Our Ref: NGY/KON

November 2026

ALL KS3 PARENTS/CARERS

Dormston SCHOOL
Knowledge is Strength

Dear Parents and Carers,

Key Stage 3 Assessment: A New Approach

At Dormston, we are committed to ensuring that assessment is fair, meaningful and helps every student achieve their full potential. From this academic year, we will be introducing a new Key Stage 3 assessment system designed to provide a clearer picture of attainment and progress across all subjects.

How will students be assessed?
Students will continue to complete assessments throughout the year in each subject. These assessments will:

- reflect the curriculum that has been taught;
- include a range of question types and levels of challenge;
- allow all students to demonstrate success;
- stretch and challenge the highest attainers;
- revisit previous areas of learning to check that knowledge gaps and misconceptions have been addressed.

Reporting attainment: Bands 1 to 9
Attainment will be reported using a simple **Band 1 to Band 9** system.

- **Band 9** = highest attainment within the year group;
- **Band 5** = broadly average attainment within the year group;
- **Band 1** = lowest attainment within the year group.

Bands are determined by comparing performance across the whole cohort and provide a consistent way of reporting attainment across all subjects.

Understanding Prior Attainment and Future Success
We recognise that students arrive at secondary school with different experiences and levels of attainment. Each student will therefore be allocated a prior attainment band, based on an average of their Key Stage 2 Reading and Mathematics outcomes.

Research shows that prior attainment at Key Stage 2 gives a broad indication of the outcomes students are likely to achieve by the end of Key Stage 4. As an approximate guide:

- **Band 1** students typically achieve GCSE grades **1 - 3;**
- **Band 2** students typically achieve GCSE grades **2 - 4;**
- **Band 3** students typically achieve GCSE grades **3 - 5;**
- **Band 4** students typically achieve GCSE grades **3 - 6;**
- **Band 5** students typically achieve GCSE grades **4 - 7;**
- **Band 6** students typically achieve GCSE grades **5 - 8;**
- **Band 7** students typically achieve GCSE grades **6 - 9;**
- **Band 8** students typically achieve GCSE grades **7 - 9;**
- **Band 9** students typically achieve GCSE grades **8 - 9.**

However, these are broad indicators and not predictions. Many factors influence success, including attendance, effort, motivation, homework, resilience and engagement with learning.

For example, students who join us in Bands 1 - 3 can and do go on to achieve GCSE grades 7, 8 and 9, particularly in subjects where outcomes are less closely linked to prior attainment in reading and mathematics, such as Art, Drama, Music, PE and some vocational or practical subjects.
Likewise, students who enter secondary school in Bands 7 - 9 do not automatically achieve the highest GCSE grades. High prior attainment can be undermined by poor attendance, low effort, weak organisation or a lack of engagement with learning.

For this reason, our focus is not simply on a student's attainment band, but on the progress they make from their starting point. We want every student, regardless of prior attainment, to be ambitious, work hard and achieve outcomes that reflect their full potential.

The key message is simple: a prior attainment band is a starting point, not a ceiling.

Measuring Progress
Following each assessment, a student's current attainment band will be compared with their prior attainment band.

This allows us to identify whether a student is:

- performing above their expected standard;
- performing in line with expectations;
- requiring additional support or challenge to meet their expectations.

This information helps teachers adapt learning and ensures that every student is given the opportunity to succeed.

Preparing for GCSE Success
Our assessments are carefully designed to build the knowledge and skills students will need at Key Stage 4. Assessment styles, language and expectations will gradually mirror those used at GCSE, helping students develop confidence and examination skills over time.

How Assessment Information is Used
Assessment information will help us to:

- celebrate achievement;
- identify students who may need additional support;
- provide greater challenge for high-attaining students;
- inform teaching and curriculum planning;
- report clearly to parents and carers.

Working Together
Assessment is only one aspect of a student's education. Attendance, effort, homework, resilience and engagement in learning remain key factors in long-term success. We encourage all students to act on feedback, develop effective study habits and take pride in their learning. We believe this new approach will provide a clearer, fairer and more consistent way of reporting achievement and progress while supporting the highest possible outcomes for all students.

Thank you for your continued support. If you have any questions about the new assessment system, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr Grundy

Mr Grundy
Deputy Headteacher