

AGSB KS3 Curriculum and Assessment - FEDS



(Guidance for Parents)

Background: Since 2014 schools have not been required to assess students using Key Stage Three levels and have been given the freedom to develop their own in-house assessment systems. AGBS used this as an opportunity to rethink the design of KS3 Curriculum and Assessment systems.

The AGBS Curriculum Committee referred to feedback from colleagues, governors, students and parents to identify some priorities. These became the FEDS Principles:

FEDS Principles

Clarity: In each subject area a common language is used and assessment criteria are shared with students. Students know what they must do to improve in each topic and subject area.

Mastery/depth: Students are encouraged to 'Master' a topic, by studying it deeply and aiming for the highest category of achievement. A growth mind-set is encouraged.

Specialism and autonomy: Teachers are given the freedom to use their subject specialist expertise to develop the curriculum and assessment systems in their subject areas.

Effective assessment: Assessment is used frequently in lessons to inform teaching and learning. Effective and clear feedback is given so that students know exactly what they must do to improve. Summative assessments (tests and exams) are consistent and standardised.

Robust Data Systems: Assessment data and 'soft' data such as effort grades and attendance statistics are used to identify underachieving students. Effective intervention is put in place to support students to get back on track.

KS3 Curriculum

- Each department has produced a **Subject Achievement Map (SAM)** that outlines the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve in the subject, (see yellow box on page 2).
- Departments use the SAMS to ensure the curriculum in Year 7-9 equips students with the skills and knowledge needed to learn the subject securely, to Grade 9 level and beyond.
- The KS3 curriculum is taught through topics. Each topic is designed to help build strong foundations of knowledge and skills in the subject, to enable the student to understand the subject more securely.
- For each topic that students study in Year 7 and 8 (in Sept 2020 this will also include Year 9) they are given a **Topic Descriptor Sheet (TDS)**. The TDS details the knowledge and skills that will be taught in that topic. *TDS are usually available in books, where this is not possible they can be found on classroom walls or on Office 365.*
- The topics are designed so that as students progress through Years 7-9, they become progressively more challenging. Each topic gives students the opportunity to learn a depth of knowledge and variety of skills specific to the subject area.
- The subject curriculums are designed so that at the end of Year 9, students have a very secure foundation of knowledge in a broad range of subjects. Added to this, all the skills on the SAMS will have been returned to on multiple occasions, to ensure they are grasped securely.

What are Subject Achievement Maps?

- Subject Achievement Maps have been created by the Head of Department and teachers in each subject area. They provide the backbone for the design of the curriculum and accompanying assessment resources at KS3.
- Colleagues used their subject specific expertise to identify what skills and knowledge students need, to learn the subject securely. They also identified how the nature of these skills and acquisition of knowledge should develop from Year 7 to Year 11 (Grade 9).
- Departments were asked to refer to their own expertise and existing benchmarks (exam board criteria/ KS3 levels and other relevant sources).

How are students assessed?

- In Year 7 and 8 students are awarded grades known as **Foundation, Emerging, Developing and Secure (FEDS)**. In Year 9 students are graded using GCSE grades, (1-9). In most subjects the grades in year 9 are applied to KS3 content, in a handful of subjects, GCSE topics are taught where it is felt this benefits pupil understanding.
- Departments use a variety of methods to give students feedback on their progress throughout the topic, for some of these tasks, teachers will share assessment criteria with students. This helps them to understand what they must do to improve further. At the end of the unit students are awarded a FEDS grade.

How can parents help students?

In Year 7, all parents are invited to a Curriculum evening. Information is shared about the curriculum and the importance of encouraging students to have a growth mindset.

*“In a **growth mindset**, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.” (Dweck, 2015)*

Students are told that the single most significant factor that will affect their success is how hard they are willing to work. Teachers will encourage students to do this in the following ways:

- Improve or redo work using the shared assessment criteria to help them to make improvements.
- Take action on feedback given to show they have learned from their mistakes.
- Revisit topics that are not graded ‘Secure’.
- Revise knowledge and practise skills on the TDS. E.g. as they progress through the unit they could highlight the content they are confident with.

Parents can support students by encouraging them to have a growth mindset and to make improvements using the strategies listed above.

Reporting progress to parents

- At the end of each term, parents receive a grade sheet (or report) that details the FEDS grade achieved in each subject. This FEDS grade is the average result of the topics covered at that point in the academic year.
- In Reports and at Parents’ Evenings teachers will give more information about the students’ results in individual topics.
- By using a grading currency (FEDS) that is unfamiliar to students and parents, we hope to reduce the pressure on students and encourage them to focus on the feedback given rather than the result. In Year 7 and 8 we want the emphasis to be on learning for the love of learning, without worrying too much about results in exams.