

November 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Year 8 Reports

This letter is to provide some accompanying information about the reports you will receive on Go4Schools throughout the year.

The system for use with Years 7 – 9 is based upon “Age Related Expectations” (A.R.E.s). We asked Subject Leaders to come up with a series of statements about what content pupils need to know and what skills they should be able to show by the end of each year, if, ultimately, they are on track to achieving strong passes (grade 5s) at G.C.S.E.

Enclosed with this letter is a booklet, showing these A.R.E.s. for each subject. Please keep this safe for future reference. There will be a new booklet for each year.

We then categorise pupils in one of five ways at each Tracking Point (TP):

SA = Significantly Above

Ab = Above

On = On

App = Approaching

WT = Working Towards

Those pupils who are working ‘on’ A.R.E. are making steady progress towards achieving these statements by the end of the year.

Pupils who are working ‘Significantly Above’ or ‘Above’ A.R.E.s are already demonstrating a greater depth of understanding of the work being taught. Those in the ‘Approaching’ category are likely to be achieving, or on the way to achieving, some, but not all statements. Those pupils in the ‘Working Towards’ category are not likely to be meeting many of the A.R.E.s at present. However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that they are not working hard or to the best of their ability – please see the information below on targets and A2L scores, which will provide more contextual information.

For the remainder of this letter, I am going to explain each section of the report by using a series of FAQs under specific headings, so that you can read only the sections which may apply to your child’s report, once it is published. Not all questions will apply to all pupils. I apologise in advance for the length of this letter, but please keep it safe for future reference.

Targets

1. How have you set the target categories for my child?

We look at the pupils' levels of ability (in English and Maths) upon entry to secondary school.

If they started with very high KS2 results, then we would hope that they are maintaining this standard and we will often show their targets as 'Above' or even 'Significantly Above'.

If they entered secondary school with KS2 results around the national averages, we would hope that they would stay 'On' A.R.E.s and be on track, eventually, for achieving strong passes at G.C.S.E.

If they started a little lower than national averages, we would still target a child to be 'On' A.R.E.s at the end of this year, as we try to help them to 'catch up'.

Finally, if pupils started Thomas Adams with low KS2 scores, we would hope that they may be in our 'Approaching A.R.E.s' category by the end of this first year.

2. Why are my child's targets different in some subjects?

This will usually be because your child entered Thomas Adams with different KS2 English and Maths results. As we only have this data to work from, some Subject Leaders prefer to link a child's targets to one subject in preference to the other – depending upon the content and skills needed in that particular subject. Art and P.E. are the only two subjects which set their targets completely separately, by reference to ability levels demonstrated at the start of Year 7.

3. But my child is new to the school or didn't sit KS2 tests - how have you set the targets for him/her?

We asked the English and Maths Departments to carry out initial assessments of your child's abilities in these two subjects early on in their time at Thomas Adams School. From these, we can then set appropriate target grades.

'Current' grades – FROM TP2 ONWARDS

4. What do these mean?

From the second TP of the year, you will see 'Current' grades alongside the targets. I am explaining these now, so that you have all of the information in one letter. Teachers will use their knowledge of your son/daughter, any classwork/homework tasks completed and any assessment results so far, to decide which category your child is currently working in, **at that point**.

However, for many children, these 'teacher current' grades may very well stay the same throughout the year and simply confirm where your child is currently working, when compared to the A.R.E.s.

5. My child has targets of 'Significantly Above' (SA) but is not reaching them in these subjects – should I be worried?

Firstly, I would ask you to look at the details on the A2L scores shown on the report and explained below, in determining how your child is doing.

If these do not highlight any areas of concern, then the answer to the question is definitely 'no, you shouldn't be worried!' Some subjects may have done limited assessments so far, so it is difficult to achieve this high grade. In addition, if pupils are achieving this grade, it suggests that the pupil could ultimately be on track towards achieving grades 8 and 9 at G.C.S.E. (previously A* grades) – and the difficulty with this is that it is still very early days to determine what a pupil may need to achieve in order to reach these grades at G.C.S.E.

A2L (Attitude to Learning) scores

Attitude to Learning scores should be regarded as a key indicator of your child's attitude to school, work and likely future progress. These will usually be the first columns that we look at when mentoring pupils, before any reference is made to targets or current grades etc.

6. What does the 4-point scale mean?

Since we are using a 4-point, rather than 5-point scale, quite simply a score of '1' or '2' is good and a '3' or '4' is not. A score of '2' should be the aim for all pupils in all four areas in all subjects. '1' is exceptional. Any '3's indicate some concern and a '4' expresses significant concern. There is no "satisfactory" grade – '3' is not good enough! For example, if there has been more than one piece of homework handed in late between TPs (without a good reason), then this causes issues for both the teacher and pupil, so the maximum achievable score will be '3'.

7. What is the difference between 'effort' and 'behaviour'?

We have deliberately split up 'behaviour' and 'effort in lessons'. Some pupils may have very good behaviour in class, but, perhaps, not always be applying themselves fully and be making the best possible effort to reach their targets and we felt that there will be times when there is a clear distinction on this for some pupils.

8. Why are there some 'n/a' scores in the 'homework' column?

For this first report, there may be a couple of subjects showing 'n/a' and your child will probably know the reason why, if this is the case. It may be, for example, that a member of staff has been absent, or that, due to the homework rota, the subject has not set homework yet. If you are still concerned, please contact us at school.

Please discuss this report with your child and please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Dunkerley or Ms Lester (Heads of Year 8): esd@thomasadams.net or hlester@thomasadams.net with any general concerns, your child's subject teacher/s with any specific issues, or me (rsw@thomasadams.net) with any queries concerning understanding the report itself/target grades etc.

Over the course of this academic year, you will receive a total of 3 reports they will include the following:

TP1 November - A2L, Target A.R.E grade.

TP2 March – A2Ls, Target and Current A.R.E grade.

TP3 June – A2Ls, Target and Current A.R.E grade along with written reports (using the subject comment bank).

Monday 2nd December 2019 - Year 8 Consultation Evening, 4:30 – 7:30p.m.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Wilkinson".

Mrs R Wilkinson

Senior Teacher – Data and Assessment