

A Guide to Learning without Levels



For Parents, Governors and
Visitors

What national changes have the government made?

'The Department for Education is removing the assessment system of National Curriculum levels from September 2014 and is not replacing it...Beyond the tests at Key Stage 2 and GCSEs at Key Stage 4, it will be for schools to decide how they assess pupils' progress.' (DfE, 2013)

The use of National Curriculum levels, which schools have used to measure a students' learning and report to parents, has been changed, as recommended by the Department for Education. This is because there were a number of issues with using levels, such as:

- Students labelling themselves as a number, often resulting in their learning being held back. There is a need to re-focus upon exactly what has been learnt, and what the student still needs to learn.
- Differences in the use of levels: Levels were seen as a nationally recognised language of progress and attainment, but some teachers across some different schools and departments used them differently.
- Levels were not always being used to adequately show the progress that students were making in specific areas within subjects.
- Learning was sometimes being structured to move students on to new areas of learning before knowledge and understanding was really secure.
- Many countries that perform well internationally do not use levels. They instead focus on a 'mastery' approach to teaching and learning.

What changes have the government made to the GCSEs?

Students who sit their GCSEs in English and Maths from summer 2017 onwards will receive a numerical grade, rather than an A*- G grade. This will be the same for other subjects from summer 2018 onwards.

Old GCSE	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A* and additional	
New GCSE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

The new GCSE grades do not map neatly onto the old GCSE grading system. The government wanted to be able to differentiate between the students achieving higher levels, which is why 6 grades (4-9) now represent what used to be 4 grades (C-A*) at the top end.

The new grade 9 will be more difficult to get than a current A*, to reward 'really exceptional performance.'

The new 'benchmark grade' ('higher pass' grade) will be grade 5. This is harder to get than the old benchmark grade, C. This has been done to try and drive up standards.

How have we responded?

The CCfL has seen the removal of levels as an exciting opportunity to develop a learning and assessment model that is focused upon the individual learning needs of all students, to make sure that they achieve the best possible Key Stage 4 outcomes. We wanted to create a new assessment system that:

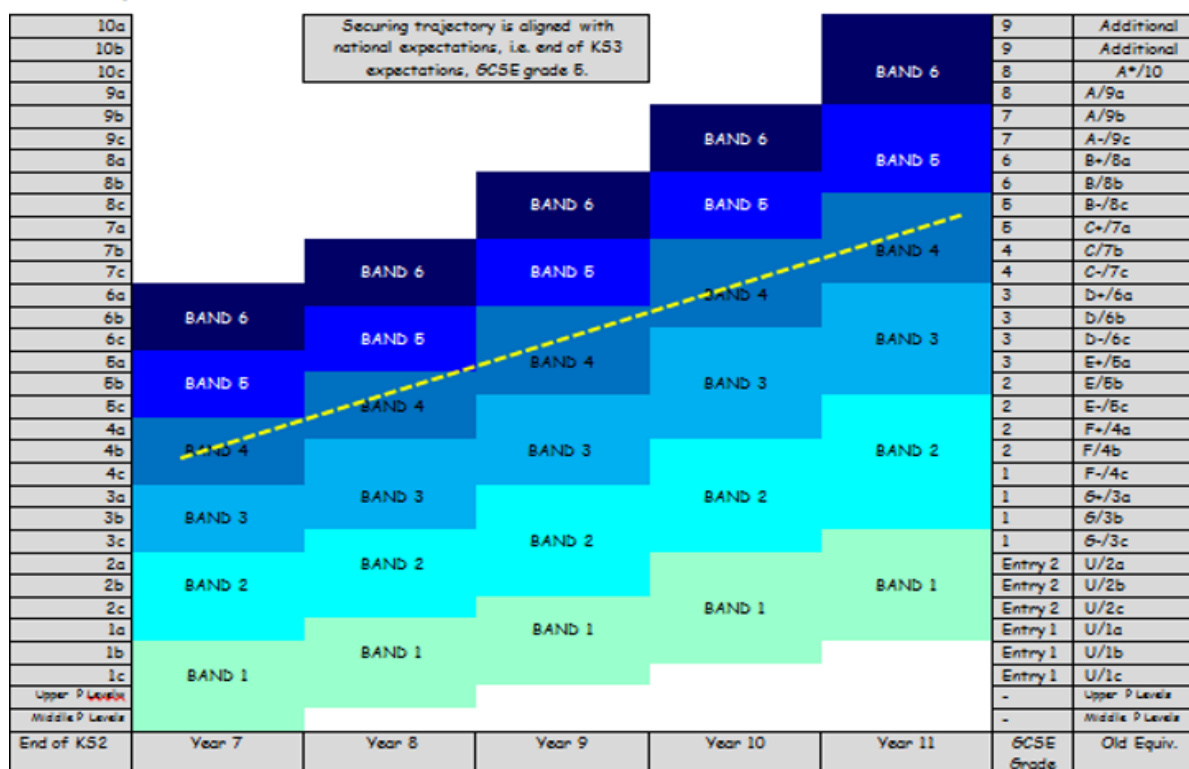
- Highlights and celebrates what the students have achieved, and informs students how they can improve even more;
- Focuses on accurate assessment and step-by-step feedback;
- Has aspirational expectations of each student, but still caters to individual needs;
- Builds the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in exams at the end of KS4;
- Helps parents to support learning at home.

How will the new assessment system look in practice?

- Upon students' arrival at CCfL, (and at the beginning of each year for existing students) department members meet with students, parents, and other key staff to determine the 'band' or 'flight path' that the student should be placed on for the next academic year.
- There are 6 bands in total, and a student's placement is calculated based upon a number of factors, for example their age, their prior attainment data and their cognitive abilities/reading levels.
- The learning descriptors for each band are age-dependent, and act as stepping stones throughout a student's school-life towards a projected GCSE grade.
- Band 4 is aligned with national expectations (end of KS2 and KS3 expectations towards GCSE grade 5, the new benchmark grade). This allows us to calculate how many of our students are on course to reach the government end of Key Stage expectations.

Learning Trajectories

National Expectations = - - - - -



Students arriving at CCfL at a later point throughout KS3 and KS4 will have their trajectory in each subject determined by their last attainment grades, the school's own baselining procedures, other factors (e.g. their reading age, learning needs) and their point of entry (e.g. start of Year 9, one term into Year 10 etc.)

Students will be able to move beyond their baseline trajectory as teachers and Curriculum Leads review their data and targets at the end of each year, meaning that there is no ceiling for any child - the sky is the limit for all!

The table below simplifies the projected GCSE outcomes for students within each band:

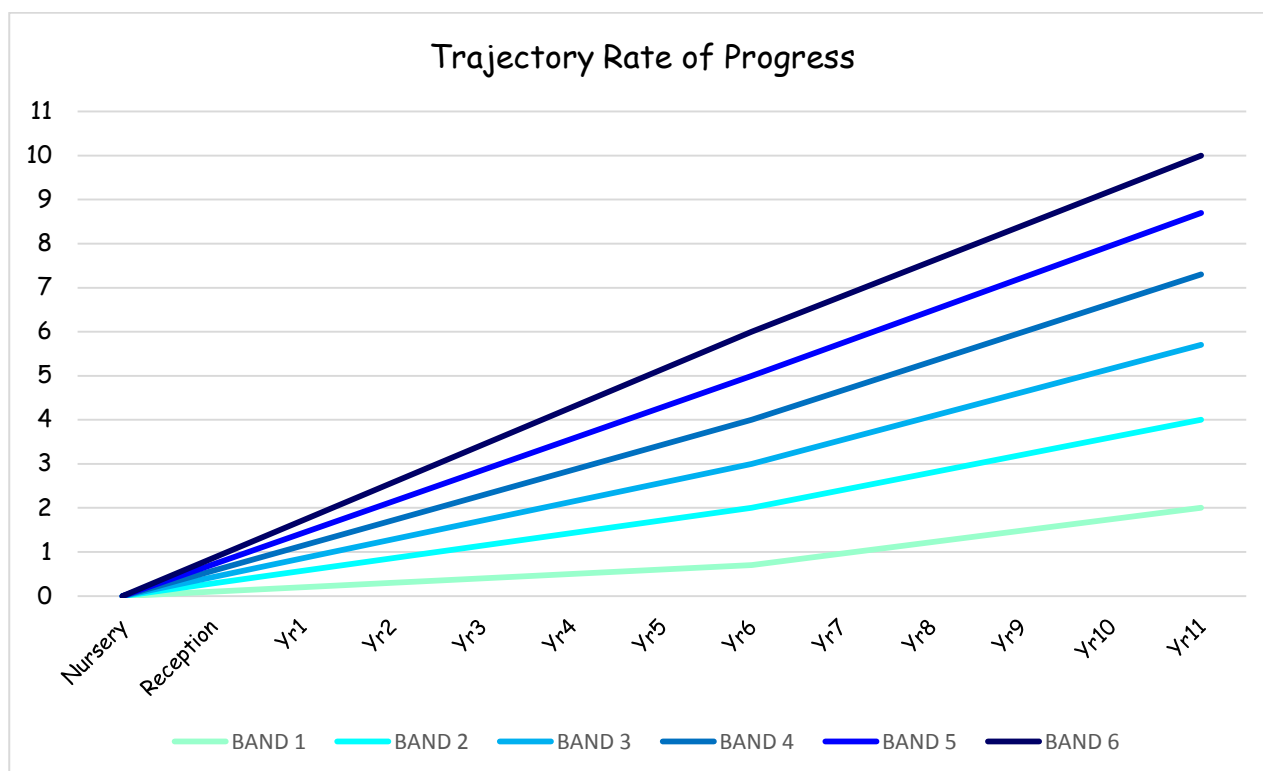
BAND	PROJECTED GCSE GRADE
1	U - Low 1
2	1 - 2
3	High 2 - 3
4	4 - 5
5	6 - 7
6	8 - 9

NB: The school is in the process of assigning non-numeric names to these bands.

How has the school worked out what 'expected progress' is?

With the removal of levels, (and the hence the associated 'two sub-levels per year' expected progress measure) schools are now more free to measure progress in ways that they see as appropriate.

Many schools have chosen to base their expectations of each student's progress upon the student's prior rate of progress. This is deemed to be a much fairer measure of student performance, as it takes into account each individual's needs and barriers to learning. Our assessment system is also based upon this principle:



As you can see, the expected progress within each of our bands is at least as rapid as the rate of progress that students have made before joining CCfL (in actual fact, the upward turn in the lines after the Year 6 point on the x axis demonstrates that we are actually expecting slightly more progress from students than they have achieved before.)

It is also worth noting that most of the subject curriculums have now been broadened considerably. This means that the rate of progress we are expecting is actually harder for students to achieve than it used to be. But we love a challenge!

How does each subject work out if a student is making 'expected progress?'

An assessment tracking sheet below is given to each student in each subject at the beginning of each unit. The 'I Can' statements that they need to achieve each term varies depending upon their band, age, and the unit that they are studying.

This sheet would be given to a Year 11 Band 5 English student, studying a writing topic.

NAME:	FORM:	TERM:
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ENGLISH - YEAR 11 WRITING

Assessment Objectives - W1: Writing imaginative, interesting, and thoughtful texts. W2: Writing appropriately for my task, audience, and purpose. W3: Structuring and organising my writing. W4: Writing using varied vocabulary and sentences. W5: Spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting.

AO	BAND 6 - I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate with a high level of impact, engaging and influencing my reader.			
W2	Produce ambitious texts, which meet the requirements of form, audience, and purpose with sophistication and originality.			
W3	Produce whole texts that are effectively and creatively structured.			
W3	Create creative and ambitious links between sentences and paragraphs, utilising an expansive range of cohesive devices.			
W4	Use a wide range of ambitious, well-selected, and precise sentence types and structures throughout my writing.			
W4	Use a wide range of ambitious, well-selected, and precise vocabulary throughout my writing.			
W5	Spell accurately throughout my writing, so that writing is virtually error free.			
W5	Use grammar and punctuation accurately throughout my writing, so that writing is virtually error free.			
AO	BAND 5 - I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate confidently, presenting interesting ideas in an appropriately sustained way.			
W2	Produce texts with an assured sense of form, audience, and purpose throughout. Clear and accurate use of devices.			
W3	Produce well-constructed and assured whole texts, using organisational devices to clarify and support purpose.			
W3	Use a wider range of coherence devices, including discourse markers and connectives, to heighten fluency.			
W4	Use a range sentence types and structures, crafting deliberately for effect.			
W4	Use vocabulary assuredly and confidently, crafting and positioning words deliberately for effect.			
W5	Demonstrate few spelling lapses. Near misses with some unfamiliar words, but only very occasionally.			
W5	Demonstrate consistent accuracy with a greater range of punctuation and grammatical choices.			
AO	BAND 4 (National Standard) - I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate effectively, sustaining the reader's interest throughout the text.			
W2	Produce purposeful texts, which consistently use stylistic devices to meet the requirements of form, audience, and purpose.			
W3	Produce well-structured texts that use clear and distinctive paragraphs, which are consistently deployed.			
W3	Create coherence between sentences, by using clear and distinctive connectives.			
W4	Vary sentence types and structures so that they are appropriate to purpose and audience.			
W4	Employ vocabulary so that it is appropriate to purpose and effect.			
W5	Spell mostly accurately, so that there are few errors.			
W5	Use punctuation and grammar mostly accurately, so that there are few errors.			

TARGET TRAJECTORY	ACTUAL TRAJECTORY	THIS TERM I HAVE MADE...		
		Above Expected	Expected	Below Expected

You will notice that there are three columns adjacent to each statement. There are three degrees to which each 'I Can' statement is considered 'achieved':

- E = Emerging:** I have shown I can do something occasionally, with support.
- S = Secure:** I have shown I can do something most of the time, with minimal support.
- M = Mastery:** I have shown I can do something all of the time, independently.

How will the school report to parents?

The cover of the report will have information on a number of key areas. These include:

- Attendance;
- Behaviour and Learning points for each lesson;
- Overview of progress across subjects.

Parents will also receive a more in-depth report for each subject. These reports show parents exactly where the student has made progress, and exactly what they still need to achieve to progress further. Teachers will go through these reports with the parents on each 'Student Review Day.' A completed assessment tracking sheet will also be shared, as demonstrated below:

NAME: Example Jones	FORM: 11ES	TERM: Autumn 2
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ENGLISH - YEAR 11 WRITING

Assessment Objectives - W1: Writing imaginative, interesting, and thoughtful texts. W2: Writing appropriately for my task, audience, and purpose. W3: Structuring and organising my writing. W4: Writing using varied vocabulary and sentences. W5: Spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting.

AO	BAND 6 - I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate with a high level of impact, engaging and influencing my reader.			
W2	Produce ambitious texts, which meet the requirements of form, audience, and purpose with sophistication and originality.			
W3	Produce whole texts that are effectively and creatively structured.			
W3	Create creative and ambitious links between sentences and paragraphs, utilizing an expansive range of cohesive devices.			
W4	Use a wide range of ambitious, well-selected, and precise sentence types and structures throughout my writing.			
W4	Use a wide range of ambitious, well-selected, and precise vocabulary throughout my writing.			
W5	Spell accurately throughout my writing, so that writing is virtually error free.			
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AO	BAND 5 - I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate confidently, presenting interesting ideas in an appropriately sustained way.			
W2	Produce texts with an assured sense of form, audience, and purpose throughout. Clear and accurate use of devices.			
W3	Produce well-constructed and assured whole texts, using organisational devices to clarify and support purpose.			
W3	Use a wider range of coherence devices, including discourse markers and connectives, to heighten fluency.			
W4	Use a range sentence types and structures, crafting deliberately for effect.			
W4	Use vocabulary assuredly and confidently, crafting and positioning words deliberately for effect.			
W5	Demonstrate few spelling lapses. Near misses with some unfamiliar words, but only very occasionally.			
W5	Demonstrate consistent accuracy with a greater range of punctuation and grammatical choices.			
AO	BAND 4 (National Standard)- I can...	E	S	M
W1	Communicate effectively, sustaining the reader's interest throughout the text.			
W2	Produce purposeful texts, which consistently use stylistic devices to meet the requirements of form, audience, and purpose.			
W3	Produce well-structured texts that use clear and distinctive paragraphs, which are consistently deployed.			
W3	Create coherence between sentences, by using clear and distinctive connectives.			
W4	Vary sentence types and structures so that they are appropriate to purpose and audience.			
W4	Employ vocabulary so that it is appropriate to purpose and effect.			
W5	Spell mostly accurately, so that there are few errors.			
W5	Use punctuation and grammar mostly accurately, so that there are few errors.			

TARGET TRAJECTORY	ACTUAL TRAJECTORY	THIS TERM I HAVE MADE..		
Band 5	Band 5	Above Expected	Expected	Below Expected

Teachers use a best-fit of the skills that students have mastered in order to form a judgement. This Band 5 student has therefore made expected progress.

The school will track this progress cumulatively in order to determine the rate at which students are progressing over the year.

This 'assessment without levels' approach is already being used by English and Maths. All other subjects will change over to this system by September 2016.