



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
Cardiff

Assessment Policy

St John's College, Cardiff

ASSESSMENT POLICY

This policy applies to the following sections/s of the School:

Sixth Form and Senior School.

Version: September 2025

Rationale

Effective assessment provides information to measure pupil performance and improve teaching and learning. There are four strands to how pupils' progress is monitored at St John's College:

- 1.** Internal assessment in each subject: regular assessment and ASPIRE Grade formal assessments
- 2.** Key Skills
- 3.** Examinations: internal examinations, GCSEs and A-Levels
- 4.** Standardised tests

Different subjects and disciplines have diverse assessment needs and a rigidity of approach is neither desirable nor necessary. The aim of this policy is to ensure that assessment procedures are in place that will bring coherence across subjects whilst maintaining relevant and effective assessment in individual departments.

1. Internal assessment in each subject

Regular Assessment

Weekly assessment is recorded for most subjects, from homework or class work.

Occasionally, project work may span over more than one week.

Assessments may take a variety of forms depending on the assessment criteria for a subject; written exercises, topic tests, practical work, oral work, contribution to discussion, ICT assignments, spelling tests, project work, etc.

Where appropriate, self-assessment or peer-assessment is used. Self-evaluation is encouraged and used to develop a mature and reflective attitude in pupils towards their work.

ASPIRE Grade Assessments

Each term, a minimum of two assessments are identified in departmental Schemes of Work as ASPIRE Grade Formal Assessments and these will contribute to the academic profile of each pupil. They should reflect a range of skills relevant to each subject and be consistent within a department.

Assessments can be differentiated by outcome or task. It is important that assessment activities are suitably challenging for high ability pupils and provide positive and encouraging outcomes to lower ability pupils.

Marks for ASPIRE Grade Assessments must be converted to a grade so that they can be used alongside assessment marks in other subjects.

ASPIRE Grade Assessments contribute to the attainment grades on reports.

Further details of the ASPIRE Grade System can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2. Key Skills

Key skills are generally drawn from the common requirements in the National Curriculum Subject Orders or from GCSE specifications. They are taught in context within each subject and are highlighted in the SoW. There is no stand-alone teaching or testing of Key Skills. Progression in each skill area is planned and monitored.

Main Key Skills

Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)

Communication - speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Application of Number - interpreting information involving numbers, carrying out calculations, interpreting results and presenting findings

Digital Competency Framework (DCF)

Information Communication Technology - finding, exploring, developing and presenting information including text, images and numbers

Wider Key Skills

- Working with others - developing interpersonal skills to support working cooperatively with others to achieve shared objectives and have regard for others.
- Improving a pupil's own learning and performance - developing independent learners who are clearly focused on what they want to achieve. Skills include: target-setting, planning, learning, reviewing and interpersonal skills, such as communicating own needs, accepting constructive feedback, negotiating learning opportunities and support.
- Problem-solving - encouraging learners to develop and demonstrate their ability to tackle problems systematically. Three types or combinations of problems are dealt with: diagnostic problems that depend primarily on analysis to arrive at conclusions, design problems that depend mainly on synthesis to create a product or process, and contingency problems that typically involve resource planning and gaining the cooperation of others, e.g. when organising an event.

3. Examinations

Examination marks are probably the most memorable and significant summative record of which pupils (and parents) take heed. Whilst we understand their limitations, nevertheless, it is very important to ensure that pupils achieve as meaningful, fair and accurate a mark as possible.

Internal Examinations

Internal examinations are held at the end of the Trinity Term for all pupils in R12 to R14. R15 pupils will also sit assessments in the Trinity term in subjects where they are not entered for external GCSE examinations.

R15 and R16 pupils also sit mock GCSE examinations towards the end of the Advent term. Sixth Form pupils sit a progress assessment towards the end of the Advent term and will also sit a set of mock examinations at the start of the Lent term.

Examinations are set in all subjects with the exception of Games and PSE.

Oral and Art Examinations may be held just before or after the examination week.

- An examination timetable is drawn up for all pupils that allows for extra time for eligible pupils.
- Examination marks will be converted to grades so that pupils can compare their performance against their ASPIRE Grades. Grade boundaries set by examination boards are used for past GCSE papers.

External Examinations

GCSEs

- The majority of GCSE Examinations are sat at the end of R16. All pupils sit GCSEs in English, English Literature, Mathematics, Numeracy, two or three Sciences and Religious Studies. Most pupils also sit GCSEs in four option subjects.
- Early entry at GCSE is at the discretion of the school.
- November entry is not offered by the school.
- GCSE results are passed to the ISC and media for inclusion in national statistics published by the Times and Daily Telegraph.
- Pupils cannot re-sit NEAs (oral and written); their first attempt counts towards their overall GCSE grade.

A Levels

- Most students study four A level subjects at the start of Year 12 and drop to three subjects in Year 13 (obtaining 3 A Levels and 1 AS Level qualification).
- A Level results are passed to the ISC and media for inclusion in national statistics published by the Times and Daily Telegraph.

Music, Chess and Elocution Examinations

- IOC, ABRSM, Trinity Guildhall and LAMDA grade examinations can be taken in school at intervals through the school year.

4. Standardised Tests

Baseline assessments are used throughout all Key Stages. The data is nationally standardised within the Independent sector. Tests that are carried out with pupils are:

Nursery – ASPECTS (Cambridge CEM)

Infants – BASE & InCAS (Cambridge CEM)

Junior – InCAS (Cambridge CEM)

Seniors – MidYIS & Yellis (Cambridge CEM)

Sixth Form – ALIS (Cambridge CEM)

Alongside other nationally recognised tests, such as PTE and PTM (Progress Tests in Maths and English), PUMA, PIRA (Literacy and Numeracy) and NGRT, NGST (Literacy), as well as internal assessments, all scores are used to measure pupils' progress through each section of the school.

Predicted grades generated by baseline assessments (modified by internal assessments where appropriate) are used by teachers to set ASPIRE Grades at the beginning of each academic year. These targets are set in the context of chances graphs, showing the possibilities of exceeding predicted grades.

Performance data is also used to identify pupils who may struggle academically, MAT pupils and the pupils who are coasting in their 'comfort zone'. Lesson planning is informed by this information to ensure individual pupil success.

Appendix 1

Information on the ASPIRE Grade System

St John's College strives to provide high quality care for each individual, equipping girls and boys with the aspirations and values that lead to rewarding careers and successful personal relationships. The ASPIRE Grade system provides an overview of pupil progress each term. Pupils are tracked on the entire body of their work throughout the term: classwork, homework, assessment and effort.

ASPIRE recognises:

Achievement

Success

Perseverance

Innovation

Resilience

Excellence

The ASPIRE Grade system will:

- **Support** pupils and provide intervention where necessary
- **Challenge** pupils to achieve their very best
- **Encourage** independent learning and self-reflection
- **Provide** opportunities for parents and pupils to monitor academic progress throughout the year

What are ASPIRE Grades?

Each pupil is given an ASPIRE Grade for each subject that they study. This grade is the minimum the pupil is aspiring to achieve throughout the academic year in each subject they are studying.

ASPIRE Grades at Key Stage 3 are based upon a numerical system unique to St John's College. The numbers used are 1-5, with 1 being the highest grade possible. On very rare occasions, high achieving pupils may be awarded a grade 0 to demonstrate that they are working above even the highest level.

This has no relation to the numerical grading system now being used by English examination boards at GCSE (grades 9-1).

For pupils in R14-U6 studying GCSEs and A Levels, however, their ASPIRE Grade for each subject is a letter (A*- G). On very rare occasions, high achieving pupils may be awarded a grade A** to demonstrate that they are working above even the highest level.

We aim to set realistic ASPIRE Grades for pupils and expect all pupils to achieve, if not exceed, the ASPIRE Grade set for them in each subject. ASPIRE Grades can be thought of as world records in sport – they are designed to be broken and are not a limit on any pupil's achievement!

How do pupils know their ASPIRE Grades?

All pupils in R13 – U6 are given a paper copy of their ASPIRE Grades at the start of each academic year. Pupils in R12 will receive their ASPIRE Grades at the start of the Lent Term in order for teachers to set grades based on MidYIS data and in-class assessments. The ASPIRE Grade sheet is stuck into the front of a pupil's homework diary for ease of reference.

How are ASPIRE Grades decided for each pupil?

The ASPIRE Grades given to pupils are based on a range of prior attainment data as well as teachers' professional judgement. We have avoided basing ASPIRE Grades solely on a single test and have instead asked teachers to use their extensive knowledge of both the pupils and their subject curricula to come up with each grade. Of course, with any system, there may well be some miscalculations, and we will do our utmost to put these right as soon as they come to our attention.

Can ASPIRE Grades be changed throughout the year?

ASPIRE grades remain the same throughout one academic year so that a pupil's progress can be compared across a set period of time. ASPIRE Grades for each pupil are reviewed at the start of each academic year and may be raised or lowered if appropriate.

Do the ASPIRE Grades follow the National Curriculum?

As a Welsh independent school, St John's College is not obliged to follow the Welsh National Curriculum and has the freedom to implement its own schemes of work to best suit the needs of its learners. As a school, we feel that the numerical grading system (1-5) would fit better with our Key Stage 3 curriculum than using the traditional levels used in the maintained sector.

At GCSE and A Level, the ASPIRE Grades are aligned with the grades awarded by the Welsh Government at GCSE and A Level.

How will the ASPIRE Grades be used?

At the end of each term (Advent, Lent and Trinity), all pupils will be given a review grade for each subject based on their work throughout that term. The pupils will then receive a sheet (which is subsequently posted home) displaying their review grades, which are colour coded, as follows:

- **Blue** = above target
- **Green** = on target
- **Amber** = below target
- **Red** = significantly below target

Following receipt of their review grades, pupils will then spend a lesson with their class teachers discussing their reviews and making targets for improvement across the next term. We hope that the colour coded system will flag up any pupils who may be struggling academically and enable the school to offer support and intervention. We also hope that it will help congratulate those pupils who are consistently working hard and to the best of their ability, regardless of their ASPIRE Grades. Often, a change in the academic profile of a pupil is the first indication of a pastoral concern and so we hope that the system will also support and inform the excellent pastoral service already provided by the school.

We very much appreciate the support of parents with the ASPIRE system and encourage pupils and parents to discuss targets and reviews at home.