

CORNELIUS VERMUYDEN SCHOOL

Specialising in Arts, Mathematics and Computing



New GCSE Reform - A Parent's Guide

1. Introduction

As you are probably aware the government has introduced radical new changes to the structure and assessment of GCSEs including changes to the grading scale. From the Summer 2017 examination series a new grading scale will be used in English and Maths where letters have been replaced by numbers. This means the traditional A*-G scale parents may be familiar with has been replaced by a scale from 9 - 1, where 9 is the highest achievable point and a point 5 or above is classed as a 'good pass' GCSE. The government has raised what is deemed to be a 'good pass' from a C to a new grade 5, where a 5 represents the top third of a C and the bottom third of a B. The rationale for this is to align the UK with the best education systems in the world.

In addition to the above, the Government has also removed National Curriculum levels, therefore the system of Level 4, 5, 6 (including sub levels such as 5c, 6b, 7a) etc which you may be familiar with at Key Stage 3 is no longer valid for use in schools.

Further information about the phases of the government's GCSE reform programme can be found at <https://goo.gl/aUNzRI>

2. When will all this be happening?

The Government's reforms to GCSEs have already started; they plan to reform the GCSE specifications in all subjects but have decided to do this in three phases:

Phase one subjects include English Language, English Literature and Mathematics (For Summer 2017 examinations)

Phase two subjects include Art and Design, Citizenship Studies, Computer Science, Dance, Drama, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Geography, History, Music, Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish), Physical Education, Religious Studies and sciences. (For Summer 2018 examinations)

Phase three subjects include Business, Design and Technology, Economics, Engineering, Media Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, Psychology, Sociology, Statistics (For Summer 2018 onwards examinations)

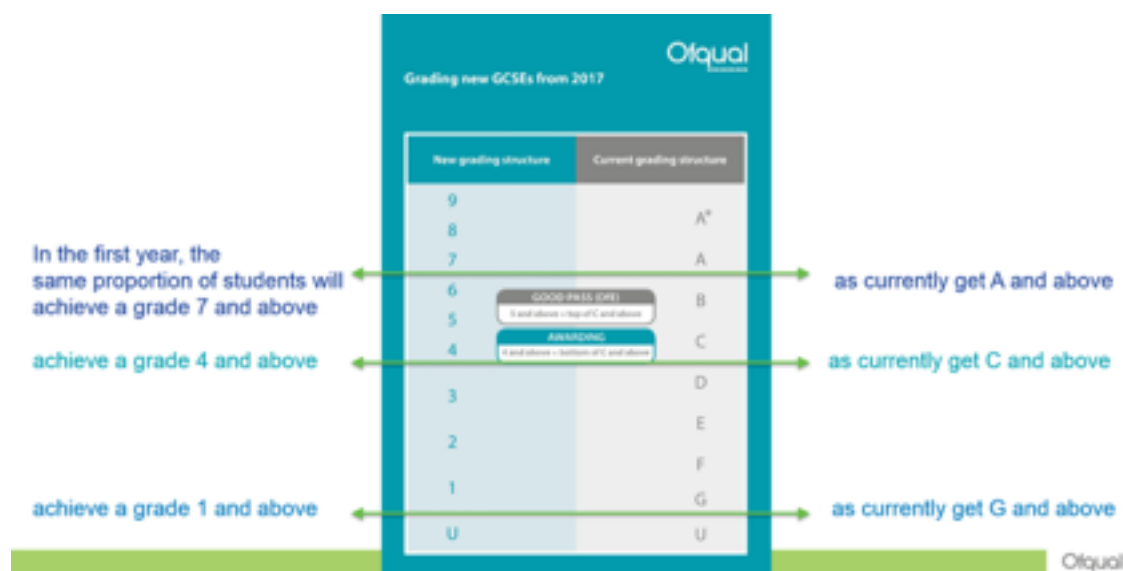
(GCSE Timeline of Reforms - taken from AQA - <http://goo.gl/2Ped4W>)

3. What new GCSEs will look like?

The main features of the new GCSEs are:

- A new grading scale of 9 to 1 will be used, with 9 being the top grade. This will allow greater differentiation between students and will help distinguish the new GCSEs from previous versions.
- Assessment will be mainly by exam (At the end of the course), with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills.
- There will be new, more demanding content, which has been developed by government and the examination boards.
- Courses will be designed for two years of study - they will no longer be divided into different modules and students will take all their exams in one period at the end of their course
- Examinations can only be split into 'foundation tier' and 'higher tier' if one exam paper does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge and abilities
- Resit opportunities will only be available each November in English language and Maths

4. New GCSE Grading Scheme



Key points

The new 9-1 grading system will mean that it will be clear to employers and colleges or universities whether students have taken the unreformed GCSEs or the reformed, more challenging ones. The new grade scale will not be directly equivalent to the existing one, and in the first year the following points can be made:

- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above
- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve an A and above
- for each exam, the top 20 per cent of those who get grade 7 or above will get a grade 9 - the very highest performers
- the bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G
- grade 5 will be positioned in the top third of the marks for a current grade C and bottom third of the marks for a current grade B. This will mean it will be of greater demand than the present grade C, and broadly in line with what the best available

evidence tells us is the average PISA* performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland

- the new maths GCSE will be tiered, with grades 4 and 5 available through both tiers

* *The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students*

Below is The Cornelius Vermuyden School interpretation of the grade cross-over.

	GCSE Grade	Numerical equivalent(approx.)
TOP	A*	9
MIDDLE	A*	9
LOW	A*	8
TOP	A	8
MIDDLE	A	7
LOW	A	7
TOP	B	6
MIDDLE	B	6
LOW	B	5
TOP	C	5
MIDDLE	C	4
LOW	C	4
TOP	D	4
MIDDLE	D	3
LOW	D	3
TOP	E	2
MIDDLE	E	2
LOW	E	2
TOP	F	2
MIDDLE	F	1
LOW	F	1
TOP	G	1
MIDDLE	G	1
LOW	G	1

5. What does this mean for my child?

It means different things for different year groups, the table below outlines the implications for each of the current year groups and makes reference to the three phases detailed on the previous page.

In September 2016, my child was in....	Your child will be assessed using ...	In which subjects
Year 7	The 9 - 1 point scale	All of them
Year 8	The 9 - 1 point scale	All of them
Year 9	The 9 - 1 point scale	All of them
Year 10	Both the 9 - 1 point scale and A*-G grades	9 - 1 points in Phase 1 & 2 subjects. Grades in Phase 3 subjects
Year 11	Both the 9 - 1 point scale and A*-G grades	9 - 1 points in Phase 1 subjects. Grades in all other subjects

6. What does this mean for The Cornelius Vermuyden School?

It means that as a school we needed to formulate an assessment system which robustly and accurately tracks the attainment and progress of each and every student from their very first day at Cornelius Vermuyden to the day that students collect their results.

7. What system are we using at The Cornelius Vermuyden School?

As the Government are introducing a new 9 - 1 point scale at GCSE level, we have decided to extend this scale for all students from Year 7 to Year 11. The use of the point scale will allow students to follow a personalised flightpath (based on their KS2 (Year 6) attainment) from their first day at The Cornelius Vermuyden School through to the end of Year 11.

The use of a common scale for years 7 to 11 will breed familiarity for students and parents who will be able to track individual progress towards a final GCSE point. In addition, the teaching at Key Stage 3 will be more closely aligned to that of the GCSE which under the aforementioned Government reforms will be more rigorous and challenging for our students.

In our system, progress grades take account of how well each student is doing compared to where they started and all students have scope to make excellent progress regardless of where they start and maximise their potential.

The Learning Journey:

In order to provide students, parents and carers with a measurable indicator of how well learners are progressing and what they are currently on track to achieve at the end of Key Stage 4, student achievement in each subject area will be reported in relation to their 'Flight Path'.

When students join The Cornelius Vermuyden School at the start of Key Stage 3, their Key Stage 2 prior attainment will be used to assign them to a personalised 'Flight Path' based

on their prior ability. This flight path will give an indication of what they should then go on to achieve at GCSE, as illustrated below, if they make expected progress.

Old KS2 Level	New KS2 SATS Score	Cornelius Vermuyden	KS4 EPI (Expected Progress Indicator)		KS4 GPI (Greater Than Expected Progress Indicator)	
Band	Total of all 3 Tests	Flight Path	Old GCSE	New GCSE	Old GCSE	New GCSE
1	336-360	Exceptional	A	7-8	A*	8-9
2	315-335	Confident	B	5-6	A	7-8
3	300-314	Secure	C	4-5	B	5-6
4	255-299	Developing	D	3-4	C	4-5
5	240-254	Beginning	E	2-3	D	3-4

8. Assessing and Reporting:

From the Summer Term of 2016, all students at The Cornelius Vermuyden School will have their worked assessed using the 9 - 1 scale in accordance with the table above.

Whilst assessing and reporting on a student's work, we will be using fine levels at each point, i.e., each point will be sub divided with a suffix of either +, = or -. Therefore a student may find his/her work graded at 7-, 5=, 3+ etc. where the number represents their point on the 9 - 1 scale and the suffix describes how securely they're working at that point, as outlined below:

+ denotes that a student is securely working at the specified point, there may be very few areas of weakness and the student could with increased effort reach the next point.

= denotes that a student is safely working at the specified point, there may be some significant weaknesses which as a consequence if the student continued to work at their current output they are unlikely to move either up or down from the point.

- denotes that a student is starting to work at a specified point or is at risk of dropping to the point below the specified one due to a range of weaknesses or gaps in knowledge. These students would require additional work and/or intervention may be necessary to ensure they remain at that point.

9. What are the changes for each subject?

A brief introduction to the changes they are introducing are:

- the English language GCSE will require better reading skills and good written English
- the English literature GCSE will encourage students to read, write and think critically; it will assess students on challenging and substantial whole texts and on shorter unseen texts
- the mathematics GCSE will provide greater coverage of areas such as ratio, proportion and rates of change; it will require all students to master the basics, and will be more challenging for those aiming to achieve top grades
- science GCSEs will cover new content, including the human genome, life cycle analysis and space physics, and they will be more mathematically challenging

- the history GCSE will require students to study more historical periods; it will cover three eras - medieval, early modern and modern - and will concentrate more on British history
- the geography GCSE will require students to use maths and statistics, and will concentrate more on UK geography; it will also require students to carry out at least two pieces of fieldwork
- languages GCSEs will be more demanding and most exam questions in modern languages will be asked in the respective foreign language
- the art and design GCSE will emphasise creativity and drawing; the DfE will remove the concept of 'endorsed' and 'unendorsed' courses and replace it with a series of separate art and design titles
- the computer science GCSE will require students to understand mathematical principles and concepts such as data representation, Boolean logic and different data types; students will also have to understand the components of computer systems, and write and refine programs
- the music GCSE will require students to read and write staff notation, understand chord symbols and analyse unfamiliar music
- the physical education (PE) GCSE will emphasise the use of data to evaluate physical activity; students will be assessed in 3 different activities, including at least one team sport - a list of sports and activities that schools can offer as part of the new GCSEs is available
- the drama GCSE will require students to understand texts and performance in their social, cultural and historical context; students must study at least 1 performance text in depth and at least two extracts
- the food preparation and nutrition GCSE will teach students about the scientific and nutritional properties of ingredients - this knowledge will help them prepare and cook healthy meals
- the religious studies GCSE requires students to study two religions; it also gives them the opportunity to study the philosophy and ethics of religion, including learning about non-religious beliefs.

10. How will the changes affect my child's challenge grade report?

From September 2016:

- the challenge grade reports for Year 11 will incorporate the new 1-9 grading for maths and English in addition to the A*-G grades for the rest of the subjects. This information will be useful for college applications
- Key Stage 3 will move to the new 1-9 grading system.

11. Website links:

Further information on the GCSE reforms can be found at the following DfE websites:

PowerPoint for parents explaining new education reforms for GCSE and A-Levels

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/538640/Qualifications_reform_-_resources_for_teachers_-_slide_pack.pptx

New GCSEs - get the facts

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform/get-the-facts-gcse-reform>

Grade descriptors for each GCSE subject

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grade-descriptors-for-gcse-graded-9-to-1>

New Maths GCSE - parents information guide

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/261118-gcse-9-1-maths-parent-learner-guide.pdf>