

A guide to targets and flight-paths

We firmly believe in setting academic targets for students. Targets, if used well can inspire and motivate and can help young people see the possibilities that are open to them.

However, when talking about targets, there are some really important questions that need to be answered:

- How are they calculated? (Are they realistic?)
- How do we track and record progress?
- What happens if the target seems like it is not going to be met?

In this document, we aim to answer each of these questions in turn

How are targets calculated?

Like most schools in the country, we use 'Key Stage 2' data. You will remember that at the end of Year 6, your son/daughter did a 'SAT test' in English and maths. From this, they will have been given a level – we call this a 'Key stage level.' Again, like most schools in the country, we then – using government guidelines – calculate what it is likely for your son/daughter to get at the end of his/her GCSE studies from the starting point in Year 6. In effect, what the calculation says is that *most* students who get 'X' level in Year 6, go on to get 'Y' grade at GCSE.

You may notice a couple of issues with this. Firstly the 'most' in italics above. Obviously this is a statistical calculation. We always need to be aware of the individual behind the statistics. We firmly believe that if a student got 'X' in Year 6, then they should be set a target of at least 'Y', but what we have to be mindful of is whether our target setting is inhibiting ambition. In other words, should the student's target really be 'Z'? In order to make this assessment, we use information from our colleagues at middle schools, our own professional judgement and further 'baseline' testing that the students do when they come to us, to see if targets should be 'stretched.'

The second issue is that you will notice that in Year 6, your son daughter only did 'SATs' in English and maths, yet we calculate targets for all subjects from them. This may seem a little odd, but again, this is nationally calculated. A statistical calculation is applied to calculate that if students get a particular level in English and maths, they should go on to get a corresponding grade in History, geography, French etc.

Your son/daughter has been issued with his/her targets for all subjects. These should be written on the front of exercise books and students should be able to say what their targets are.

Can targets change?

Yes they can. We never want to limit a student's potential; so, in discussion with the student – if s/he is doing well, a new, higher target would be set.

How do we track and record progress?

Each term, for each subject, your son/daughter will complete a series of formal assessments. We use these assessments to calculate student progress towards achieving their target. The assessments we set are always based on the final examination they will take; so Year 9-11 always do GCSE style assessments. Departments work together to make sure student work is moderated to ensure that we are as accurate as possible in our judgement of student progress.

A note of caution

Students (and parents) can often feel dismay when they get first assessment results at the start of courses, as students may sometimes seem to be getting quite low grades. It is important to realise, that this is a journey – of flight-path, as discussed below – and that providing the student is 'on track' as they approach their final examination, there is no need to worry.

It is also important to appreciate that when students first attempt GCSE questions, they may seem rather intimidating and strange and results are at first relatively low; this is why we practice. What students and parents should notice is that as students have more practice and become more confident with subject knowledge and familiar with the skills required at GCSE, their progress will be more in line with expectation.

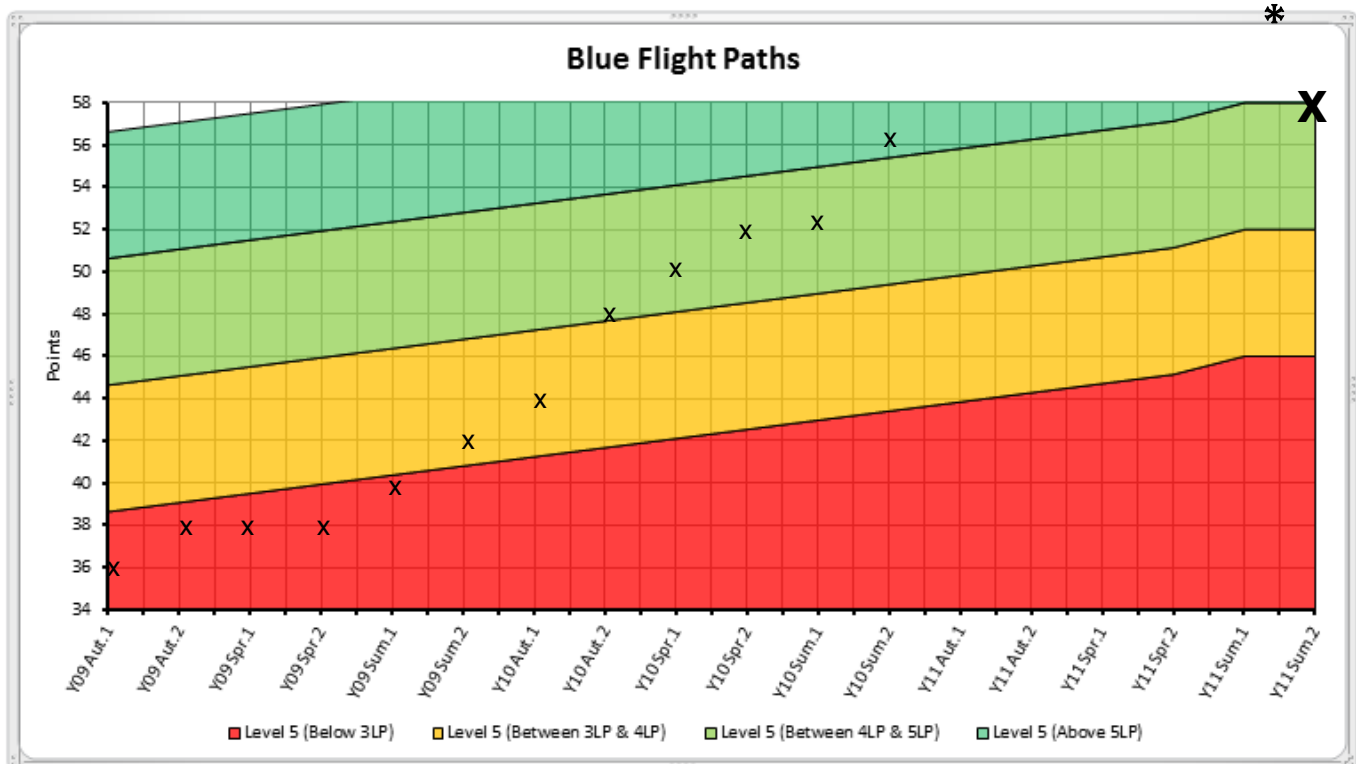
Flight-paths

Our 'Flight paths' are a way of communicating student progress. Students get used to us talking about their journey along the flight path and whether they are above or below the line.

The example below will hopefully make the system clear:

Grade	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*
Points	16	22	28	34	40	46	52	58

My Target Grade is **A***



There are four 'levels' of flight path. Each relates to students' Key stage 2 levels. The example above is for a student who achieved Level 5 in English and maths when she was in Year 6.

Her target is a grade A* (remember, this is calculated from national data) and is shown by the large 'X' at the top right. You will notice along the bottom of the graph, there are our data points (Y09 Aut 1, Y09 Aut 2 etc.) These are the assessment points in our student's journey.

When she has had her results for this subject – let's say it is history – she has marked them on her flight path – using the point to grade conversion at the top. In the example, our student is a Year 10 student and had plotted her progress through Year 9 and Year 10.

Our student didn't find Year 9 too easy in history and her grades were below target compared to where she should have been. There will have been support put in place to help her (see below) but also, remember from the above, that students may find the start of GCSE subjects quite difficult. This appears to be the case for our student, as she now –at the end of Year 10 – is doing well and is 'on target' to achieve her target grade.

You should find a 'flight path' for each of your son/daughter's subjects, stuck in the front of their exercise books.

Another note of caution

Common Assessments are a 'snapshot' of student achievement at a given time. They relate to a specific assessment on a specific aspect of the course. It is therefore quite possible for students to get a high 'CA' in one round of assessment, but lower in another. This may be particularly pronounced in subjects which may have 'practical' as well as 'theory' elements, or for subjects with discreet elements to the course. In such subjects, it is quite possible for a student to have a greater or weaker propensity towards a particular element. However, as the student moves through the course, we would expect those differences to become less pronounced, as assessments, as we get closer to the end of the course will become closer in nature to the final GCSE assessment.

What happens if the target seems like it is not going to be met?

By using 'flight-paths', students who are not making desired progress can easily be identified. Such students will need an 'intervention' of some description.

In the case of our student above, the intervention is likely to be in the form of detailed marking by her teacher in the student's book. These comments will be written by the teacher every time the book is marked and will give our student clarity about what she should work on. There will also be the opportunity for the student to respond to the comments in order to consolidate her learning.

In most cases, this is the only intervention required. However, if our student's grades were not improving sufficiently as she moved through Year 9 and into Year 10, we would implement additional interventions:

- Additional work set to support learning
- Catch-up classes at lunchtime or after school
- Parental meetings
- Targeted intervention lessons (English and maths only – when students are withdrawn from other subjects to have additional English/maths support)
- Modified timetable (Year 11 only – when we develop a bespoke timetable focused on key subjects to ensure students achieve the qualifications they need)