



Pensby High School

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Headteacher: Mr K Flanagan

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Dear Parent / Carers

Re: Pensby Assessment System 2016 -17

I am writing to you to further outline the changes we have made to the way we assess your child's progress and how we report to you as parents and carers. We have changed the way we will communicate progress to you as parents and carers as a response to changes that the Government has introduced into all secondary schools in England.

Background

There are a number of reasons why the school has introduced a new assessment system this academic year:

- **The system of 'national curriculum levels' has been removed.** Students in the current Years 8-11 took national curriculum tests at the end of primary school in which Level 4 was the expected level nationally, I am sure you remember these tests and how important they were in Year 6. However, students in the current Year 7 took new and very different national tests at the end of their Year 6, the outcome of these tests were expressed as a number ranging from 80 to 120. A pass for students in July 2016 was expressed as a combined score of 100 or above rather than a Level 4 in three different subjects.
- **The GCSE examination system is changing.** The GCSE examination system is being changed. Current year 11 students will sit the new GCSE examinations in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. Students in the current Year 10 will sit the new GCSE examinations in the majority of subjects. Students in the current Year 9 and below will sit the new GCSE examinations in all subjects. The Government has made it clear that the number of students gaining a 'good' pass in the new system will be lower than previous years.
- **In the new GCSE, assessment is mainly in the form of written examinations.** In the new reformed GCSE examinations 'Controlled Assessments' (previously referred to as 'coursework') are being removed in most subjects; assessment will be in the form of written examinations at the end of Year 11. GCSE written examinations have increased in difficulty over the last few years; the evidence of the new specimen papers is that the level of difficulty in the new GCSEs will be even greater still. The new system is one of linear examination, that is the exams are all taken at the end of the course – this is very similar to 'O Levels' in the 1980s and earlier.

- **The GCSE Grading System is changing.** Instead of examinations being graded A*-G they will be graded 9-1. **The new numbered GCSE grading system is totally separate from the previous system of numbered national curriculum levels and is therefore not comparable.**

- **In the reformed GCSE system a ‘good pass’ will become more difficult.** A ‘good pass’ in the current system is a grade C but in the new system it will be a **grade 5**. A current grade C is equivalent to a grade 4 in the new system. A grade 5 is broadly equivalent to the very top of a C and bottom end of a current grade B. So students sitting new GCSEs may well perform at the same level or even higher than older brothers and sisters, but gain less ‘good’ passes.

| Current GCSE Grading Structure | New GCSE Grading Structure |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A* | 9 8 |
| A | 7 |
| B | 6 5 |
| C | 4 |
| D | 3 |
| E | 2 |
| F | 1 |
| G | |
| U | U |

- **Achieving the highest grades will become more challenging.** A grade 7 will be broadly equivalent to a current grade A. A grade 9 will be achieved by half the percentage who nationally currently achieve an A* grade. The approximate equivalence of grades is summarised in the table above.

The Pensby Assessment System 2016-17 - Student Targets.

- Students in year 11 already have GCSE targets that were set in September 2015 and these will remain unchanged. Each individual’s progress towards these targets will be reported to parents in the same way as it has been during Year 10.
- Students in Years 7-10 have been set yearly targets based on the new GCSE 9-1 system. These individual targets are based on students making progress that is better than would be expected nationally. For example a student who achieved an average KS2 level of a 4b (i.e. the national expectation at the end of primary school) would have a Year 11 target of a grade 6 (i.e. the top end of a current grade B).
- For illustration, a student with a Year 11 target of a grade 6 would have a Year 9 target of a grade 4. A grade 4 target means that they will be expected to demonstrate performance to the same level as a current GCSE grade C in that subject. The target setting ‘flight paths’ are summarised in the table below:

| Year 6 Prior Attainment | | Target Grades | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| | | Y7 | Y8 | Y9 | Y10 | Y11 |
| Old System | New System | | | | | 9 |
| | | | | | 8 | 8 |
| | | | | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | | | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 5a+ | tbc | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 5b, 5c | >=106 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4a, 4b | >90 and <106 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 4c or below | <=90 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Reporting Progress to Parents / Carers.

- **Parents Evenings** are held for each year group at which you will be able to discuss progress with subject teachers – these are detailed in the School Calendar.
- **Each year group has a full written report** once during the course of the academic year. This consists of comments from each Subject Teacher and your child's Form Tutor.
- **Monitoring Reports** are sent home during the year. For Years 7-10 they will indicate the following:
 - a) Target Grade for each subject.
 - b) Whether your child is on track to achieve the target grade or not. This will be based on relevant assessments made during the year, progress with classwork and homework.
 - c) A 'Behaviour for Learning' grade.
 - d) A 'Commitment to Learning' grade.

Monitoring reports will not repeat a GCSE grade each time, it is likely that most students will make an equivalent to one 'GCSE grade' as their progress within a year, but this is approximate and progress is not linear, and this is not to say that some students will make more or less dependent on their personal rates of progress. Some aspects of a subject are more difficult to grasp and these may well be marked below other aspects at any one time – the most important measure for all of us is simple; are you working hard enough to make the progress we hoping for by the end of the year and by the end of Year 11.

We are not subdividing GCSE grades to allow for a part grade to be given as this not reflective of real GCSE outcomes.

- **End of Year Monitoring Report.** In addition to the Monitoring Report information this includes the grade achieved (based on 9-1 scale) in the end of year examinations.

I hope that this letter goes some way to explaining changes to the assessment system. I am sure that there will continue to be reports in the media as the changes work through and we will of course keep you up to date as our system moves through the year. If you have any questions regarding this system then please contact me via the school office in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

Mr P Madden
Deputy Headteacher