



UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT AT GOLDINGTON ACADEMY

**A guide for parents of Key Stage 3
Students - Years 7, 8 and 9**

This booklet explains our new assessment system, which has been designed to:

- Focus on your child's learning and progress
- Reduce unnecessary pressure on younger students
- Provide clear information about how your child is doing
- Prepare students effectively for their GCSEs

We hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's form tutor, Head of Year or Miss Thomas - Assistant Head Teacher (Assessment Lead) - thomass@goldington.beds.sch.uk.

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1. Why have we changed our internal assessment system?

In 2014, the government removed National Curriculum levels, giving schools the freedom to develop assessment systems that work best for their students. This was when we introduced our Emerging, Developing, Secure and Mastered (EDSM) grading system which we used up until the end of July 2026.

Our school has changed since this system was introduced, with the most significant difference being the transition to become a secondary school. Therefore, in 2024 we made the decision to review our current practices and update our internal assessment system. Since then, a considerable amount of time has been spent reviewing alternative systems, consulting with teachers and developing a framework that we feel best suits our school context. We have developed a new approach for Key Stage 3 that:

- ✓ **Focuses on learning, not targets** - We want students to focus on mastering knowledge and skills, not just hitting targets
- ✓ **Reduces pressure** - Years 7-9 are crucial for building strong foundations. Our system reduces unnecessary pressure while maintaining high expectations
- ✓ **Provides clear information** – You will know whether your child is working above, at or towards subject expectations
- ✓ **Allows subject-specific assessment** - Each subject sets expectations based on what is being taught, rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach

2. How Key Stage 3 assessment works

Daily Assessment (Formative Assessment)

Every lesson, teachers assess how well students are learning through:

- Questioning
- Observing work
- Marking and feedback
- Self and peer assessment

This helps teachers adapt their teaching to meet students' needs and helps students understand how to improve.

Termly Assessment (Summative Assessment)

Three times a year (at the end of each term), teachers make an overall judgement about how your child is doing in each subject using our new grading system.

This judgement is based on:

- Class work over the term
- Homework
- Tests and assessments
- Projects and presentations
- Overall understanding of the subject

3. Understanding the 1-3 grading system

At Key Stage 3, your child will be assessed using a simple 1-3 system:

Grade 1	Consistently working ABOVE subject expectations
Grade 2	Working AT subject expectations
Grade 3	Working TOWARDS subject expectations

What are "subject expectations"?

Each subject department has defined what students should know and be able to do when working at each grade. These expectations are based on:

- The National Curriculum
- Our school curriculum
- What prepares students well for GCSE

Subject expectations are different for each subject because different subjects require different knowledge and skills.

4. What the grades mean

1: Consistently working above subject expectations

What this means: Your child is demonstrating:

- A strong understanding of the subject
- An ability to apply knowledge in different contexts
- Independence in their learning
- Depth and sophistication in their work

2: Working At Subject Expectations

What this means: Your child is demonstrating:

- A good understanding of the subject
- An ability to apply knowledge in different contexts with support
- Growing independence in their learning
- Has a solid foundation for future learning

3: Working towards subject expectations

What this means: Your child is developing their understanding but needs additional support. They may:

- Need more time to grasp concepts
- Require additional practice
- Benefit from extra support
- Be building foundational skills

5. How we track progress

Unlike at GCSE, we will not set individual numerical targets for students in Years 7-9. The reasons are as follows:

- ✓ **Reduces pressure** - Students can focus on learning rather than hitting targets
- ✓ **Allows for different rates of progress** - Some students develop quickly, others need more time
- ✓ **Focuses on mastery** - We want students to truly understand, not just tick boxes

Progress will be monitored using:

- FFT (Fischer Family Trust) Estimates - These are national data that predict likely Key Stage 4 outcomes based on prior attainment. Teachers use these to ensure students are on track.
- Termly teacher assessments data
- Daily monitoring of individuals in lessons- If a student is not making expected progress, we will identify this quickly and put support in place.

It is important to remember that progress is not always linear. Your child might:

- Stay at the same grade but deepen their understanding
- Move between grades as they tackle more challenging content
- Make faster progress in some subjects than others

All of this is normal and expected.

6. How we report to you

The frequency of the information you receive from us will not change with the new assessment system. You will still receive two interim reports: one at the end of the Autumn Term and one at the end of the Spring Term. You will receive a full written report at the end of the academic year.

Interim reports will contain the following for each subject:

- **Teacher Assessment:** Grade 1, 2 or 3
- **Attitude to Learning:** Grades A-D
- **Independent Learning:** Grades A-D
- **Behaviour for Learning:** Grades A-D

Teachers will use the following criteria to judge if your child is working at A, B, C or D.

Grade	Attitude to Learning	Independent Learning	Behaviour for Learning
A: Highly Motivated	Determined, focused and never gives up. Actively pursues feedback and acts upon it. Evaluates own progress and adjusts accordingly.	High standard of homework and additional work produced. Asks for extension tasks. Attends and takes an active role in clubs and intervention sessions as appropriate.	Fully engaged in lessons and displays model behaviour
B: Engaged	Focused and positive in lessons. Receptive of feedback and acts upon it to improve work. Works hard to complete lesson work to a high standard.	Good standard of homework and additional work produced. Attends clubs and intervention sessions as appropriate.	Engaged in lessons, complies with behaviour expectations
C: Passive	Has a passive approach to lessons. Will act on feedback, however this is not always completed to a high enough standard.	Homework is usually completed, but inconsistent in quality. Attends some after school sessions as appropriate.	Can be distracted or lack focus which has an impact on learning and sometimes receives warnings
D: Disengaged	Can actively avoid learning and the completion of work. Rarely attempts to act on feedback with enough effort to improve learning. Sometimes fails to complete tasks.	Homework and additional work not completed regularly enough. Does not engage with learning in their own time. Can be unprepared for lessons. Revision or research is not completed.	Negative attitude; can be disruptive in class and often receives warnings/red & yellow cards.

Example of an interim report:

Subject	Teacher Assessment	Attitude to learning	Independent Learning	Behaviour for Learning
English	2	B	B	B
Maths	1	A	B	B
Science	2	B	C	B
History	2	B	B	A

At the end of the summer term, you will receive a detailed report including:

- Teacher assessment grade
- Attitude to learning, independent learning and behaviour for learning grades
- Contribution to lesson and personal organisation grades
- Improvement targets from each subject teacher
- Overall comment from form tutor

During the year, you will be invited to a parent consultation evening where you can:

- Discuss your child's progress in detail
- Get specific advice on how to support at home

7. Supporting Your Child at Home

General Tips

Talk about learning, not grades

- Ask "What did you learn today?"
- Show interest in the content they are studying
- Discuss how they can improve

Encourage a growth mindset

- Praise effort and progress, not just achievement
- Help them see mistakes as learning opportunities
- Remind them that everyone learns at different rates

Support good study habits

- Ensure they have a quiet space to work
- Help them organise their time
- Check homework is completed
- Encourage reading every day

Attend school events

- Come to parent consultation evenings
- Attend information evenings
- Stay in touch with form tutors and subject teachers as required

8. Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you not set targets for Key Stage 3 students?

Research shows that for younger students, focusing on learning rather than numerical targets leads to better outcomes. Students can focus on mastering knowledge and skills without the pressure of constantly trying to hit a moving target. We still track progress rigorously using national data, but we do not share individual targets with students at this stage.

How do I know if my child is making good progress?

If your child is consistently working at subject expectations (2), they are making expected progress. If they move from a 3 to a 2, or from 2 to 1, that is excellent progress. However, progress is not just about changing grades - your child might stay at a 2 but develop much deeper understanding. Teachers will explain this in reports and at parent evenings.

My child is working towards subject expectations (3) - should I be worried?

Not necessarily. A 3 means your child needs additional support to reach expectations, and we are committed to providing that. Some students need more time to develop foundational skills. The important thing is that we have identified this early and can put support in place. Stay in close contact with school and work with us to help your child progress.

Will my child have a target when they start GCSEs?

Yes. When your child starts Year 10, they will be given GCSE target grades based on their prior attainment and national data (FFT estimates). At this point, the focus shifts to preparing for external exams, and targets become more important.

How does this system prepare my child for GCSEs?

Our system is specifically designed to prepare students for GCSEs by:

- Building strong subject knowledge and skills
- Developing independent learning
- Reducing pressure in Years 7-9 so students are resilient for Years 10-11

Can my child move between grades?

Yes, absolutely. As students learn more and develop their skills, they may move from a 3 to a 2, or from a 2 to a 1. Equally, as content becomes more challenging, a student might temporarily drop a grade. This is all part of the learning process.

My child is working at different grades in different subjects - is this normal?

Yes, this is completely normal. Students have different strengths and interests. Someone might be working at a 1 in English, but a 3 in Maths, or vice versa. Each subject is assessed independently based on that subject's specific expectations.

How often will my child be assessed?

Your child is assessed every lesson through formative assessment (questioning, feedback, etc.). Formal summative assessments happen termly, and you will receive reports at the end of each term.

I am concerned about the grade my child is working at?

If you have concerns about a grade, please contact your child's subject teacher in the first instance. They can explain the evidence behind the grade and show you examples of work. If you still have concerns, contact the head of department or head of year.

Will this system disadvantage my child when applying to sixth forms or colleges?

No. Sixth forms and colleges are interested in GCSE results, not Key Stage 3 grades. Our system is designed to prepare students to achieve the best possible GCSE results.

How do I access my child's reports?

All reports are published through Go 4 Schools, our online reporting system. You will receive login details and instructions on how to access reports.

What should I do if my child is struggling?

Contact your child's subject teacher, Form Tutor or Head of Year as soon as possible. The earlier we can identify and address difficulties, the better. We have a range of support available.

We are excited to be working with you to support your child's education. Our assessment system is designed to help every student achieve their potential while developing a genuine love of learning. Together, we can ensure your child has a successful and enjoyable time at Goldington Academy.

If you have any questions about anything in this booklet, please do not hesitate to get in touch.