



CHANGES TO GCSE AND KS3 GRADING

**INFORMATION BOOKLET FOR PARENTS and
STUDENTS**

Spring Term 2016

Changes to assessment in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11

As you are probably aware the government has recently announced 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 'good pass' from a C to a new grade 5. The government has also asked schools to move away from using the National curriculum levels 1-9 completely from reception to year 9.

These changes have huge implications for target setting in schools. At St Martins School we feel that it is vitally important for students to be given their new target grades as soon as possible. Consequently the school is well advanced in preparations for the new GCSE grading system and is ready to begin rolling out the new targets. This booklet is intended to explain what the new grades mean so that students and their families can better understand the changes we've made to students target grades on their next progress report.

What do the new numbers mean?

Because 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. However, to ensure that the new system is fair to those students taking the new exams 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. However, this does not mean that a grade 7 is equal to an A grade as the content is so different.

We have included an explanation sheet 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 1-9 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	GCSE's to be graded 1-9
Current year 11	No changes
Current year 10 and below	Maths, English Language, English Literature
Current year 9 and below	Art, Computer Science, Dance, Science, Drama, Food, Geography, History, French, Spanish, Music, PE, Religious Studies
Current year 8 and below (all GCSE'S will now be 1-9)	Design and technology, ICT, 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 (*The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation who regulate qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications*) table that this inevitably means a smaller percentage of students are expected to gain this standard than gained a C grade in the past.

OFQUAL TABLE

NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE	CURRENT GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE
9	A*
8	A
7	A
6	B
5	B
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
U	G
U	U

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

AWARDING
4 and above = bottom of C and above

Changes to years 7 and 8?

In addition to the changes to GCSEs the government has also radically changed the Key Stage 3 curriculum for our year 7 and year 8 students. The change in content means that the old assessment system of levels is no longer applicable. In fact, the Government review of the new national curriculum went as far as to say that the system of levels may in fact 'inhibit overall performance'.

To ensure that parents and students can continue to monitor progress effectively we have adopted a new approach to KS3 assessment. This system is designed to reflect the changes that the government has introduced into primary schools but also to provide a strong platform to prepare students for our raised expectations at GCSE.

Grading in years 7 and 8

Central to the new assessment approach is that all students will be required to reach an 'expected standard'.

Expected Standard: A student will be considered to have met the expected standard for the end of year 7 or year 8 if they are on track to achieve at least a Grade 5 in their Yr11 GCSEs in a particular subject.

As always departments will be regularly marking books, setting tests and extended tasks to track student progress. Students will receive regular feedback to ensure they know the next steps that they must take to progress. Any students identified as not meeting the expected standard will be offered further interventions such as study supports to ensure that they catch up.

Will my child be adequately challenged?

In addition to targeting students who are below the 'expected standard', departments will also be stretching students to move to 'beyond' it. In many instances this will not be about moving on to a new topic, instead students will be encouraged to deepen their knowledge further to ensure their conceptual understanding is thorough. This will provide the foundation students will need to ensure they are ready to start the new and more challenging GCSE programmes of study.

Departments will share examples of how to move beyond the expected standard with students and will provide extra work for any students who wish to deepen their knowledge and understanding further at home.

How will the changes affect my child's progress reports?

We will be moving to termly progress reports for years 9, 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
- An indication of their GCSE target grade (1-9 or A*-G grading)
- Whether they are on target to be above, on or below their target grade

As mentioned earlier, students in years 7 and 8 will no longer be given an indication of a student's current national curriculum level as that system is no longer in use. Parents will get a report with their target GCSE grade for year 11 and whether they are progressing towards that target at above, on or below the expected rate of progress

How will I know what the 'Expected Standard' looks like?

Year 7 book trial

In the back of your son/daughters books you will see assessment strands which will be filled in as your son / daughter moves through the curriculum. This will tell you exactly what your son / daughter can or can't do and whether they are emerging, developing, secure, exceeding or advanced within their year group's curriculum.

Given the exam system has been relatively stable for a number of decades we realise that these changes will be confusing for many parents. If you have any questions about these changes please join us for our parent's forum **TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY at 6.00pm**.