



CHANGES TO GCSE AND KS3 GRADING

GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Changes to assessment

As you are probably aware the government has implemented radical changes to the structure and assessment of GCSEs. We are moving away from the familiar system of A*-G grades to a new system of grading with numbers. In addition to the changes to the structure of the GCSEs, the government is also raising the expectation of the standard of GCSE that will be considered as a 'good pass' from a C to a new grade 5.

These changes have large implications for target setting in schools. Consequently the Academy is fully prepared for the new GCSE grading system and has already begun rolling out the new targets. Targets at The de Ferrers Academy are subject and student specific and are based on Key Stage 2 SAT results. Targets are also benchmarked in order to place students in the top 20% of performance nationally.

This guide is intended to explain what the new grades mean so that you can better understand the changes we've made to your child's targets on their October half term Academic Summary.

What do the new numbers mean?

As the content in the new GCSEs is so different there is no simple and direct way to convert between the old GCSE A*-G grades and the new number grades. To ensure that the new system is fair to those students taking the new exams however, the government has fixed the percentages of students gaining particular grades against the old system. So for example the same proportion of students that gained an 'A' and above in the old GCSEs will now gain a grade 7 and above in the new GCSEs. This does not mean however that a grade 7 is equal to an A grade as the content is so different.

We have included an explanation sheet from OFQUAL below that provides further information concerning the proportions of students that receive each grade compared with the old system.

Which subjects are affected?

Due to the number of different GCSEs that are being updated, not all subjects will be moving to the new 9-1 system at the same time. It is quite possible that your child will have a mix of letter and number grades when they receive their targets this year. This is the same nationally and your child will not be disadvantaged in any way by this.

Year Group	GCSEs to be graded 1-9
Current year 11 and below	Mathematics, English Language & English Literature
Current year 10 and below	Art & Design, Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Science, Drama, Food & Nutrition, Geography, History, French, Music, Physical Education, Physics & Religious Studies
Current year 8 and below (When they begin their GCSEs in Yr9)	Business Studies, Design & Technology, Economics & Media Studies.

What is considered a 'good' pass?

To align the UK with the best education systems in the world the government has raised expectations of achievement and will now consider a 'good pass' at GCSE to be a grade 5. You will see from the OFQUAL leaflet included that this inevitably means a smaller percentage of students are expected to gain this standard than gained a C grade in the past.

Ofqual
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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

GOOD PASS (DfE)
5 and above = top of C and above

AWARDING
4 and above = bottom of C and above

GCSE, AS and A level reforms in England
Grading new GCSEs from 2017

Exams in reformed English language, English literature and maths GCSEs will be taken for the first time in 2017. These will be graded from 9 to 1, instead of A* to G.



Statistical predictions will be used in 2017 to ensure there is alignment between the new and current grading structures, such that:

- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above
- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve a grade A and above
- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 1 and above as currently achieve a grade G and above

All other grade boundaries will be set arithmetically, as now. For example, the boundaries at grades 5 and 6 will be set based on the difference in marks between grades 4 and 7; grade 5 will be set at one third of the difference in marks, and grade 6 at two thirds the difference in marks.

The government's definition of a 'good pass' will be set at grade 5 for reformed GCSEs. A grade 4 will continue to be a level 2 achievement. The Department for Education does not expect employers, colleges or universities to raise the bar to a grade 5 if a grade 4 would meet their requirements.

The new grading structure will be applied to other GCSE subjects in 2018 and 2019.



Changes to Key Stage 3

In addition to the changes to GCSEs the government has also radically changed the Key Stage 3 curriculum for our students in years 7, 8 and 9. The change in content means that the old assessment system of levels is no longer applicable.

As a result of these changes, we have decided to implement a new assessment system at Key Stage 3, so that our students can develop the skills required to be successful in Years 10 and 11. The Academy has written 9-1 grade descriptors for each subject taught in either Key Stage so that students across all year groups can be assessed against the same criteria. These descriptors will be available shortly on our website.

How will the changes affect my child's Academic Summaries?

Half-termly Academic Summary reports will remain largely the same for years 10 and 11. The only change will be that the target grades on the report will reflect the new GCSE grades. Students will also receive:

- An indication of their attitude to learning
- GCSE target grade (9-1 or A*-G grading)
- An indication if a student is on course to gain their GCSE target grade
- An end of course prediction as a GCSE grade

Students in years 7, 8 and 9 will no longer be given an indication of a student's current national curriculum level as that system is no longer in use. To allow the assessment systems time to develop, the decision has been taken to not publish current working GCSE grades in Key Stage 3 at this time. An On Course Indicator will, however, be provided for each subject to indicate whether a student is on course to meet their end of year target. This will be accompanied by an Attitude to Learning score which is a key indicator of likely progress.

More information is available on the Ofqual website [here](#).