



# **Assessing without levels in Key Stage 3**

**Maghull High School**

**September 2014**

*Reviewed September 2015*

## What do we want to achieve?

A KS3 assessment system that:

- Is based on developing the key knowledge and skills required for success in KS4
- Is based on our high expected standards of students
- Is based heavily on formative feedback and allows all students to succeed – and so develops a growth mindset
- Incorporates periodic summative assessment to support this ongoing formative feedback
- Is simple and easy to understand – for staff, parents and students.
- Has consistent principles, to be used across subjects, but the flexibility to be suitable for all subjects.

## The Growth & Thresholds model in a nutshell

- What are the 'big ideas' in each subject?
- What do students need to master, in terms of knowledge and skills, in order to be successful in KS4?
- What does excellence look like in each subject?
- Scaffold progress towards excellence through the thresholds, from a baseline threshold.
- Use the thresholds to focus assessment and feedback on what counts.

This is how the 'Growth & Thresholds' model can be implemented in Maghull High School.

**1. Do a baseline assessment in Y7**

Use the KS2 levels, CAT score (average), information from feeder schools, reading tests (and other internal tests?) to do a baseline assessment in Y7. Use this baseline assessment to place students into 4 ability bands (Thresholds) based on prior ability. This could then be linked to future GCSE grades:

KS2 Levels	KS3 Thresholds	GCSE (Current)	GCSE (New)
5a+	Very Able	A*	9-8
5	Upper	A-B	7-6
4	Middle	B-C	5-4
3-2	Foundation	D-G	3-1

**The new grades explained:**

- **Grade 9:** top A\* performers; awarded to the top 20% of pupils who achieved a grade 7 or higher **NATIONALLY**
- **Grade 8:** the rest of those who obtained A\* but did not qualify for a 9
- **Grade 7:** equivalent to an A grade pass
- **Grade 6:** equivalent to the top two thirds of a grade B
- **Grade 5:** equivalent to the top third of a grade C and the bottom third of a grade B
- **Grade 4:** equivalent to the bottom two thirds of a grade C
- **Grade 3:** approximately equivalent to a D grade pass
- **Grade 2:** approximately equivalent to an E grade pass
- **Grade 1:** approximately equivalent to grade F and G passes

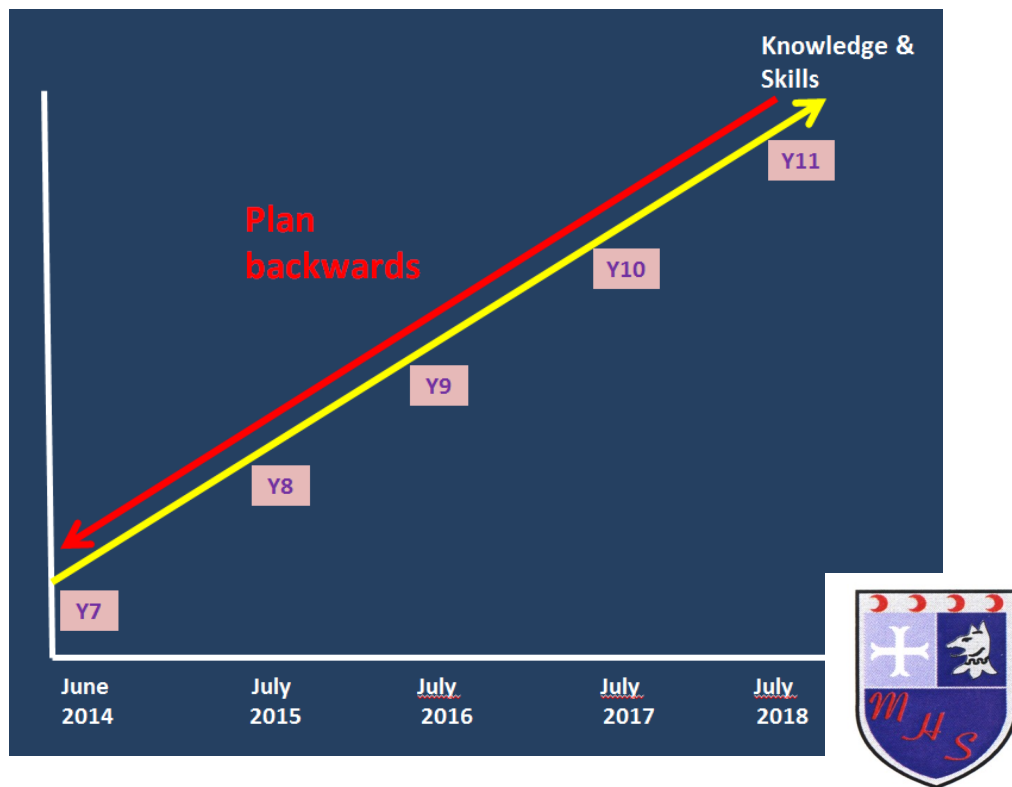
Current Grade	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*	Top 20% of 7+ nationally
New Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

**2. Subject areas to identify the core knowledge and skills**

Each subject area identifies the core **knowledge** and **skills** that students will need to master in order to be successful at GCSE. This will be based on the knowledge and skills that subject staff know to be key to success in Y10 and 11. They will also link to the National Curriculum programme of study.

e.g. in science:

- the core knowledge might be – cells, interdependence, forces, energy, particles
- The core skills might be – identify, describe, explain, analyse and link



Once we know where we want the students to go in our subjects, in terms of achieving excellence by the end of Y11, we can then plan backwards with the curriculum for Y7-11.

### 3. Ensure the curriculum delivery in each subject develops a growth mindset

If we want successful learners, we need to develop a 'Growth Mindset' within our students. This can only be done effectively if it is an integral part of our teaching, as well as our day to day interactions with students.

So within our teaching of the curriculum we need to ensure that we are developing the following attributes:

- **Expect excellence** – develop a belief that everybody can improve and reach for excellence, when expectations and levels of challenge are high.
- **Be resilient** – develop in students an understanding that learning requires hard work, effort, deliberate practice and learning from our mistakes – but that with the right approach, we can all overcome obstacles.
- **Respond to feedback** – give good quality and specific feedback, as well as the opportunity for students to respond to this feedback.
- **Inspired by others** – use the success and excellence of others to inspire students to go on and improve their own work.



**4. Subject areas outline the standard expected for each threshold**

A starting point is to map out the KS3 curriculum.

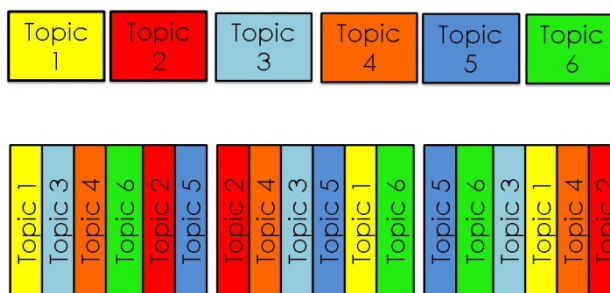
What are the big ideas and what topics will be taught, when – and what are the key knowledge and skills to be assessed in each unit of work:

Big Ideas

Year	Term	Unit/s of work	Core knowledge	Core skills
7	1			
	2			
	3			
8	1			
	2			
	3			

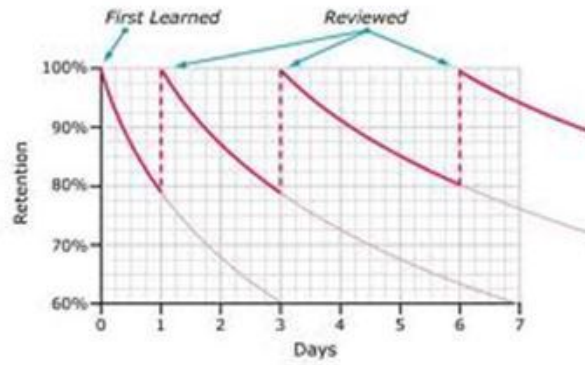
When planning a curriculum in this way, it is also worth bearing in mind how it will support learning.

**Blocking vs interleaving**



The diagram above shows how traditional curriculums have been planned i.e. blocks of topics over the course of the year. As we learn more from neuroscience, we understand that if topics are not revisited over time, it becomes difficult to recall the information. See below:

Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information



The ‘blocking’ method of curriculum design does not support this recalling of information. So when designing the curriculum it would be worth considering an approach of ‘interleaving’ topics throughout the year i.e. coming back to them regularly.

For each unit of work, subject teachers will need to discuss, decide and agree what standards are expected from each threshold, in terms of the core knowledge and skills. This allows us to set the high standards we expect from our students. It also allows us to be selective about the key knowledge and skills that we think are important and so need to be assessed – so we don’t just assess everything.

So each unit of work would start with a completed copy of this table:

Threshold	Threshold Knowledge	Threshold skills
<i>Very Able</i>		
<i>Upper</i>		
<i>Middle</i>		
<i>Foundation</i>		

	Level of Learning	What does it mean?
<b>Very Able</b>	<b>Deep</b>	Can extend and apply ideas. Extended thinking
<b>Upper</b>		Can link and relate ideas. Strategies for thinking & reasoning
<b>Middle</b>	<b>Surface</b>	Many ideas. Basic skills & concepts
<b>Foundation</b>		Single idea. Recall & reproduction

Which would then lead into a learning schedule for that unit of work:

## Learning Schedule for a unit of work

Year:

Unit of work title:

### Threshold Assessment

Threshold	Level of Learning	Key Knowledge	Key Skills
Very Able	Deep		
Upper			
Middle	Surface		
Foundation			

### Learning Schedule

Episode	Learning objectives	Success Criteria	Suggested learning activities	Surface Learning Questions	Deep Learning Questions	Links to other learning	Home Learning Opportunities	Suggested Resources
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								

## 5. Ensuring Progression

When subjects are planning their thresholds, it is important that there is progression through the years. So for example, if a student has a baseline threshold of 'Middle' learners, if they make expected progress through KS3, they should achieve a minimum of a grade C by the end of Y11. This means that the 'Middle' learner thresholds in Y7 and 8 should show increasing levels of demand in terms of expectation, to allow them to maintain this trajectory. Ideally what we would like of course, is for them to rise through the thresholds towards 'Very Able'.

## 6. Tracking progress & reporting to parents

In terms of tracking progress and reporting to parents we can look at how students are performing, relative to their baseline threshold:

- Working below their baseline threshold – ***Making less than expected progress***
- Working within their baseline threshold – ***Making expected progress***
- Working into the next baseline threshold – ***Making good progress***
- Working two above their baseline threshold or at the top of or beyond the mastery threshold – ***Making exceptional progress***

Alternatively, each threshold could be divided to show how students are progressing within the threshold – which could then be linked to GCSE grades:

Threshold	GCSE Forecast	Threshold Knowledge	Threshold skills
<b>Very Able</b> (KS2 L6+)	9 (A*)		
	8 (A*)		
<b>Upper</b> (KS2 L6-5)	7 (A)		
	6 (B)		
<b>Middle</b> (KS2 L5-4)	5 (B)		
	4 (C)		
<b>Foundation</b> (KS2 L3-2)	3 (D)		
	2 (E)		
	1 (FG)		

- Working below their baseline threshold– **Making less than expected progress (-1)**
- Working at the lower end of their baseline threshold e.g. Middle 4 – **Making expected progress (0)**
- Working at the upper end of their baseline threshold e.g. Middle 5 – **Making good progress (+1)**
- Working above their baseline threshold or at the top of Very Able i.e. excellence 9 – **Making exceptional progress (+2)**

Numbers in brackets are what could be entered into spreadsheets for our monitoring – see below:

Name	CAT V	CAT NV	CAT Quan	CAT Mean	KS2 En	KS2 Ma	Baseline Threshold	Av Forecast GCSE	En Forecast Grade	Maths Forecast Grade	En AP 1	En AP 2	En AP 3
Shaun	99	99	99	99	5	6	V	7	6	7	0	1	1
Kate	100	105	110	105	6	6	V	7	7	7	-1	0	1
Pete	84	86	84	85	3	3	F	3	3	3	-1	-1	0
Chris	90	94	92	92	3	4	M	4	3	4	1	1	2
Jane	110	115	120	115	6	6	V	7	7	7	1	2	2
Sue	108	104	106	106	4	3	M	4	4	3	0	1	2
John	70	71	70	70	2	2	F	2	2	2	-1	-1	-1
Naomi	109	99	101	103	6	4	U	5	7	4	0	1	1
Vic	100	100	100	100	6	5	V	7	7	6	0	1	1

Advantages to this:

- Recognises achievement and progress within a threshold – especially important for lower ability students, who could still be making ‘good progress’ at the lower learner level.
- Allows those subjects that want to use GCSE grades to link to assessment in KS3 to do so.

## 7. Formative assessment

These banded thresholds of knowledge and skills (alongside the growth mindset attributes) can then be used to give students ongoing formative feedback, based on their day to day work, about how to improve and move through the thresholds. In order to support a growth mindset, the feedback should be aimed at moving students through the thresholds towards mastery, so developing resilience and grit. So expectations are consistently high.



## 8. Summative assessment

Summative assessments (termly) can be used to further assess how well students are doing towards the end of the unit of work. Based on their performance on these tests, they could be awarded a 'threshold level', based on how they have done.

As an example, a single summative test could be used to award students a threshold level, as shown below:

Test score %	Threshold
75-100	Very Able
50-75	Upper
25-50	Middle
0-25	Foundation

**% are illustrative only.**

Alternatively, Summative tests could be used to produce a 'Forecast GCSE grade'

Test score %	Threshold	Forecast GCSE Grade
75-100	Very Able	9-8
50-75	Upper	7-6
25-50	Middle	5-4
0-25	Foundation	3-1

**% are illustrative only.**

We could break this down into individual grades, but a broader forecast might be more sensible, certainly in Y7 and 8?

Some subjects might want to do tiered tests e.g. 1-3 or 2-4.

For some subjects, for example practical subjects, it won't be suitable to do a test. They will need to introduce termly periodic assessments that assess across all the threshold knowledge and skills.