

BSquared

An Introduction and Guide to Using Secondary Steps, our GCSE Assessment Framework



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Introduction

Since the Government removed the National Curriculum Levels in 2014, we have been working with a group of schools to develop new and informative ways to assess pupil progress and attainment.

The new National Curriculum has a greater focus on knowledge development. The Key Stage 3 curriculum builds important foundations for Key Stage 4 – creating more of a continuum rather than two separate courses. GCSEs will be more demanding and require higher levels of literacy and numeracy to achieve top grades.

Our assessments are aligned with the new GCSE grading criteria; therefore all pupils in Years 7 and 8 will be awarded grades on a 9 – 1 scale which will dovetail into their Key Stage 4 assessments. Raising the standard of the benchmark midpoint grade, the new grading system will create wider differentiation, especially amongst high achievers.

- Pupils who achieve a grade 1 are at a standard equivalent to a grade F and G.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 2 are at a standard equivalent to a grade E.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 3 are at a standard equivalent to a grade D.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 4 are roughly equivalent to the lower end/bottom two thirds of grade C. Broadly the same proportion of pupils will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.
- Pupils who are working in the top third of grade C and the lower third of grade B are roughly equivalent to a grade 5. This grade is commonly regarded as an international benchmark, relating a pupil's performance to that of students getting top-grade passes in high performing countries in international league tables.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 6 are at a standard equivalent to the top two thirds of a grade B.

Those pupils achieving the higher top three grades (A* - C) will be spread across six grades (4-9). This will show the top from the middle performers more clearly.

- Pupils who achieve a grade 7 are at a standard equivalent to a grade A. Broadly the same proportion of pupils will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve an A and above.
- For each examination, the top 20 per cent of those who get grade 7 or above will get a grade 9 – the very highest performers.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 8 are at a standard equivalent to a grade A* but did not qualify for a grade 9.
- Pupils who achieve a grade 9 are at a standard equivalent to a grade A* - roughly half of the 6.8% of those who got A* are likely to get this. Awarded to the top 20% of pupils who achieved a grade 7 or higher, nationally.

With these wide bands, pupils need to understand how hard they work will have a major impact on the final grade they achieve.



Flightpaths

The GCSE specification criteria has been used in each subject as a basis for assessment throughout a pupil's five-year learning journey. Understanding what, in terms of achieving excellence, pupils need by the end of Year 11, assessments have been worked back to show what a pupil should do in each grade, in each year.

The challenge which underpins the grade becomes more demanding each year: if the pupil is working broadly in line with their target grade each year, they are making good progress.

The assessments can be used to judge what students demonstrate they can and cannot do. If the statement is deemed as met, pupils will have to have demonstrated a mastery of that skill consistently across different topics and assessments.

Information gleaned from these assessments will aid teacher planning. Any areas of difficulty can be targeted so that pupils can make accelerated progress and be fully prepared for all aspects of their GCSE assessments.

When pupils join schools at the start of Key Stage 3, the analysis of data from Primary feeder schools can be used to give a threshold based on prior ability. However schools decide to baseline their new Year 7 pupils, their assessed grade will place them onto a five-year Flightpath towards their final GCSE grade. This Flightpath shows the expected learning defined within the curriculum and offers pupils the opportunity to make great progress from their starting point in Year 7 to their GCSEs. It is a forecast of the final grade in each subject.

Keeping pupils on an ambitious trajectory, highlighting and offering support if they begin to veer off course, will ensure teaching and learning is purposeful and successful. With the same grade system across all year groups and better consistency across all subjects, intervention is easier to target and report.

Progress is unlikely to be perfectly linear each term. It is reasonable to expect pupils to be within one grade of their end of year target. Attainment which is more than one grade below the end of year target is a cause for concern, signifying significant underachievement.

				9
			9	8
		9	8	7
	9	8	7	6
9	8	7	6	5
8	7	6	5	4
7	6	5	4	3
6	5	4	3	2
5	4	3	2	1
4	3	2	1	
3	2	1		
2	1			
1				
Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11

Flightpaths work in a similar way to the other assessment frameworks. There is a difference in how the content is arranged.

Other Assessment Frameworks	GCSE Flightpaths
Subject	Subject
Profile	Year
Attainment Level	Flightpath

Although this is a minor change to navigation, this does cause big changes to how data is presented. With other assessment frameworks, a student will work within a subject and profile for a number of years. They will progress through the different attainment levels within each profile. With the GCSE Flightpaths students will work on one or two Flightpaths within a year and will move to the next year in September. Students will only be assessed against the year group they are in.

Students will need to be baselined when they start working on the GCSE Flightpaths. This is done using the Set Flightpath button in the individual assessments screen. By clicking on Set Flightpath on Flightpath 5, it marks Flightpath 4 as complete. The student’s progress is then tracked on Flightpath 5.

At the end of each year they will be automatically baselined by the software for the next school year. It will set the student to work on the same Flightpath they were working on the previous year. If they have achieved 60% of Flightpath 6 in Year 7, they will automatically start on Flightpath 6 in Year 8.

Teachers can move students up or down Flightpaths as required. On the individual assessments screen you will see the ‘Increase Flightpath (+1)’ and ‘Decrease Flightpath (-1)’ buttons. These allow teachers to move students up or down to a different Flightpath easily.

English Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the English curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

Within our English Assessments, Reading and Writing are assessed separately. As pupils' learning develops, their achievements can be recorded

Within Reading at Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils should be taught skills through a range of literature. Our statements are written so that assessments can be made from any relevant text; therefore schools are not limited to studying specific texts.

Within Spoken Language pupils should be taught to speak confidently and effectively, including through:

- using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion
- giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point
- participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said
- improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.

The English language GCSE has a Speaking and Listening element but it is separate in terms of an award in the actual GCSE exam. In other words, no marks for Speaking and Listening count towards the final exam mark. Students receive a separate mark and certificate. With this in mind, we have split the areas within English so that a grade for Reading and Writing can be calculated or weighted separately from Spoken Language—or Speaking and Listening. This element of English can still be assessed and given its own grade.

Our assessment in English Literature covers Year 11.

Mathematics Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Mathematics curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- become fluent in the fundamentals of mathematics, through varied and frequent practice with increasingly complex problems over time, so that pupils develop conceptual understanding and the ability to recall and apply knowledge rapidly and accurately.
- reason mathematically by following a line of enquiry, conjecturing relationships and generalisations, and developing an argument, justification or proof using mathematical language
- can solve problems by applying their mathematics to a variety of routine and non-routine problems with increasing sophistication, including breaking down problems into a series of simpler steps and persevering in seeking solutions.

The mathematics curriculum also highlights the importance of Spoken Language in pupils' development. Where applicable, assessments include the use of specific mathematical vocabulary, for example, in descriptions of calculations or analysis, or how conventional mathematical terms should be used correctly.

Throughout these areas, pupils will be assessed on mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem solving. As a general rule, as pupils move into higher grades the content becomes more weighted towards algebra than number. In some grades there are no assessments on certain elements of maths—for example, Statistics is only assessed in Year 7, grades 8 and 9.

The mathematical fluency pupils will develop is broken down into steps within our framework. Their mathematical knowledge builds on work completed in Key Stage 2 and extends understanding in the areas of:

- Number
- Algebra
- Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change
- Geometry and Measures
- Probability
- Statistics

Maths Mastery Approach – Years 7 - 8

We have developed a Maths Mastery approach assessment package which is an increasingly popular teaching method. Within this method, pupils are encouraged to identify, understand and apply relevant maths principles, making connections between ideas which build skills needed when tackling new problems. At the moment we have assessments for this approach in Years 7 and 8.

Science Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Science curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics
- develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of science enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them
- are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the uses and implications of science, today and for the future

Individual schools will decide how/when they will cover the content of the science curriculum. Therefore our assessments are written so that knowledge, skills and application of any part of the content can be assessed, making it manageable and relevant within any scientific subject—matter.

In most schools, all pupils in Years 7 and 8 complete a 'science' study. By the time they reach Year 9, some pupils opt to work towards a Double or Triple science, whilst others continue with a combined science curriculum.

Years 7 – 9 pupil progress is detailed within:

- Knowledge, Recall and Vocabulary
- Hypothesis and Planning
- Scientific Numeracy
- Analysis and Evaluation

Years 10 – 11 pupil progress is detailed within:

- Knowledge and Skills
- Application

For pupils working towards a double or triple science award, we have assessments for:

- Biology – Years 9 -11
- Chemistry – Years 9 - 11
- Physics - Years 9 – 11

Within these subjects, pupil progress is detailed within:

- Knowledge and Skills
- Application

The content for each of these areas is the same. This means that schools can teach any area within the subject in any year and assess progress against statements which cover learning comprehensively.

Art and Design Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Art and Design curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences
- become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques
- evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

The Art and Design objectives have been populated with assessment points under the following headings:

- Develop
- Experiment
- Record
- Respond

Art and Graphics are split into two subjects but the content of the assessments is the same for both. The statements apply to both as they are effectively variations of the same GCSE assessment criteria. However, students usually study one or the other from Year 9 and therefore they are treated as two different subjects.

Computing Years 7 - 9

The overarching aims for the Computing curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- can understand and apply the fundamental principles and concepts of computer science, including abstraction, logic, algorithms and data representation
- can analyse problems in computational terms, and have repeated practical experience of writing computer programs in order to solve such problems
- can evaluate and apply information technology, including new or unfamiliar technologies, analytically to solve problems
- are responsible, competent, confident and creative users of information and communication technology.

At the moment, our ICT assessments cover Years 7 – 9. Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Algorithms
- Programming and Development
- Data and Data Representation
- Hardware and Processing
- Communication and Networks
- Information Technology

Dance Years 7 - 8

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Choreography
- Performance
- Rehearsal/Personal Management Skills

We have created assessments which take into account little background learning in the primary settings.

Drama Years 7 - 8

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Drama Techniques
- Performance/Staying in Role
- Rehearsal/Group Skills/Responding to Ideas

We have created assessments which take into account little background learning in the primary settings.

Design and Technology Years 7 - 8

The overarching aims for the Design and Technology curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- develop the creative, technical and practical expertise needed to perform everyday tasks confidently and to participate successfully in an increasingly technological world
- build and apply a repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills in order to design and make high-quality prototypes and products for a wide range of users
- critique, evaluate and test their ideas and products and the work of others
- understand and apply the principles of nutrition and learn how to cook.

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Designing
- Making
- Evaluating
- Technical Knowledge

Textiles Years 7 - 8

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Designing
- Making
- Understanding

Food Technology Years 7 - 8

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Principles of Nutrition
- Cooking and Preparing Food

Resistant Materials Years 7 - 11

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Understanding
- Designing
- Making

Geography Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Geography curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- develop contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places – both terrestrial and marine – including their defining physical and human characteristics and how these provide a geographical context for understanding the actions of processes
- understand the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and how they bring about spatial variation and change over time
- are competent in the geographical skills needed to:
 - ⇒ collect, analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through experiences of fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes
 - ⇒ interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including maps, diagrams, globes, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
 - ⇒ communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps, numerical and quantitative skills and writing at length.

Our Geography assessments cover Years 7 – 11. Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Map Skills
- Geographical Enquiry
- Case Studies
- Physical and Human Features

The statements are based on the GCSE specifications which require these skills to be applied consistently across every year in all of the topics. As Geography is such a wide-ranging subject with so many topics it is to be expected that the students will return to certain skills throughout the course and that they will need to 're-master' these skills but with a more complex subject—matter.

Our assessment encompasses the OFQUAL requirement for students to be assessed against mathematical and statistical techniques.

History Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the History curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the history of our islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day, how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world, the nature of ancient civilisations, the expansion and dissolution of empires, characteristic features of past non-European societies and the achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history, between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history and between short- and long-term timescales
-

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Knowledge
- Skills

Pupils' skills need to be maintained and demonstrated every year, within a new topic. The language of the assessments reflects the increasing difficulty of the skills. At a lower grade they will have mastered one aspect of the statement and then at a higher grade where it appears to be two flight paths - the second part is an extension of the same skill to demonstrate a higher level of challenge.

The importance of using accurate and appropriate specialist vocabulary, as well as communicating with the correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation, is highlighted within our assessments.

Modern Foreign Languages Years 7 - 11

The assessments for Modern Foreign Languages cover German, French and Spanish.

The overarching aims for the Languages curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources
- speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
- can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt
- discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Writing
- Reading
- Speaking
- Listening

The content for each of the three languages is the same.

Music Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Music curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- learn to sing and to use their voices to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence
- understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Listening
- Composing
- Performing
- Evaluating

Physical Education Years 7 - 11

The overarching aims for the Physical Education curriculum are to ensure that all pupils:

- develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- are physically active for sustained periods of time
- engage in competitive sports and activities
- lead healthy, active lives.

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Sport Performance in a Competitive Situation (Grades 1-9)
- Sport Performance in Isolation (Grades 1-4)

Our Dance assessments cover Years 7 – 8. Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Choreography
- Performance
- Rehearsal/Personal Management Skills

The new PE GCSE criteria has students put forward in one team sport, one individual sport and one from either of the two. The criteria is heavily based on how the participant can cope with skills in a competitive situation. It is marked out of 30 for each sport with only 1-5 marks given in Isolation (skills demonstrated with no competition) and 1-25 marks given in a competitive situation. This is mirrored with our Flightpaths.

The statements in isolation gradually reduce per grade each year as this reflects the curriculum for PE as students progress through the years (e.g. Y11 is all about their application of the skills they have developed in previous years and showcasing and developing this in competitive situations).

We have removed the idea of the Core PE in its current form as a practical-only subject, instead viewing Key Stage 3 PE as being partly practical/exercise, and partly preparation for GCSE PE. GCSE PE overcomes the issue above by saying that they have to be assessed as an average across their best three sports (including at least one team and one individual), but there is also a focus on theory which is examined. As such, we are using the new GCSE PE specification approach and are working that back to Key Stage 3 PE, even though historically the NC PE does not require any form of focus on theory.

Physical Education Cont.

The idea of this is that it will tie in with the approach of other subjects and will provide better preparation for the students wanting to do GCSE PE/BTEC Sport as a Key Stage 4 qualification, although we are mindful that at Key Stage 3 the emphasis should still be predominantly on practical skills. For those who want to drop Sport/PE at Key Stage 4 and just do the statutory Core PE, the faculty can then do in-house assessments separately.

In terms of the different number of sports per Level in one year, the reason being is that the students are to be assessed in three sports for the new GCSE PE specification -both team and individual sports. With this being the case it means we can tell where individual students are in terms of their overall practical assessment. They would need to achieve ineffectiveness in all three Sports (One Team, one individual and one of either) to achieve Level 1. If they improve their team sport to show basic skill level but are still ineffective in their other two sports they would be deemed a Level 2. If they can increase their skill level in their second sport they become Level 3 and if in their last sport they are achieving basic standards they are classed as a Level 4. To reflect this, the isolation element of the PE assessment only goes up to Grade 5 at Year 7, Grade 4 at Year 8, Grade 3 at Year 9, and Grade 2 at Year 10 and Grade 1 at Year 11.

Levels 6-9 would not be assessed against the isolation criteria as the highest grade of this strand would have already been achieved across the three Sports at level 5. This means the student should have the skills and techniques needed in isolation and would now have to perform these skills in competition at a competent level or above to improve their grade. Their lessons would become very competition focused.

Religious Education Years 7 - 9

All schools are required to teach religious education at all Key Stages. We have produced two different assessment packs which fall under the umbrella of Religious Education - Ethics and Religious Education.

Some schools will be issued guidance from their Diocese regarding which religion/s to study. GCSE specifications require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of two religions.

Pupil progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Beliefs, Teachings and Sources
- Celebration and Ritual
- Social and Moral Practices and Way of Life
- Engagement with Own and Others' Beliefs and Values
- Engagement with Questions of Meaning and Purpose

Our first Ethics assessment covers Years 7-8. Pupils' progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Explaining Influence of Teachings on Beliefs, Values, Behaviours and Attitudes
- Personal Response
- Evaluating Beliefs and Attitudes
- Quality of Written Communication

Our second Ethics assessment covers Years 9-11. Pupils' progress is detailed within the following areas:

- Knowledge
- Explaining Influence of Teachings on Beliefs, Values, Behaviours and Attitudes
- Using Sources of Authority
- Personal Response
- Evaluating Beliefs and Attitudes
- Quality of Written Communication

Each point within these headings can be applied to a range of different religions and is therefore applicable to any school's Religious Education Curriculum. The importance of using a range of specialist vocabulary, as well as communicating with the correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation, is highlighted within our assessments.

There is a discrepancy between our headings for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as there is no national curriculum for Ethics in Key Stage 3. Instead schools follow their own locally agreed syllabus at Key Stage 3 before going onto a national specification course in Key Stage 4. For these reasons it is quite appropriate for the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 statements to be treated as somewhat separate as this is the case in reality.

21st Century Learning Skills Years 7 - 8

Many schools work with their pupils to improve their skills and attitudes to learning as part of their Key Stage 3 curriculum. Developing a mature and responsible approach to their own learning is a key element to a pupil's success.

These assessments have been developed in one of our schools following work with the Innovations Unit.

The main areas for assessment are how able pupils are to:

- Persevere with a task
- Approach their learning
- Make decisions, providing clear reasons
- Identify and use resources
- Make reasonable improvements to their work

Business Studies Years 10 - 11

Students are assessed on how well they can recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories, issues and current business practice. Throughout the grades, pupil's ability to evaluate evidence and analyse issues is considered, as well as how they plan and carry out investigations and tasks. Higher grades require more critical understanding and effective use of the selection and organisation of information from a wide range of sources, showing they are able to investigate businesses in a variety of contexts.

The importance of using accurate and appropriate business terminology, as well as communicating with the correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation, is highlighted within our assessments.

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