

Assessment without Levels

Overton School

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1. How is assessment at Key Stage 3 changing from September 2020?

In September 2014, the government announced that National Curriculum Levels were to be abolished and not replaced. Instead, from September 2016, all secondary schools in England and Wales are required to publish their own 11-16 assessment policies, detailing how progress and attainment across Key Stages 3-4 will be assessed and reported. This guide explains how Overton School plans to assess and report student achievement from September 2020 across Years 7-11 for our formal curriculum model, with a particular focus on the changes at Key Stage 3.

2. Why have National Curriculum Levels been abolished?

Levels were first introduced alongside the National Curriculum in 1988. For almost 30 years, they have provided schools, students and parents or carers with a universal language around assessment across Key Stages 1-3, as well as a common criteria against which achievement in individual subjects could be benchmarked, tracked and monitored.

From 2016, levels were also used to report the results of Key Stage 1 and 2 statutory assessments (SATS) in Years 2 and 6. Following the abolition of levels, for the first time this summer, SATS results will not be reported in the form of levels but rather as a scaled score in the range of 80-130. At KS2, the government's expectation is that 85% of all students meet the new 'secondary ready' score of 100 (roughly equivalent to a Level 4b at present).

The government's decision to remove levels from the National Curriculum was motivated by a number of different factors. The main reasons were:

a) Accuracy and consistency

Levels were originally intended to be used as broad end-of-unit, end-of-year descriptors, providing students and parents with a best-fit summary of how well learners had mastered the knowledge and skills associated with individual subjects. In practise however, the increasingly widespread use of levels to assess individual tasks and assignments, distorted this purpose.

b) Clarity and coherence

The introduction of sub-Levels (e.g. 4a, 4b, 4c), whilst enabling schools to demonstrate progress at shorter, more regular intervals, has further undermined the usefulness of levels. Government research suggested that many students and parents or carers did not fully understand and could not clearly explain the difference between specific levels or sub-Levels in relation to different subjects.

c) Fixed v. growth mindset

Where levels were the main focus of conversations with students and parents or carers, learners understandably often focused more on the level or sub-Level awarded, than on the specific guidance and feedback provided. Removing levels therefore has the potential to accelerate learning and student progress by focusing feedback on those aspects of the curriculum where their knowledge and understanding is secure and those areas where there are gaps.

Linked to this, evidence also suggests that removing levels and the label associated with them, emphasises to learners that there is no ceiling on achievement and helps to promote a positive growth mind-set.

3. Assessment principles

Overton Schools’ new assessment framework seeks to address these concerns and capitalise on the opportunity presented by the removal of levels, to introduce an assessment system that:

- Is simple and easy to understand - for staff, students and parents
- Is based on high expectations and challenge for all
- Is closely linked to the curriculum and focused on developing the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for success at Key Stage 4
- Improves learning and encourages a growth mind set by providing students and parents with high quality next-steps feedback focused on specific objectives
- Tracks pupil progress in relation to an aspirational target across Key Stages 3 and 4
- Allows all students to experience success, by focusing on the progress they make from their starting point
- Differentiates between pupils of different abilities, giving early recognition of pupils who are falling behind and those who are excelling

4. The mastery curriculum and student trackers

From September 2016, the level ladder, which currently provides the basis for assessment and reporting at KS3, will be replaced by the **mastery curriculum**. Instead of using levels or sub-levels to assess achievement and inform feedback, the core knowledge, concepts and skills that underpin each subject will be assigned to eight broad **thresholds**. These thresholds correspond broadly to the old National Curriculum Levels 3-8, but have been updated to reflect recent changes both to KS2 and GCSE. In Years 7-9, in most subjects, student achievement is assessed in relation to four of the six thresholds. The descriptors attached to each threshold – **foundation**, **emerging**, **developing**, **securing**, **intermediate**, and **mastering** - provide students with a clear indication of how well they are progressing. Very simply, each student’s target is to ‘master’ the knowledge, concepts and skills delivered in each year of the programme of study.

Old Level	New Threshold	New Year 7 Thresholds	New Year 8 Thresholds	New Year 9 Thresholds
				EP
8	8.0		EP	Mastery
	7.5			
7	7.0	EP	Mastery	Intermediate
	6.5			
6	6.0	Mastery	Intermediate	Securing
	5.5			
5	5.0	Intermediate	Securing	Developing
	4.5			
4	4.0	Securing	Developing	Emerging
	3.5			
3	3.0	Developing	Emerging	Foundation
	2.5			
2	2.0	Emerging	Foundation	

	1.5			
1	1	Foundation		
	0.5			

As the diagram above illustrates, the thresholds are progressive and build year-on-year throughout the programme of study. What, for example, constitutes ‘securing’ in Year 7, would only count as ‘developing’ in Year 8 and ‘emerging’ in Year 9. At the top end, where students are demonstrating knowledge, understanding and skills above and beyond those specified in that year of the programme of study, they are deemed to making ‘**exceptional progress**’ (EP). Examples of this might include problem-solving, applying the knowledge and skills they have gained to new and unfamiliar contexts, adapting their work for different audiences or conducting their own research and shaping their own lines of enquiry.

Student-friendly trackers, like the Year History exemplar that follow, provide learners with a clear breakdown of what each descriptor means, detailing precisely what knowledge, understanding and skills are required to attain each new threshold. For each subject, trackers for each year group (or set for those subjects that set students by ability), together with a progression map for the whole of Key Stage 3 and a curriculum map outlining course content are available to view on the curriculum area of the school website.



Year 7: History Tracker: Key Concepts and Skills

To succeed in History at Overton School there are a range of **key concepts** and **key skills** that you must master as your progress through Key Stage

3. Refer to this sheet often and use it to help you with your home learning and assessments: it is your guide to becoming a master historian!

Key Concepts and Skills	Foundation	Emerging	Developing	Secure	Intermediate	Mastery
<p>Before and after 1066</p> <p>Change and continuity Historians explain and analyse change and continuity over time.</p>	You can identify examples of change between two different periods.	You make accurate statements but do not development them with examples.	You make limited use of examples. Your descriptions lack development.	You can describe examples of change between two periods or over time.	You include some basic examples and write in paragraphs. You can make simple explanations of change and continuity.	<p>You can make developed explanations of change and continuity.</p> <p>You include some detailed examples and write in clear SPEED paragraphs.</p>
<p>The Magna Carta</p> <p>Significance Historians can make judgements about the relative important of events and individuals.</p>	You can identify important people, events, and developments	You make accurate statements but do not development them with examples	You can describe the importance of people and their actions, events, and developments.	You make limited use of examples. Your descriptions lack development	<p>You can explain how / why people and their actions, events, and developments are important.</p> <p>You include some basic examples and write in paragraphs.</p>	<p>You can make developed explanations of how significant events, individuals, or developments led to change.</p> <p>You include some examples of significance (e.g. impact or legacy/ GREAT).</p>
<p>Black Death</p> <p>Cause and consequence Historians explain and analyse the causes and consequences of events.</p>	You can describe historical events through story or narrative.	You make accurate statements but do not development them with examples.	<p>You can identify and describe the long-term and short-term causes of events.</p> <p>You make limited use of examples. Your descriptions lack development.</p>	You include some basic examples and write in paragraphs.	You can identify and explain the long-term and short-term causes of events briefly.	<p>You can explain a range of different causes (for example short and long term)</p> <p>You include some detailed examples and write in clear SPEED paragraphs.</p>
<p>Measly Middle Ages using historical evidence Historians use evidence to support their views and analyse sources for usefulness and reliability.</p>	You can use evidence to extract information to learn about the past.	You mainly summarise the source or select quotations without inference.	You select quotations from the text to support your ideas. You do not yet consider the provenance.	You can use evidence to make basic suggestions ('inferences') about the past.	<p>You can use the provenance to make developed inferences and basic judgements concerning usefulness and reliability.</p> <p>You include quotations / extracts and make accurate inferences. You make some limited use of the provenance.</p>	<p>You can analyse the sources using elements of the provenance to judge usefulness and reliability.</p> <p>You include quotations / extracts and make accurate inferences. You make good use of the provenance.</p>
<p>Islamic Conquest/ Ottoman Empire</p> <p>Understanding interpretations Historians understand that there are different interpretations of the past and explain why people have different views.</p>	You can identify what other people have said about the past.	You mainly summarise the source or select quotations without inference.	You select quotations from the text to support your ideas. You do not yet consider the provenance	You can describe the opinion of an author or historian based on reading source material.	<p>You can explain the differences in opinion between two or more different authors based on reading source material.</p> <p>You include quotations / extracts and make accurate inferences. You make some limited use of the provenance.</p>	<p>You can explain the opinion (interpretation) of an author based on reading source material and considering the provenance.</p> <p>You include quotations / extracts and make accurate inferences. You make good use of the provenance.</p>

5. Learning Journeys and aspirational targets

In order to provide students, parents and carers with a measurable indicator of how well learners are progressing and what they are currently on track to achieve at the end of Key Stage 4, student achievement in each subject area will be reported in relation to their current 'Learning Journey'.

At the beginning of Year 7, students will be assigned one of the seven Learning Journeys outlined below for each of their subjects, based on KS2 prior attainment and any baseline assessment. In the practical and language subjects, baseline assessment is also used to ensure that students are matched to a Learning Journey that accurately reflects their ability in that subject. For this reason, it is likely that students will be assigned to different Learning Journeys for different subjects. From September 2020, students currently in Year 7 to 9 will also be mapped to a Learning Journey for each of their subjects, using their prior and current attainment data.

KS2 SATS Level	Year 7 Target	Year 8 Target	Year 9 Target	Learning Journey across Key Stage 3	KS4 Target Range	KS4 9-1 Target	KS4 A*G Target	BTEC Target	BTEC Target Range	Level 1/2
>6	>6A	7B-7A	8C-8A		7-9	9			Level 2 - Distinction *	Level 2
5B-5A	6B-6A	7C-7A	8C-8A		7-9	8	A*	Level 2 - Distinction *		
5C-5B	6C-6B	6A-7C	7A-8C		6-8	7	A	Level 2 - Distinction		
4B-4A	5C-5A	5A-6A	6A-7B		5-7	6	B		Level 2 - Merit	
4C-4B	4A-5C	5B-6C	5A-6B		4-6	5	C	Level 2 - Merit		
3B-3A	4C-4B	4B-5C	4A-5B		3-5	4		Level 2 - Pass	Level 2 - Pass	
<3B	<4C	<4A	<5B		2-5	3	D	Level 1 - Distinction	Level 1 - Distinction	
						2	E	Level 1 - Merit	Level 1 - Merit	
						1	F/G	Level 1 - Pass	Level 1 - Pass	

At the end of each Learning Journey, the **KS4 Target Range** indicates what outcomes students are on track to achieve if they continue to work hard towards their aspirational target. Once students formally begin to study GCSEs towards the end of Year 9 or start of Year 10, this KS4 target range will be replaced with a single aspirational **KS4 Target Grade**. Please note that GCSE targets are expressed using the new 9-1 grading system that replaces the old A*-G grades for all subjects from this year. **BTEC Targets** are linked to the GCSE targets as equivalents.

One clear advantage of this approach is greater coherence and continuity across Key Stages 3 and 4. Instead of using levels to report progress at Key Stage 3 and GCSE/BTEC grades to report progress at Key Stage 4, moving forward, there will be a common language around assessment across Years 7-11 and greater clarity around expected outcomes at each stage of a student’s school career.

Using a KS4 estimated target range instead of a single target grade at KS3 emphasises that outcomes are not fixed or pre-determined. To reinforce the school’s high expectations and the idea that there is no cap or limit on what students can achieve, Learning Journeys will be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year. Where a student is consistently working at the upper end of their Learning Journey KS4 target range or exceeding it, they will be moved up to the next Learning Journey.

Entry Levels to Level 2 qualifications will be reported using the six thresholds with foundation, emerging, developing, securing, and intermediate and mastery. Where mastery is reported, this will be anticipated as the same as a pass grade for the units of work towards qualifications, however each qualification is subject to external verifications and assessments.

Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2
		Mastery
	Mastery	Intermediate
Mastery	Intermediate	Securing
Intermediate	Securing	Developing
Securing	Developing	Emerging
Developing	Emerging	Foundation
Emerging	Foundation	
Foundation		

Learning journeys will be issued three times a year, Autumn 2, Spring 2 and Summer 2 terms in addition to scheduled reporting cycle for KS3 students.

6. How will student progress in relation to their Learning Journeys be reported?

Student Learning Journeys provide a clear, consistent and measurable benchmark against which achievement in different subjects can be assessed and reported. In place of a level or sub-level on student target stickers and reports, symbols will instead be used to indicate how well students are progressing towards their aspirational target.

>	Making better than expected progress. On track to achieve or exceed aspirational target.
<	Making less than expected progress. Not currently on track to achieve aspirational target. More effort needed.
=	Making expected progress. On track to achieve aspirational target

It is important to note that the upper end of Overton School’s aspirational KS4/BTEC target range, places students in the top 10% of outcomes for students nationally in terms of progress across Key Stages 2-4. As such, making ‘expected progress’ towards these aspirational targets is a significant achievement in itself and something that students should be proud of.

Joe Blogs - Year 8

Subjects	Learning Journey	Autumn	Spring	Summer
English	5-7	<	>	>
Maths	6-8	=	>	>
Science	7-9/Level 2 – Distinction*	<	=	>
Geography	5-7/Level 2 - Merit	=	>	>
History	5-7/Level 2 - Merit	=	>	>
RE	5-7/Level 2 - Merit	=	>	=
PE	6-8/Level 2 - Distinction	<	<	=
Computer Science	6-8/Level 2 - Distinction	=	=	<
Art	6-8/Level 2 - Distinction	=	=	>
Music	4-6/Level 2 - Pass	<	>	=
Spanish	5-7/Level 2 - Merit	=	<	=
Drama	4-6/Level 2 - Pass	<	=	>

The sample target sticker above, taken from a Year 8 student’s planner and populated with the first round of autumn achievement data, shows that Joe Blogs has been placed on to the same 4-6 Learning Journey for 2 of his 12 subjects, for the 5-7/Level 2 - Merit Learning Journey 5 of his 12 subjects are on

the same path, for the 6-8/Level 2 - Distinction Learning Journey 4 of his 12 subjects are on the same path and lastly there is one subject on the 7-9/Level 2 – Distinction* Learning Journey.

With the exception of Computer Science, where he is working towards the bottom end of the target range, Joe is either making 'expected' or 'better than expected' progress towards his aspirational target in these 11 subjects. Joe is performing more highly in Drama, Art, History, Geography and Science, and to reflect this he has been assigned to the higher 7-9/Level 2 – Distinction * learning journey a subject. Music and Drama is his weakest subjects in relative terms, although he is making 'expected' and 'better than expected' progress towards the 5-7/Level 2 - Merit target range. In English and Mathematics, Joe is making 'better than expected' progress and working towards the top end of the target range. If he can sustain this high level of achievement, he may be moved up a Learning Journey in these subjects.



Subjects	Staff Name	Expected Target	Current Attainment				Attitude to Learning				Current Teacher Comments		
			October 2020	December 2020	February 2020	April 2020	October 2020	December 2020	February 2020	April 2020	Aspect Worthy of Praise	Areas of Development	Next Steps
Art & Design	NG	S	M				1				CREATIVE	EVALUATION	
Citizenship	RL	S	S				2				BEHAVIOUR	COLLABORATION	
Computing	RL	S	M				1				APPLICATION	EVALUATION	
English	ML	M	M				1				DETERMINATION	CURIOSITY	
Geography	RL	S	M				1				WRITTEN WORK	DISCUSSION	
History	RL	S	S				1				APPLICATION	EVALUATION	
Maths	JM	M	M				1				DETERMINATION	CURIOSITY	
Music	CW	D	S				1				WRITTEN WORK	DISCUSSION	
PE	RR	D	D				2				BEHAVIOUR	EVALUATION	
RE	RL	S	S				1				APPLICATION	COLLABORATION	
Science	MJ	S	S				1				CREATIVE	EVALUATION	
Spanish	EW	E	D				1				CREATIVE	CURIOSITY	
Horticulture	VB	S	S				1				BEHAVIOUR	COLLABORATION	
Food Tech.	LC	S	S				1				BEHAVIOUR	COLLABORATION	

Attendance		Punctuality		Behaviour		
Attendance		Punctuality		Positive	Needs Work	Overall
99%		100%		Achievement Points (September to date) 120	Needs Work (September to date) 2	Overall Points (September to date)

Grade	Engagement to Learning Grades
1	An excellent student who applies themselves consistently to all tasks both in school and at home regardless of outcome.
2	A good student who applies themselves well in most class and home learning tasks completing them to the best of their ability.
3	A student who can work well and complete tasks to the expected standard. Greater consistency in effort, concentration and organisation may be required.
4	A student who does not show sufficient commitment in this subject which has an impact on their own learning and possibly that of their peers. They may give up easily, and lack the discipline to

KS3 & KS4 Progress Information		
Current Progress	Key	What does this mean?
Foundation	F	Students have been introduced to specific ideas and skills in a unit of work.
Emerging	E	Students beginning to grasp some of the ideas and skills in a unit of work.
Developing	D	Students have begun to grasp the concept of show some competency with skill but it is not secure i.e. the skill is not consistently applied or the students demonstrates some misunderstanding still.
Securing	S	The students understanding with the skills is secure i.e. they make few or no mistakes when applying the skills and show a solid understanding of the content covered (but not extensive).
Intermediate	I	The students understanding with the skills is intermediate i.e. they make few or no mistakes when applying the skills and show a solid understanding of the content covered (but not extensive) with some confidence.
Mastering	M	Students demonstrate complete competency with a skill. A full understanding of content i.e. they make no mistakes and demonstrate a skill regularly, their understanding is detailed and accurate (it is likely to demonstrate mastery with a skill which a student will have evidenced competency in more than once).
Exceptional Progress	EP	Students have mastered a skill and are now applying it and testing in numerous situations and contexts. They are showing a flair beyond simply knowing, understanding, applying and are now going beyond expectations. Knowledge will be detailed and be beyond what is required to simply understand a topic.

Ofqual

Grading new GCSEs from 2017

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	
8	A*
7	A
6	B
5	C
4	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

Source:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/639602/Grading_poster.pdf

Old Level	New Threshold	New Year 7 Thresholds	New Year 8 Thresholds	New Year 9 Thresholds
				EP
8	8.0		EP	Mastery
	7.5			
7	7.0	EP	Mastery	Intermediate
	6.5			
6	6.0	Mastery	Intermediate	Securing
	5.5			
5	5.0	Intermediate	Securing	Developing
	4.5			
4	4.0	Securing	Developing	Emerging
	3.5			
3	3.0	Developing	Emerging	Foundation
	2.5			
2	2.0	Emerging	Foundation	
	1.5			
1	1	Foundation		
	0.5			

BTEC First Award Grade	
Level / Qualification Grade	Grade Equivalent
Level 2 / Distinction*	8.5
Level 2 / Distinction	7
Level 2 / Merit	5.5
Level 2 / Pass	4
Level 1 / Distinction	3
Level 1 / Merit	2
Level 1 / Pass	1.25

KS4/5 Reports

The new GCSE level 9-1/BTEC Level Pass-Distinction* will be used in conjunction with a + symbol that represents secure pass at that level and an insecure pass at that level represented with a - e.g. 7+/Merit (M)+ represents a Secure Pass at Level 7/Merit. KS4 targets will only be represented as 9-1/Pass-Distinction*.

7. Assessment

Summative assessments will be reported in **KS3 to KS5 per reporting cycle**. Percentages recorded in teacher’s book/departmental trackers.

KS3: Attainment will be based summative assessment/tests. Reports will indicate only the AWL path instead of the actual percentage as the attainment for each reporting cycle. However the following will be used across all subjects to standardise the outcomes of tests into AWL paths:

Assessment without Levels (AwL) Paths	Code	Band
Exceptional	EP	71-100%
Mastery	M	61-70%
Intermediate	I	51-60%
Secure	S	41-50%
Developing	D	31-40%
Emerging	E	21-30%
Foundation	F	0-20%

Emphasis on using AwL for KS3 for describing progress e.g. *Joe Bloggs achieved a **Secure** pass in Binary Conversions test but in order to move onto the **Mastery** level, he needs to...*

KS4: Attainment will be based summative assessment/tests. The new GCSE/BTEC levels will be entered based on subject specific grade boundaries from the exam boards. Teachers may report to parents/guardians on the progress of pupils based on both formative and summative assessment to reflect progress over time in formal and informal feedback to students and parents or guardians.

KS5: Attainment will be based summative assessment/tests. The new GCSE/BTEC levels will be entered based on subject specific grade boundaries from the exam boards. Teachers may report to parents/guardians on the progress of pupils based on both formative and summative assessment to reflect progress over time in formal and informal feedback to students and parents or guardians.