

'Assessing the impact of introducing the AQA award system on the outcomes for our pupils'

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Executive summary

The AQA Unit Award Scheme is a way of recording pupil's achievements. It allows for our pupils to have the opportunity to have their achievements formally recognised with a certificate after a unit of learning is completed. It is a scheme tailored to support those with additional learning needs. An 'Achievement for All' ethos is adopted by the scheme, making the qualifications accessible for learners of any age and ability.

The AQA Unit Award Scheme can support our pupils in progression to further study, employment and becoming independent in society.

(Information taken from AQA website (2021) - <https://www.aqa.org.uk/programmes/unit-award-scheme>).

The AQA Unit Award Scheme was introduced to our pupils at Tram House in September 2020. Pupils in KS5 can undertake academic and vocational units, with the vocational units relating to individual pupils' interests.

Throughout this case study, I will explore the impact the introduction of the AQA Award Scheme has had to the school and discuss the achievement and progress that has been made by our pupils.

Introduction

The following case study will discuss the impact of the AQA Award Scheme on the Sixth Form pupils, which involves 20 pupils aged 16 to 19 years old. The Sixth Form is made up of three classes who each have an array of learners. One of the classes has 9 pupils who attend the Sixth Form provision at South Thames College, which provides opportunities for more independence and independent learning opportunities, including access to more group learning.

Pupils across the Sixth Form, who are able to access academic classes take part in maths, English, science, PSHE and computing lessons. Our earlier learners can take part in gaining and maintaining group skills and will engage in sensory-based activities. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a vocational achievement which has an intended focus on pupil's individual interests. The vocational strands are made up of: the Creative Industries, Travel and Tourism, Hospitality and Catering, Retail and Community and Horticulture.

Method

Through long-term and medium-term plans which work alongside assessment records, progress is constantly monitored. Once certification is granted, the certificates given can be used to visually measure the outcomes the pupils have achieved. At the beginning of each term, subject content is planned by teachers in line with the national curriculum and lessons are subsequently planned to deliver this content to the pupils. Several AQA Award units are chosen for each subject area for the academic and vocational pathways and throughout the teaching term assessments alongside the unit outcomes take place. Evidence through worksheets completed and photographs of activities are collected to mark the learning taking place.

An AQA tracker, allows for progress to be measured in each subject. Units start from pre-entry level, to entry level and then level one and two. Level two is the equivalent of a GCSE, so the levels prior are taught to help prepare our pupils and give them the opportunity to reach further qualifications. The tracker is used to record which units have been completed and which can be used taught next to ensure progress is being made. As seen in Figure 2, an AQA 3-year planning document has helped teachers plan the subject content for future years and to be able to show that the learners will be able to progress through the content, ideally progressing through the levels to reach level 2.

Assessment grids used for the whole school are collected alongside the AQA tracker. The assessment grids are used to record learning and progress made throughout the terms. It is filled in termly by teachers and progress is measured and calculated as a percentage in each term.

Results

Evidence of progress made is tracked through an academic and vocational tracker.

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Evidence of progress made is tracked through an academic and vocational tracker. Number of units completed are recorded alongside pupils' names as seen in Figure 1. The records from the tracker are used to assist teachers in planning the teaching content on a 3-year rotation. This is to enable pupils to make progress through the subjects and ideally progressing through levels from pre-entry to level 2.

An example of the maths tracker is shown in Figure 1. A total of 15 units have been completed across 14 learners in maths. This involves a range of subjects including money and time. An example from a unit involving money named 'shopping with support,' allowed pupils to practice skills they need to use when going shopping. This has allowed pupils to continue to practice and develop these practical skills they will need to adopt outside of school.

Vocational units provide pupils with the opportunity to make social progression. Pupils have been able to work on skills they would need out and about in the community, such as travelling on a bus. Opportunities to work on independent living skills have been introduced, such as cleaning and washing up. These skills have now been embedded as part of the everyday routines at South Thames College. Further opportunities for work experience have been provided, such as admin jobs, which have allowed for pupil to develop skills that can be used across different areas.

Prior to the introduction of the AQA Award System some pupils would not have had a chance to access learning like this. It has given staff members a range of ideas and opportunities to provide learners with a fuller and more personalised curriculum, which takes into consideration pupils' own interests. All learners from the Sixth Form have been able to access teaching either through academic or vocational subjects, and the range of subjects timetabled for pupils has increased. Pupils have been exposed to trying new things and working on their personal interests has allowed for pupils to experience their interests further.

Wide range of subject content to choose from allows teachers to plan the same unit of content achievement and easily deliver at differentiated levels. Consequently, pupil engagement levels and attention to learning have increased, and so additional academic progress has been seen.

Awards Ceremonies will be held at the end of each term to celebrate the achievements made across the academic year. Pupils are invited to share their achievements with their teachers and peers and could recognise the amount of work they had achieved through their certificates. Staff and pupils enjoy recognising and celebrating their achievements and can reflect on the learning occurred throughout the term.

As this is the first year of delivering the AQA units, we are unable to clearly measure whether there will be progress made throughout the levels. However, following the 3-year planning document, teaching of higher levels will be delivered to the pupils, if suitable, so it is likely progress through the levels will be made.

Discussion

To conclude, the introduction of the AQA award system has had a large and meaningful impact to the school and the pupils. Pupils' achievements are being recognised and the teaching and learning of the units is enjoyed by all. The subject content taught provides pupils with skills they can take with them to further education and potential employment, as well as the potential opportunity to gain further qualifications.

Figure 1: AQA Unit Tracker – Maths

	Aut 1 - now submitted				Aut 2 - now submitted				Sp 1 - now submitted				Spring 2 - now submitted			
	105741	110240	110630	110960	110245	105742	113625	105583	110246	110811	113382	110247	71043	110250	85118	
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Figure 2: AQA 3 Year Planning Document

Year rotation and Term	A Spr 1	A Spr 2	A Sum 1	A Sum 2	B Aut 1	B Aut 2	B Spr 1	B Spr 2
Half Termly Theme	Being Safe	Nature	Imagination	Holidays	Mr. Myself and I	Celebrations	Being Safe	Nature
Subject area	Time	Time in practice	Measure	Measure in Practice	Money	Money in Practice	Time	Time in practice
AQA Math Units pre-Entry	110020MATHS SWITCHING TIMES ON CLOCKS	111468MATHS UNDERSTANDING DAYS EVENTS WITH SUPPORT	111480MATHS LENGTH AND WEIGHT	108959MATHS MEASURING WITH SUPPORT	114920MATHS PRODUCTION TO MONEY UNITS IN	103386SPENDING AND RECEIVING MONEY	111468MATHS TIME	108189MATHS MATICS 25/100S THE TIME
	110204MATHS DAYS OF THE WEEK				110089MATHS PRODUCTION TO COIN RECOGNITION	103817VERBAL EXCHANGE ON A RETAIL SETTING	111182TIME HALF PAST TIMES	108809USING TIME WITH SUPPORT
	110833DAYS OF THE WEEK USING COMBOS						103058MATHS COUNTEING ANNOUING TO DIGITAL TIME AT OUR SERVICE INTERV44	
AQA Math Units Entry		107088MATHS CALENDARS, TIME AND MONEY		103994MATHS MATICS REASURES	103281MATHS MATICS MONEY	MATHS MATICS MONEY MANAGEMENT	103809MATHS MATICS 21 PERSONAL EXPENSES	102283MATHS MATICS CALENDARS AND TIME
							103809MATHS MATICS CALENDARS AND TIME	102283MATHS MATICS CALENDARS AND TIME