



# HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

## A GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT IN YEAR 9 [2022-23]

In September 2014, the new National Curriculum was introduced by the government and with this National Curriculum Levels were removed in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre adopted an approach to ‘assessment without levels’ [AWL] based on a model developed by Durrington High School as part of the Department for Education Innovation Project.

### The principles behind our approach include:

- We want to let students and parents/carers know the **progress** they are making, relative to their starting points from the end of KS2
- We do not want to limit what our students think they can achieve, so do not set them ‘targets’ – we want all students to have high aspirations and aim to be excellent in all they do and develop an **ethic of excellence**<sup>1</sup>
- We want to celebrate the progress of **all** students, from **all** starting points
- We want students to understand that if they are not currently making expected progress or better, 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, and to exhibit a **growth mindset**<sup>2</sup>

### How do we assess students?

The purpose of assessment is to identify strengths and areas for development in learning, so these can inform teacher’s planning and teaching to address and close any gaps in knowledge, understanding and/or skills.

When students arrive in Year 7, we look at two key pieces of assessment information about them – their KS2 maths standardised test score and their KS2 English (reading) standardised test score. These, with outcomes between 80 and 120, have replaced KS2 levels. Levels had a 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 straightforward as this. From a given starting point, some students might make good progress and get a grade 6 at GCSE, whilst other may make exceptional progress and achieve a grade 8. Some, for a variety of reasons, may get a grade 3 or lower. At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre, we aim to support all students to make at least expected progress, with a large number of students making good or exceptional progress.

When planning teaching, learning and assessment, teachers think about the topic the class will be doing and think about the core knowledge and core skills that will be taught and developed over time so that students achieve well in their GCSEs. Topics, core knowledge and core skills are broken down into four thresholds:

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Berger (An Ethic of Excellence)

<sup>2</sup> Carol Dweck

## Threshold Description Table

| Threshold         | KS2 Score | 'Flightpath' description  |
|-------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Excellence</b> | 111-120   | Aimed at students with the highest starting points from KS2, these students should achieve grade 8-9 at GCSE                              |
| <b>Secure</b>     | 101-110   | These students should be aiming to achieve at least grade 6-9 at GCSE   |
| <b>Developing</b> | 91-100    | These students should be aiming to achieve at least grade 4-9 at GCSE   |
| <b>Foundation</b> | 80-90     | Aimed at students with the lowest starting points from KS2, these students should be aiming to achieve <b>at least</b> a grade 3 at GCSE. |

Teachers use the information that they have about the starting point of each student, to help each student move up through the thresholds within each year and across the three years of Key Stage 3 – with the aspiration and target being that all students will aim towards achieving 'excellence' and beyond.

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

- In maths, we use their KS2 maths test score, their MidYIS score from a test sat in Term 1 and a baseline assessment
- In English, we use their KS2 reading test score, MidYIS score from a test sat in Term 1 and SPaG scores
- In most other subjects we use an average of maths and reading KS2 test scores combined with their MidYIS score – there is a high correlation between these and how students perform generally at GCSE
- In Drama, Music, PE and Art, we carry out baseline assessments of our own as we recognise that these subjects have specialist practical skills.

### How do teachers use this assessment information?

In two ways:

- (i) 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. For example, if a student achieved a test score of 98 in English reading 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 threshold**. If they are not, this feedback will focus on embedding the criteria in the **developing threshold**.
- (ii) 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 for the subject. Following these assessments, the teacher makes a judgement about the current threshold the student is working at. This is then compared to their starting point. This is reported home to parents as the student's 'Current Flightpath':
  - **Exceeding:** a student is working beyond their flightpath, based on their starting point, at this time
  - **Meeting:** a student is working at their flightpath, based on their starting point, at this time
  - **Not yet meeting:** a student is currently not yet fully meeting their flightpath, given their starting point

Each academic year, the bar and expectation of knowledge and skills required is raised which means it is more demanding to progress up through the thresholds. Work towards this will help ensure students are GCSE-ready by the end of Key Stage 3. If a student was working at 'Secure' in Year 8 and is working at

‘Secure’ in Year 9 also, this would indicate they are working at a higher standard now than in Year 8. If a student was working at ‘secure’ in Year 8 and is currently working at ‘developing’ this would not indicate their achievement has declined but it would indicate they have not yet made sufficient progress to ensure they maximise their success by the end of Year 11.

The report sent home looks like this:

| Subject                     | Teacher      | Current Year 9 Threshold | Current Flightpath | Readiness to Learn |         | Aspect of learning to develop further      |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|--|
|                             |              |                          |                    | Previous           | Current |  |
| Art                         | Teacher Name | Developing               | Exceeding          | G                  | G       | Class work and growth mindset              |
| Drama                       | Teacher Name | Foundation               | Meeting            | G                  | G       | Engagement and Focus                       |
| English                     | Teacher Name | Developing               | Not yet meeting    | G                  | G       | Contribution in class                      |
| Games                       | Various      | Developing+              | Exceeding          | G                  | G       | Class work and growth mindset              |
| Geography                   | Teacher Name | Secure+                  | Not yet meeting    | O                  | O       | Engage with the subject in a wider context |
| History                     | Teacher Name | Secure+                  | Not yet meeting    | O                  | O       | Contribution in class                      |
| ICT                         | Teacher Name | Excellence               | Meeting            | O                  | O       | Class work and growth mindset              |
| Mathematics                 | Teacher Name | Secure+                  | Not yet meeting    | G                  | G       | Organisation                               |
| Music                       | Teacher Name | Developing+              | Exceeding          | O                  | O       | Engage with the subject in a wider context |
| RE                          | Teacher Name | Excellence               | Meeting            | G                  | G       | Responding to Feedback                     |
| Science                     | Teacher Name | Excellence+              | Exceeding          | O                  | G       | Contribution in class                      |
| Spanish                     | Teacher Name | Excellence               | Meeting            | G                  | O       | Contribution in class                      |
| Technology: Food Technology |              |                          |                    | O                  |         |  |
| Technology: D&T             | Teacher Name | Developing+              | Not yet meeting    |                    | G       | Engagement and Focus                       |

The ‘Current Threshold’ column provides information about the current standard of work students are completing. Students will receive feedback about improving/developing the standard, quality and depth of their work from their teacher, either in writing or verbally in lessons. This information may help inform decisions about which subjects to study in Years 10 and 11 at GCSE Level. See the table on the previous page which indicates the likely range of GCSE grades for each ‘threshold’.

A ‘key aspect of learning to develop further’ may be identified which is providing a notable barrier to learning and progress at the current time. This will be linked to a strand of their Readiness to Learn. The Readiness to Learn Continuum can be found here: (<http://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/page/?title=Assessment+%26amp%3B+Reporting&pid=110>). A focus on this will help students to make greater progress from their starting points on their journey towards excellence, and beyond.

## Frequently asked questions

### **My daughter has always achieved well in maths at KS2 and in her first report at Highdown School is ‘not yet meeting’ her flightpath. 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, we raised the bar of expectation across the whole KS3 curriculum – we want 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 demanding. As a result, it will not be uncommon for them to not quite be there at Highdown School. 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 white ‘not yet meeting’ 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 areas for development, 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 would not 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, grit and graft, 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.

### **As the year goes, why might the ‘current threshold’ and ‘current flightpath’ of my son change from one term to another?**

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

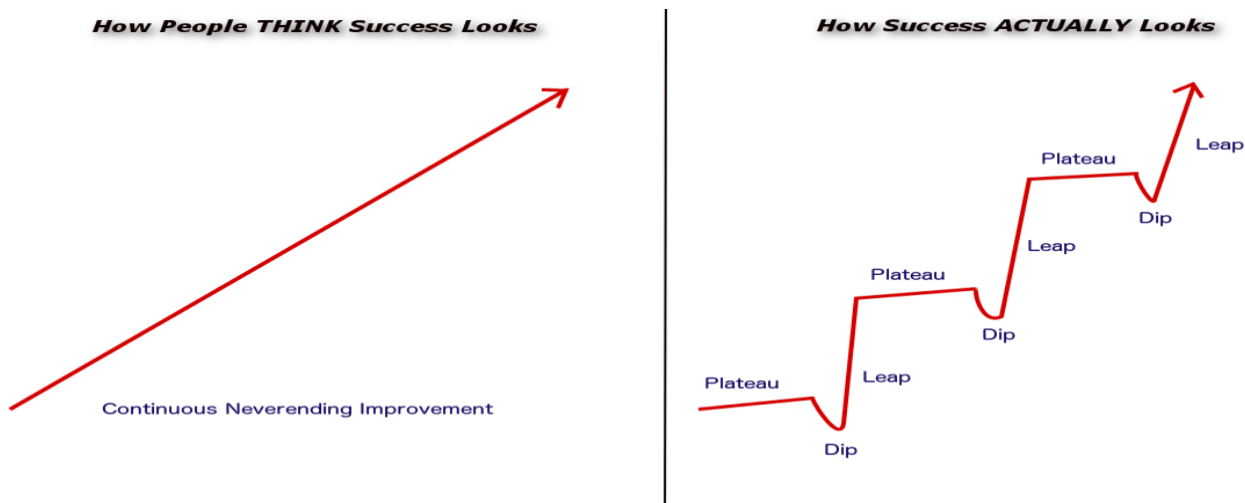
- In some subjects e.g. PE, the content that is covered each term will be very different. For example, in term 1 a student might be doing gymnastics and find this quite difficult, however in term 2 they might be doing football and perform really well with this.
- As the years go on, students consolidate 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.

### **My child has ‘O’s for readiness to learn but is still ‘not yet meeting’ their flightpath in drama and music. Why is this?**

For most students, there should be a correlation between readiness to learn and their progress, i.e. if readiness to learn is strong (Outstanding) we would expect them to be at least meeting their flightpath based on their starting points. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, a student with a high KS2 starting point may be meeting their flightpath in most subjects, but not yet 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).

**My son was making good progress at the end of Year 8 but in his first report for Year 9 is now ‘not yet meeting’ their flightpath? What’s gone wrong?**

Nothing has gone wrong. The bar has been raised in Year 9 so the expectation is more demanding than in Year 8. Progress is non-linear (see illustration below) and will likely fluctuate across entire KS3, particularly between reporting points, although overall progress will be made. ‘Not yet meeting’ their flightpath does not mean he is not making progress. Assessment information reported earlier in Year 9 may be based on fewer disciplines/aspects of the subject so far compared to what assessment was based on at the end of Year 8. The important thing is he focuses on developing the knowledge/skills as indicated by his teacher.



If you have any queries/questions about your son or daughter’s progress within a subject, please do not hesitate to contact their subject teacher. If your concern is more general, e.g. across three or more subjects, please contact your son/daughter’s Head of Achievement.