



Millthorpe  
school

# Getting the Best Out of Targets

Information for  
Teaching Staff,  
Parents and Carers

Autumn 2022



# Benchmarks (Estimates), Targets, Predictions

## **FFT**

The Fischer Family Trust (FFT) is a charitable organisation established by Mike Fischer whose fortune was created through the company Research Machines – a major supplier of IT to British schools over the last 40 years. They provide data services to UK schools and to the National Health Service.

In Education, they provide benchmarks of likely future performance and indicators which schools can use to evaluate their performance. They are a very small organisation and work in conjunction with local authorities to support their service.

## ***Benchmarks (Estimates)***

- The FFT provides benchmarks for each student of their likely future attainment.
- It does this by using information from many thousands of students in the past and linking attainment at one age (e.g. GCSE results at 16) with attainment at a previous age (e.g. KS2 test results at 11, CAT scores in Year 7).
- At Key Stage 4 (KS4), the FFT provides for each student the percentage chance of getting each grade for 30 GCSE subjects. They also show the benchmark grade. They do not give benchmarks for non-GCSE subjects e.g. BTECs. The KS4 benchmarks are based on KS2 test results.
- At KS4 the FFT also provide benchmarks for whole school indicators such as the basics, (proportion of students gaining grade 4 in Maths and English).
- **BUT** – the FFT database may not hold all students and some students didn't take KS2 tests, so it can't provide benchmarks for everybody.
- **ALSO** – benchmarks are not prophecies. Just because **many** students progressed from a particular KS2 score to a such-and-such a GCSE outcome doesn't mean that **this** student with their particular circumstances is destined to follow suit.
- The FFT uses a range of models for benchmarks of which 3 are common:
  - **FFT-50** - to make average progress (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) based on prior attainment, month of birth and gender of the students
  - **FFT-20** - to make high progress (top 20<sup>th</sup> percentile) based on prior attainment, month of birth and gender of the students
  - **FFT-5** - to make very high progress (top 5<sup>th</sup> percentile) based on prior attainment, month of birth and gender of the students
- At Millthorpe we use **FFT-50 for evaluating** our progress. For **aspirational targets** we use **FFT - 20**.

## ***Targets***

Everybody hates targets that someone else has set for them. They chip away at a sense of self-control. At Millthorpe, targets have to be agreed with the person responsible for achieving them, whether that is a student, a subject teacher, a Head of Department or the Headteacher.

No target should just be a copy of FFT benchmarks.

Research suggests that around 50% of the final grade is predictable by knowing a student's previous attainment. The other 50% is determined by the quality of teaching, the support at home, the determination of the student and other factors.

**The purpose of a target is to motivate a person into higher achievement.**

This is so important, I'll write it again.

**The purpose of a target is to motivate a person into higher achievement.**

Always remember this if you are helping a student arrive at a target or you are negotiating a performance management target with a teacher.

It is important that any achievement target is both realistic and aspirational if it is to motivate a person into higher achievement.

At Millthorpe we never use the targets a teacher negotiates with their students to evaluate a teacher's performance. We use the student outcomes matched against FFT 50 benchmarks from FFT to help us do this, along with lots of other information about teachers such as their classroom performance and feedback to students. For this reason, a teacher can encourage a student to aim high without being afraid of being penalised for it should the student fall a little short of a target. Aim high without fear.

## ***Predictions***

Predictions are made by teachers of the final outcomes of students in KS4.

In KS4, tracking is a forward prediction of the likely attainment of each student at the end of Year 11, taking into account their current quality of work, their level of effort and the maturation that the rest of the course will bring. We use grades like 6+, 6-, 5+, and 5- for the majority of GCSEs. A grade like 5- means a low 5 whereas a 5+ means a high 5.

# Individual student benchmarks

Subject	FFT Benchmark Based on subjects challenge setting	Pupil target data Combine data, knowledge & aspiration					
	Chance of each grade or higher	Risk of lower grade	Benchmark grade	Chance of higher grade	Target grade	How likely?	Target reviewed?
Biology		49%	6- FFT20 High	25%	?		
Chemistry		27%	5+ FFT20 High	48%	?		
Computing		49%	5- FFT20 High	31%	?		
English Language		44%	5- FFT20 High	28%	?		
English Literature		40%	5 FFT20 High	33%	?		
Geography		40%	5 FFT20 High	38%	?		
Mathematics		35%	5 FFT20 High	32%	?		
Music		39%	5 FFT20 High	42%	?		
Physics		49%	6- FFT20 High	29%	?		

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## Student charts – example

Students get benchmarks for their chosen GCSE subjects as above.

We use FFT-20 benchmarks, so these grades already contains aspiration.

# KS4 student target-setting at Millthorpe

## ***The process***

Student targets must be ASPIRATIONAL.

Student targets must MOTIVATE STUDENTS.

Therefore, targets must be negotiated and engage students in thinking about their successful futures.

1. Students are introduced to the target setting process in assembly. All the uncertainties are explained as well as the vital role effort and determination play in achievement.
2. They are encouraged to think about what grade they would like to aim at in each of their subjects and parents and carers are encouraged to discuss this at home.
3. After a short time, they meet with their subject teachers to negotiate targets.
4. Subject teachers add negotiated targets into our pupil database.

## ***The role of form tutors***

Encourage students to think hard about their targets. Make sure students write their desired target grades in their planner in pencil before they negotiate with subject teachers.

Explain again, where needed, all the uncertainties covered in their assembly and help them with individual issues. Explain again that it is their effort and attitude to learning which will determine which grade they will actually achieve, not just their scores from KS2 on which the chart is based.

Discuss individually how some subjects might be important for their career aspirations. Link achievement in school to their intended careers, however uncertain those might be.

Emphasise how important English and Maths will be for their long-term future.

## ***The role of subject teachers***

Set work for the whole class while you meet individually with each student.

The meeting should be brief as each will already know what target they would like. In most cases, one lesson will be enough to negotiate individual targets for the whole class.

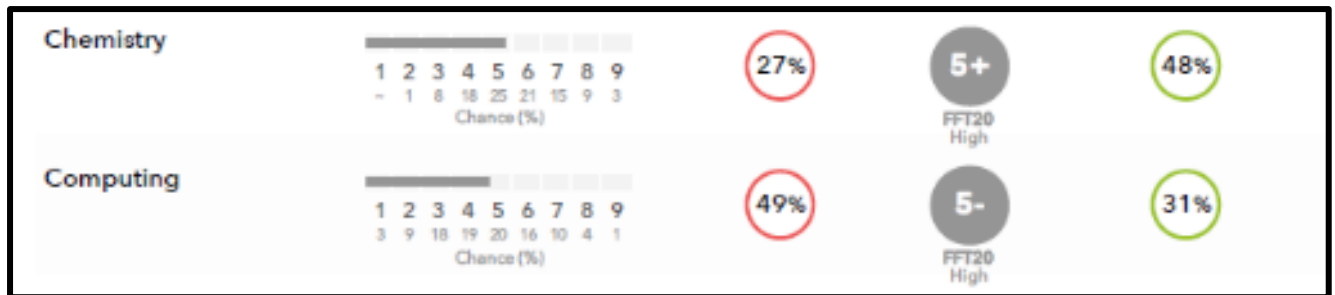
Make sure the student is being appropriately ambitious but not unrealistic.

Try to guide the student to a grade at or above the FFT-20 most likely estimate (but see the detailed guidance). Record the agreed target in your mark book and in SIMS.

Make sure the student records it in their planner for your subject.

## Detailed Guidance

Take a close look at the subjects below. Is the benchmark grade suitable? Is the next higher grade nearly the same probability or perhaps the next lower grade is nearly as likely?



For Chemistry the student has a 25% chance of a grade 5 (the median grade), but nearly a 50% chance of getting a 6 or higher (21% + 15% + 9% + 3% = 48%). It would not be silly to aim at a grade 6 if the student was ambitious and willing to work hard.

For Computing on the other hand, the student has a most likely grade of a 5 but a low estimate of exceeding it (only 31%). It would not be aspirational to drop to a grade 4, but it would be a challenge to aim for a grade 6. Everything depends on circumstances though. If the student has worked really hard in KS3 these benchmarks may be too low. Perhaps the student is keen for a grade 6 in your subject. If so, it will do no harm to say "OK, that's really ambitious, and if you are prepared to put in the work, I'll agree it. Remember, it's not the target that will get you there, it's the work you put in."

## General principles

For almost all students, the benchmark grade or the one above it is ambitious. Try not to drop below the FFT- 20 benchmark grade. If you do, have a good reason ready. Be positive and supportive – be very careful of your language. There are some scenarios which are a bit more difficult to deal with ...

### ***Scenario 1 – wildly ambitious student***

They want not one grade higher than their FFT- 20 most likely grade, but two or more. Option 1: agree it, anticipating that your first assessment may show them to be well under target. If it is, you can re-open the discussion leading to a more realistic target. Option 2: explain that the work you've seen already suggests they are well below that target – suggest that they accept something more realistic, but you are always willing to raise the target if they produce higher quality work.

### ***Scenario 2 – anxious high achiever***

They have many high benchmark grades across their subjects but worry about whether they can achieve them – they lack confidence in their ability or their capacity to work hard enough. This is often about the 8/9 boundary. Don't sweat it. Accept the lower grade, build up their confidence and renegotiate the target grade once they gain confidence.

### ***Scenario 3 – not engaged with the process***

This may be to do with the student thinking they are low-attaining. Perhaps they have low benchmark grades. Tell them you want them to do as well as they can to give them a successful future, and you think they can achieve at least a grade “X”. Tell them you'd like to put this down – is that OK? It is important they hear that their achievement matters to you (despite it not seeming to matter to them at the moment).

### ***Scenario 4 – upset by the benchmarks not being very high***

This may be a student whose KS2 results were modest but who has worked very hard to raise their achievement by the end of KS3. The benchmarks based on KS2 results thus under-estimate their real potential. They are typically a hard-worker and keen to do well. Alternatively, they may be a student with a very high KS2 English mark and a very low KS2 Maths mark – FFT just averages them out and benchmarks middle grades.

Emphasise the uncertainties in the benchmarks - “they are produced by a computer which only knows your KS2 results, your date of birth and your gender, it doesn't know how hard you work”. Encourage them to raise at least one grade above FFT- 20. This is one of the possible exceptional cases in which you might consider a target two grades above the benchmark.

## New GCSE Grades

All GCSE subjects are now examined using the new grading structure of grades 9 to 1 which was first introduced for English and Maths with the 2017 examinations. In 2018, most other subjects adopted the new grades and in 2019, all GCSE subjects used the new grades. Parents may be more familiar with the legacy grade structure of A\*-G. The black dotted line on the diagram below shows how the new grade boundaries match the old grades. With the new grading system the government is regarding a grade 5 as a “strong pass” and this is the minimum grade the student will need if they wish to study the subject at A Level. Grades 4 and 7 are equivalent to the bottom of the old C and A grades respectively. Engineering and Child Development are not GCSEs and are graded differently. They are graded as follows; Pass (P1 or P2), Merit (M2) and Distinction (D2 or D\*2).

**Legacy GCSE Grades**

**New GCSE Grades**

A*		D*2	9
A		D2	8
B		M2	7
C			6
D		P2	5
E			4
F		P1	3
G			2
U			1
			U



## Learning Conduct Grades

Grade	Learning Conduct
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>GOLD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Highly motivated &amp; engaged; effort is consistent and sustained</li> <li>· Contribution in class is active and sustained</li> <li>· Always responds well to challenge and perseveres when work is difficult</li> <li>· Will take active steps to find out more without prompting</li> <li>· Is always motivated to respond positively to feedback and improve work</li> <li>· Both oral and written work are always the best that the student can produce.</li> <li>· Meets deadlines and completes homework to the highest standard</li> <li>· Works highly effectively independently and with peers treating all students and staff with dignity and respect at all times</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Mostly engaged in the subject; effort is regularly good</li> <li>· Usually contributes actively in class</li> <li>· Regularly responds well to challenge and usually perseveres and seeks to overcome difficulties</li> <li>· Will seek support when needed</li> <li>· Regularly responds positively to feedback and acts upon the feedback</li> <li>· Oral and written work is usually the best that the student can produce.</li> <li>· Usually meets deadlines and homework is regularly completed to a good standard</li> <li>· Usually works well independently and with peers treating students and staff with dignity and respect</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>AMBER</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Effort is variable, as is engagement</li> <li>· Does not often contribute actively in class or contribute positively</li> <li>· Frequently does not respond well to challenge</li> <li>· Does not actively seek ways to overcome challenge or difficulties</li> <li>· Needs to respond more to the feedback given to demonstrate progress and improvements</li> <li>· Oral and/or written work needs to improve. It is frequently not completed to a level that demonstrates that they have tried.</li> <li>· Needs to meet all deadlines and produce more work of their best quality, including homework</li> <li>· Sometimes does not work well independently and/or with peers and does not always treat students and staff with dignity and respect</li> </ul>
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>RED</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Frequently disengaged with subject/learning. Very little effort evident, if any.</li> <li>· Contributions to learning are limited. Behaviour may have a negative impact on other learners</li> <li>· Does not respond well to challenge. May give up or distract others</li> <li>· Must make use of support provided and keep trying when work is difficult</li> <li>· Does not use feedback effectively to improve work. Must read comments on their work and use the information to improve</li> <li>· Oral and/or written work is well below expectations. There is evidence of sustained poor effort and work is often incomplete.</li> <li>· Frequently misses deadlines and/or work is often poor quality. Homework is incomplete or sub-standard</li> <li>· Does not work positively independently and/or with peers. May have an adverse effect on peers. Rarely treats everyone with dignity and respect</li> </ul>

