

Data Update July 18

Termly Progress checks

Effort codes: 3 years after we introduced the 1-5 effort code system, we decided to review it. We spoke to lots of students and decided that we would change it for the academic year 2018-19. There were 3 main reasons for this decision:

Effort grades 4-5 were very rarely used and therefore essentially redundant

The number of codes had multiplied so much that it was difficult to track them

A number of effort codes were less about effort than about outcomes, and we felt this was unfair.

The new system will, we hope, be simpler for students, staff and parents. There will be 3 principle effort grades. The third grade will, as before, contain some more specific information, but there will be far fewer of these codes.

1. Working very hard

2. Working hard

3. Concern with effort

Lack of effort with homework

Lack of effort with class work

Several pieces of homework missed

Attitude towards learning needs improving

Can be off task in lessons

Organisation of work needs improving

Homework and class work both require more effort

There will be a 4th option Abs (absence) where teachers feel that the volume of absence has been such that it is impossible to judge the level of effort.

LAGs:

The LAG grades will essentially remain the same. However, in keeping with the change for the effort codes, there will be an Abs (absence) option here too. All predictive grades are of course based upon an estimate of future attainment based upon how students are performing at any given time. For all students, teachers use their professional judgement to give these grades. Where there is no evidence for them to base their decisions upon, in the case of a high level of absence, they will not now do so.

The grading system at AHS:

Whichever exam system is in place, be it at GCSE or A Level, over a number of years teachers become accustomed to the system and are therefore able to make an informed decision about what grades they should give for individual pieces of work, assessments, exams or predicted grades for the future.

Whenever new systems come into place, this understanding has to be built back up again. Exam boards and the government provide guidance, and teachers work extremely hard to make sure they can be as informed as they ever were.

The government's decision to do away with National Curriculum Levels 3 years ago meant that each school had to decide for itself how it would measure progress, especially at Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). Schools took the approach they felt best suited their school.

A range of the options taken by schools:

Stick with National Curriculum Levels as they feel they understand them
Bring GCSE grades 9-1 down to Key Stage 3, starting at the lowest and moving up. (AHS version)

Bring GCSE grades 9-1 down to Key Stage 3, but give students a 5 year prediction. In this instance students receive grade 8s or 9s in Year 7, but

they are a Year 7 version of grade 9.

Give no grades at all at Key Stage 3 and only report on effort and attitude to learning in the different subjects.

At AHS, we favoured the 2nd option for several reasons:

Giving them 5 year targets, especially for subjects they had never done, seems unfair.

We didn't want to put too much pressure on students early on.

We favour giving them targets for Key Stage 3, and the individual year groups within it, so that students have a clear focus for the year and then we reset those targets for when they actually begin their GCSEs in Year 10. This is of course a point at which other new subjects are available.

We want students to understand that it is what they achieve at the end of Year 11 that is important; everything else along the way is a practice, helping them to learn for their GCSEs.

Using GCSE grades at Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9):

It has always been the case that students in Year 9 could, in individual circumstances, produce a piece of work that would score an A* at GCSE level for a piece of work/assessment. This is still the case for Grade 9 in the new GCSE system. However, if that student were to take the exam in the subject, it is highly unlikely that they would do so well. This is for several reasons:

For a piece of work/assessment in Key Stage 3, it is likely that a student would be focused on one individual topic area for a period of 3-6 weeks. The focus of every lesson would be building up to that piece of work/assessment. Students would receive clear guidance on how to approach the work and would know precisely the nature of the task they were to undertake at the end of it.

For real GCSEs this is never the case: Students would have to revise for every topic area they had covered and would not know the precise nature of the questions they would have to face.

All the skills they learn in subjects at Key Stage 3 can be employed later

on at GCSE level, in addition to the new ones they acquire once they start their actual GCSE courses. The volume of topics they cover at GCSE also increases greatly.

Students can, and do, produce wonderful work in the lower year groups, but the grades they receive can't automatically be transferred to a 'real' GCSE scale.

This is not to belittle the achievements of those students producing excellent work at GCSE, but it should explain why they can achieve high grades in individual pieces of work yet not be ready to take a GCSE.

When it comes to work students do when they have started their GCSE courses, in Year 10 and 11, the grades they receive for work, and the LAGs given to them by their teachers, should be very indicative of what they will get at the end of the course. At Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9), they are on a pathway which will eventually lead to those grades.

For most subjects, it is typical that a target for Year 7 might be grade 1-2, for Year 8 3-4 and for Year 9 4-6. It is important to remember that students progress at different rates in different subjects, the way each subject is taught is different, but by Year 9 the grades start to become similar for the majority of subjects as they look to progress to their GCSE courses.