

Avoiding the Tramlines – tracking progress at key stage 3

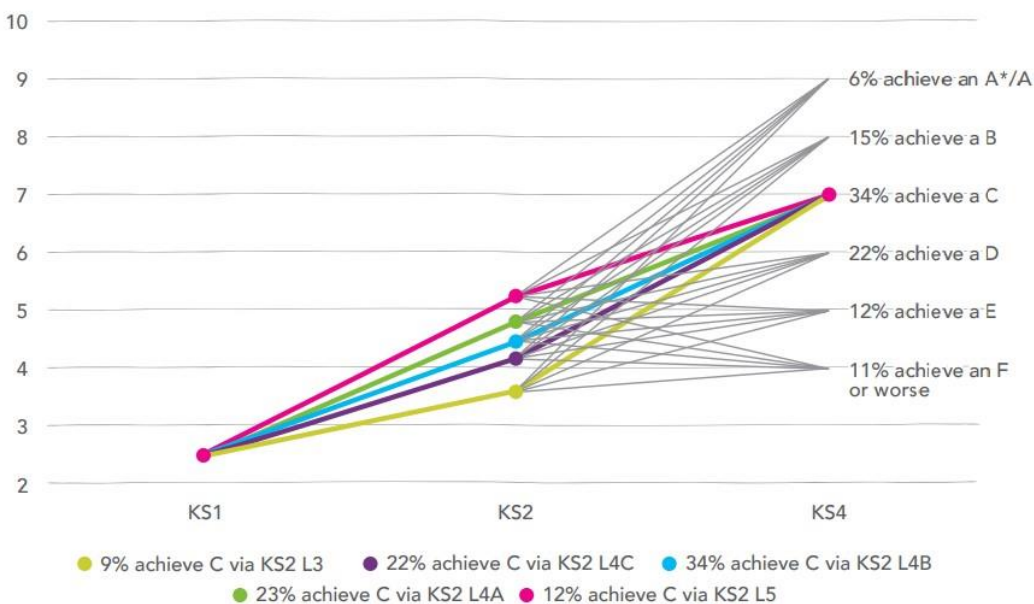
The most frequently-seen approach to assessment at KS3 is one where the school creates what could be called a ‘tramline’ from KS2 to Year 11 for each pupil, based on the average of their English and Maths scores at the end of year 6, and then report in each subject whether a pupil is on, above or below a ‘minimum expected grade’.

Your Progress from Years 7 to 11						
KS2 Starting Point In Levels	Mastery Starting Point	Y7 Target	Y8 Target	Year 9 Target	Y11 Minimum Grade	Y11 Target Grade
Level 2 and below	Working towards Foundation 1	Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3	E	D
Equivalent to	G-	G	F	E	E	D
Level 3	Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3	Intermediate 1/2	D	C
Equivalent to	G	F	E	D/D+	D	C
Level 4	Foundation 2	Foundation 3	Intermediate 1/2	Intermediate 3	C	B
Equivalent to	F	E	D/D+	C	C	B
Level 5	Foundation 3	Intermediate 1/2	Intermediate 3	Advanced 1	B	A
Equivalent to	E	D/D+	C	B	B	A/A*

There are several potential issues with this approach, including:

- not knowing whether the KS2 scores accurately reflect pupil ability
- assumptions made about future attainment in other subjects than En and Ma
- ignoring the fact that there is a range of outcomes from any KS2 scores (see below - from FFT)

More children get to the ‘right’ place in the ‘wrong’ way, than get to the ‘right’ place in the ‘right’ way!



How can we avoid the Tramlines?

- At the start of Y7, the best information about pupil attainment will be their KS2 results - but from that point onwards, **the best information about future attainment will be their current attainment**, i.e. the information accumulated from formative assessments and standardised tests, as shown in each Flight Path.
- A 'KS2 tramline' can set in stone what the school thinks the pupil will attain all the way through to year 11. **Yet it is based on another school's assessment of a completely different curriculum**. We should really have an expectation that all pupils could benefit from well-informed adaptive teaching, and aim for all pupils to attain at the higher GCSE grades.
- By saying a pupil was 'below or above expectation' rather than 'reporting what they are learning and how they might improve, could serve to orientate pupils' attitudes to their subject at too early a stage.
- Using a 'Working At' approach like this will mean that pupils will be working at very low grades in Y7. Furthermore, to record this (e.g. 1.1 1.2, 1.3 etc) would require a false level of granularity.
- Using the 'KS2 Tramline' approach with simplistic reporting could indicate a lack of planning in a subject. If a parent was to challenge a statement and ask how the teacher knows the pupil is 'below expectation' the teacher might not be in a strong position to provide the information necessary to support this judgement.

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In comparison with the 'Tramline from KS2' approach, the AWL approach integral to 4Matrix offers structure to the process of planning a Scheme of Work to address the New National Curriculum outcomes at KS3 and provide a progression in learning from year 7 to year 9.

It supports the identification of a manageable number of Learning Objectives which are neither atomistic, nor over-summative (as in using a single number, often unwisely split into sub-units). It provides an easy means to indicate whether pupils are mastering these learning Objectives - which teachers can use when they feel it is appropriate, and from home - using 4Matrix Infinity - if they prefer. They don't need to think about or record any numbers.

It then provides added value by producing forward projections of likely future attainment by the end of key stage 4 and providing Flight Paths which show a convergence of several estimates, including the development of mastery, standardised assessments, estimates from KS2, and Attainment 8 estimates.

It provides the means to produce reports which detail what pupils have been taught and how well they are mastering the Learning Objectives, and provides summative information for school leaders.

Importantly, it provides a good solution to schools which offers a sound approach to curriculum design and assessment, which saves time at every stage, and provides much value-added information for no extra effort than reporting what pupils are learning, a task which teachers would need to do whichever approach that they used.

Overall, we believe that 4Matrix, and the *Assessment Without Levels* system that it includes, avoids the tramlines by using evidence of pupils' current progress in mastering what they are being taught, to estimate future attainment.