

Key Stage 3 Assessment at Hope Valley College

Parent Guide



Introduction

The removal of National Grading Systems for Key Stage 3 (Year 7 to 9) means that schools have developed their own way of assessing children's progress. Since this change, we have been refining our approach to the KS3 curriculum and an assessment system that drives teaching, learning and progress. This booklet outlines our systems and practices for assessment.

What is the purpose of assessment at Hope Valley College?

1. To give students a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills and understanding that they will learn.
2. To support students, over the course of a carefully constructed series of lessons, to learn the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to make progress.
3. Provide students with clear feedback about the knowledge, skills and understanding that they have developed, and the areas in which they need to improve.

How do we assess students?

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

- Formative – on-going, ungraded, and focused on smaller sections of the curriculum.
- Summative – Summative assessments will usually take place two or three times per year, and these may take the form of mock exams, a test, an assessed piece of writing or practical work as appropriate to the subject. Knowledge included will build cumulatively through the year.

Responsive teaching is the basis of how our teachers plan and teach lessons. 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 to improve. Every faculty in the school has its own responsive teaching agreement which outlines how this will be applied in their curriculum area.

Some examples of responsive teaching strategies:

- Questioning
- Quizzes
- Multi-choice questions
- Reading or observing pupil 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
- Student responses on mini whiteboards
- Marking books

Attitude to learning

We believe that to learn successfully, students need to be *ready* to learn, *resilient*, *resourceful*, *respectful* and *reflective*. These are the five characteristics of good learners and students who are consistently demonstrating these characteristics will progress well in school. Each half term teachers give students a numerical grade (1-4) which demonstrates their Attitude to Learning in each subject. These grades summarise the extent to which each student is demonstrating the five characteristics of good learners.

How is the ATL grade calculated?

We calculate an average of the grades awarded to show progress over the course of the academic year, and this is a good indicator of how much progress students will make across the curriculum.

Over the last three years we have collated ATL data and analysed this against KS4 outcomes. This data has shown that young people who have ATL grade of 1.9 go on to achieve better than expected grades.

Progress

Every child arrives at secondary school having reached a different level of attainment in each subject. It is important that we take account of their starting point in setting targets and measuring progress. In our system, teachers will take account of how well each student is doing compared to where they started. All students have scope to make excellent progress regardless of where they start, and we want all children to believe that their learning and potential has no limits.

How do we judge the starting points of students?

We do not assign target grades to students at key stage 3 as we do not want to put any limits on their aspirations. We want to encourage the mind-set where all students strive for excellence and maximise their achievement across a broad curriculum.

In the summer term of Year 6, all students in English state schools sit their end of KS2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). The scores achieved in those tests are then reported as scaled scores ranging from 80 to 120. We use the average of these scores in Reading and Maths to support decision making about groupings (particularly in Maths) and learning support. Due to the cancellation of SATs in 2020 and 2021, current Year 8 and 9 students do not have any prior attainment data from Primary School. We therefore used CAT4 data (Cognitive Ability Tests) to initially assess students a starting point.

Like many secondary schools, **we use Fischer Family Trust (FFT)** national specialist software to provide key benchmarking data based on KS2 SATs results and other information about the student's progress at KS1 and KS2. The FFT benchmarks, including target grades for every subject, are based on how similar students nationally performed in the subject last year (similar students are defined as similar prior attainment, gender and month of birth). We share FFT benchmark data with students and parents in Year 9 in preparation for GCSE courses.

In addition, some students undertake **Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs)** where we do not have other data or we feel that we need more information. These are assessments that identify students' strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences. CATs are not about knowledge recall and require no preparation. They offer all students the same opportunity to show their underlying ability. CATs

give a detailed profile of students' verbal, non-verbal and quantitative abilities and the result data can be used to build an understanding of a student's potential and learning style. In turn, this is used to inform the development of effective teaching and learning that meets the needs of students.

The processes outlined above are only a starting point. Our goal is to make sure that every child achieves their full potential across a broad, balanced, rich curriculum.

Reading Age

To assess our students' reading ability, we ask them to take a multiple-choice STAR reading test three times a year. This screening test is taken online. From this information, our staff can offer support to students who need extra help with their reading and suggest appropriate reading materials for those who are ready for greater challenge. The test also estimates a students' reading comprehension and acuity. As a benchmark, any child with a reading age of 9 or above, which is a nationally accepted standard of reading accuracy and comprehension, can access most reading materials at secondary school.

The 'reading age' indicates general reading comprehension skills. Reading ages can fluctuate according to how long a student spend on the test and how carefully they selected their answers. In school, we monitor the STAR reading test results over time to spot patterns which suggest extra help might be needed. We offer additional support and intervention to students who need extra help with their reading to access the curriculum in secondary school.

As a general guide, these numbers suggest:

Below 6 Years - emerging reader with gaps in foundational reading skills

6 to 7 Years - developing decoding Skills - will need support and intervention to aid with reading

7 to 9 Years - A decoding reader with some gaps in comprehension, fluency, and inference skills.

9 to 15 Years - A generally fluent and comprehending reader at a Secondary level.

15 + years - an expert reader who should cope with most texts in school.

Hope Valley College staff will work hard to improve fluency and comprehension in reading. We ensure all students in key stage 3 have a regular, timetabled visit to our fabulous library. English teachers will recommend additional reading through half termly enrichment homework tasks. We welcome your support; by encouraging your child to regularly read for pleasure, you can support their reading development at home as well.

Progress in Maths at Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, we use a 12-step progression scale to assess students and review progress. Each step is split into four sections to structure progress through the step. The table below gives an indication of how the student's current step relates to a potential GCSE grade. A child can progress through the steps each year and the level of challenge increases each year. A child's progress will also be affected by their Attitude To Learning (ATL) in maths meaning that everyone can progress through the steps at a different rate.

Year 7	
Step	Indicative Grade at GCSE
1	1-3
2	4
3	5
4	6
5	7
6	8
7-12	9

Year 8	
Step	Indicative Grade at GCSE
1	1-3
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6
6	7
7	8
8-12	9

Year 9	
Step	Indicative Grade at GCSE
1	1-2
2	3
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9-12	9

Measuring Academic Progress

All subjects will use responsive teaching strategies and summative assessment to drive the academic progress of all students. This is benchmarked against GCSE potential grades, and based on key subject specific knowledge, skills and application. At Key Stage 3, this data is collected at the end of each academic year and is used to inform our teaching and KS4 courses. At Key Stage 4, a student's work is marked in line with GCSE or equivalent specification mark schemes.

Alongside any assigned attainment grades, high quality formative feedback will also be given in line with the Department Assessment Policy and Marking Policy. Departments will also undertake moderation and standardisation to ensure accuracy and consistency of marking. We report an academic progress grade and potential grade for all subjects at two points in Year 10 and Year 11. The academic progress grade is known as a 'Most Likely Outcome (MLO)' i.e., the grade that the student will achieve IF they continue to work as they are doing currently. The potential grade, generated by FFT, should be viewed as a minimum grade and we expect all students to achieve or exceed this.

Attendance and progress

Regular attendance at school is vital to help children achieve and get the best possible start in life. Children who frequently miss school often fall behind with their work, and there is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results. The table below is our interpretation of a range of attendance percentages.

98% or above		Children are more likely to achieve the best possible grades they are capable of
95% or below		Children are more likely to achieve up to half a GCSE grade below their full potential
90% or below		Children are more likely to achieve up to three quarters of a GCSE grade below their full potential
85% or below		Children are more likely to achieve up to a whole GCSE grade below their full potential
80% or below		Children are more likely to achieve up to one and a half GCSE grade below their full potential

Reporting to parents

We report Attitude to learning grades 5 times per year, at the start of each half term We report academic progress at the end of each year in Key stage 3 and twice per year at Key Stage 4. We share potential grades with parents in the Autumn term.