment Group 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 perform as strongly as they can, 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 Attainment Group 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 Attainment Groups as a starting point for discussion rather than an absolute guide as to which subjects to choose.