

What are these minimum grades all about?

CP – Concerned Parent

MS – Marches School

CP Why has my child been set minimum GCSE grades when they are only in Year 7?

MS We give minimum grades at the start of each 'Key Stage' - Year 7 (KS3), Year 10 (KS4) & Year 12 (KS5 – A' Levels).

CP Okay. How do you come up with them?

MS Most students joining The Marches from primary schools in England have taken SATs exams at the end of KS2. Their performance will have been scored between 80 & 120.

100 is considered the national average.

Primary schools in Wales do not have SATs. Progress made at the end of KS2 is graded using National Reading and Numeracy Tests. We use these to set comparable scores.

CP Yes, but how do these primary school test results and assessments translate into GCSE grades?

MS The government shares national data for every child with a third-party data modelling organisation. It is then matched to actual GCSE results obtained in the past by children in the top twenty percent of English schools who had similar KS2 results.

CP Who does all this fancy modelling work and are they any good?

MS The Marches uses Fischer Family Trust (FFT), it holds a government licence to do this work. FFT is run as a non-profit making organisation and is a registered charity. More information can be found here: <https://fft.org.uk/>

CP So these grades are targets for my child?

MS No. We don't use the term 'Target'. FFT are very careful to remind us they provide **estimates**. We use these estimates to give predicted minimum grades. We expect most students at The Marches to achieve higher results.

CP So why not just aim for every child to achieve straight 9's at GCSE?

MS We know that every child progresses differently. Having minimum grades gives a baseline to aim for.

We use them to set objectives that aim high and that your child can see as realistic and achievable for them if they work hard.

Teachers use a system of 'grade ranges': Poor GCSE grade – one grade lower than the minimum grade; Good GCSE grade – one grade higher than the minimum grade; Exceptional GCSE grade – two grades higher than the minimum grade.

We use the language of minimum to support students to aim for more than the minimum.

We stopped using the word target after parents told us staff and their children were both fixing on the lowest grade and only aiming there.

CP But not all children develop at the same rate. Can I get the minimum grades changed if I feel they don't reflect the progress my child is making?

MS Yes. We have three data collection points each year – December, April and July. Parents and students can request a review of minimum grades at any point by contacting the Head of Academic Progress.

Reviews are evidence based, so please ensure any request is supported by consistent results. We send you a link to a form to make requesting this easy every time we share a data report with you.

CP That seems a bit clearer. What if I have any more questions, or want to go over anything?

MS You can always speak to the Head of Academic Progress and subject teacher. They will be pleased to discuss things with you.