



St Mary's Catholic High School

# Key Stage 3 Assessment Booklet

Assessment without Levels

February 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Your son/daughter is experiencing a more rigorous Key Stage 3 National Curriculum that has been introduced over the past few years, in order to better prepare pupils for the vigor and challenge of the new GCSEs and A Levels.

The KS3 National Curriculum has a greater focus on knowledge development, along with the opportunity to study the 'big ideas' of a subject in greater depth. A key change that was introduced in the last 5 years was the removal of assessment levels.

Overall, these developments provide opportunities to provide a more appropriate Key Stage 3 curriculum, which builds the important foundations for Key Stage 4.

In summary, we will have a Key Stage 3 curriculum and assessment model which:

1. Is focused on developing the key concepts, knowledge and skills needed for success in Key Stage 4.
2. Is based on high expectations and challenge for all.
3. Uses regular assessment and feedback which gives all students the chance to develop a secure understanding of the key ideas and content.
4. Continues to include high quality key assessments, which help pupils develop the skills needed to tackle GCSE examination questions.
5. Provides information from assessments to reliably identify what pupils have/have not understood and informs future teaching and learning, including intervention needs.

Yours faithfully



**Mr J Cox**  
**Head of Standards and Achievement**

## What are the current GCSEs like?

In 2017, GCSEs were reformed to become more demanding. More than ever, they require sophisticated levels of literacy and numeracy to access the top grades.

Other changes included:

- a new grading scale that uses the numbers 1 to 9 to identify levels of performance.
- a structure where all assessment happens at the end of the course and where content is not divided into modules.
- exams as the default method of assessment, except where they cannot provide valid assessment of the skills required.

## What do these new levels equate to?

New GCSEs have become graded 9 to 1, rather than A\* to G. Grade 9 is the highest grade, set above the current A\*. These grades were awarded for the first time in 2017 results for specifications that first started teaching in 2015. As of 2019, all GCSE results will be using the new system.

Grade 4 is known as a 'standard pass'. Grade 5 is now known as a 'strong pass' and is equivalent to a high C and low B on the old grading system. Grade 4 will remain the level that students must achieve without needing to resit English and Maths post-16.



**Grading new GCSEs from 2017**

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

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

**AWARDING**  
4 and above = bottom of C and above

## **How will pupils be assessed at Key Stage 3?**

At the start of Year 7 pupils take CAT 4 (Cognitive Ability) tests, as well as tests in literacy. There will also be a combination of classwork, homework and key assessments throughout Year 7.

### **Assessment for Learning (AfL)**

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and as such, AfL will be present in lessons as an on-going and continuous process. Some AfL assessments will be extended tasks. These can be thought of as "Checking Progress" activities. Following an assessment of this type there will be detailed marking and feedback, and the student will be expected to reflect and act upon that feedback. This provides opportunities for pupils to develop further their knowledge, skills and understanding.

### **Key Assessments**

Key assessments take place at the end of a unit of work and are usually a more substantial piece of work. These Key Assessments will tend to:

- Provide a summary judgement about what has been learned by each pupil at a specific point in time
- Show what pupils can achieve without support
- Inform any subsequent intervention activities

Key assessments will take a variety of forms, depending on the nature of each subject. For example, in Maths and Science they are most likely to be tests. In History and English extended writing will be prominent. While in Design and Technology, assessments will be based around design and make processes. In Drama and PE, teachers will often rate the performance of pupils against set criteria.

Throughout the academic year, there will be externally assessed Progress Tests in English, Maths and Science, as well as end of year tests in many subjects.

## How will these Key Assessments be graded?

Our grading system indicates how well the pupils have understood that particular unit of work, based on their performance in the final assessment. This fits in with our aim to develop a **secure** understanding of the key ideas and knowledge needed for successful performance at KS4. The scale is:

<b>Exceeding</b>	Demonstrates comprehensive understanding of the concepts/skills covered.
<b>Confident</b>	Has grasped the main concepts and skills covered and can apply to new contexts.
<b>Secure</b>	Has a secure understanding of the main concepts and skills covered when applied to familiar concepts
<b>Progressing</b>	Has grasped some of the main concepts and skills covered, while others still require development.
<b>Developing</b>	Beginning to develop understanding of the main concepts and skills covered.

Whatever the nature of the assessment, the outcomes will generate a level on this scale or be converted to a level on this scale. Tests are a good example of an assessment where conversion will be necessary, so in a Science test, for example, boundaries will be created to convert a percentage into a level.

## How will progress be judged and tracked throughout KS3?

Pupils will be expected to perform at an assessment level that is consistent with their prior attainment band as shown in the table below.

It is important to note that assessments gradually become more challenging as students move from year to year, so students can continue to achieve 'Secure', for example, and be making expected progress. This is illustrated below:

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
		Exceeding
	Exceeding	Confident
Exceeding	Confident	Secure
Confident	Secure	Progressing
Secure	Progressing	Developing
Progressing	Developing	
Developing		