



# Achieving outstanding academic success with **Alps analysis**

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## Case study

### Cowbridge Comprehensive School

#### Context

Cowbridge Comprehensive has a thriving Sixth Form with a total of around 340 students over the two year groups. We also attract between 10 to 20 students annually from other schools, who join the Sixth Form in Year 12. Every student who applies to join us from another establishment is interviewed by the Senior Leader of Achievement for Key Stage 5, who also provides them with options advice; looking at predicted GCSE grades helps us to match these students to suitable courses. The school has an excellent reputation for academic success, our students follow a range of study programmes, with an emphasis on traditional A Levels.

Cowbridge Comprehensive offers 28 AS and A level courses together with BTEC Sport and the Welsh Baccalaureate. We had our first Alps reports for the summer examination series of 2014.

#### Using Alps Reports

The speed at which the Alps reports are produced means that at the start of the academic year, curriculum leaders are provided with detailed Alps reports which form part of the target setting process in both Year 12 and Year 13. The report is also used as part of the Self Evaluation and Review process, where Curriculum Leaders are invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and SLT link in the September/October following the examination results. This gives departments the opportunity to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of the outcomes in their subject area. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to focus on the development of targets for the following year. All staff have an excellent understanding of the subject level Alps thermometers (thanks to annual training) and as a result, teachers have a sense of pride when they see an Alps grade of 3 and above, putting them in the top 25% for progress in their subjects compared to the national benchmark.

The Alps report is also used in order to inform the school Governors of the outcomes of AS and A Level results. This allows the Governors the opportunity to share in the successes of the school and provide challenge where appropriate.

At the start of Year 12 each student calculates their own Alps grade. This gives the student an understanding of the method behind the Alps grade, together with providing ownership. During form time and assembly, students are given information about how this grade is used both at a classroom and school level. Although teachers are given both Year 12 and Year 13 Alps grades, each student is only given their Year 13 grade in order to raise aspirations.



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The school has three whole school Data Capture points (Review Weeks) throughout the year. Staff enter a 'working at' grade and an 'attitude to learning' grade. The 'working at' grade is then measured against the Alps grade and is rated as red, amber or green against the target. The data is examined at both a departmental level and by the Sixth Form Achievement Team, who have an overview across all subjects for each student. Students are interviewed by their form tutor and asked to set SMART targets in order to improve their grades. The Achievement Team interview underperforming students and interventions are put in place to help the student. If students continue to underperform, parents are informed. Those students who achieve greater than the Alps grade are presented with vouchers and other incentives during assembly and praise letters are sent to parents.

Alps targets are particularly useful when writing reports to parents. Together with the students' 'working at' grade and 'attitude to learning', the Alps grade is also included. Staff also find the Alps data very useful when speaking to parents, not only at parents' evenings, but also when discussions arise throughout the year.

In 2017, we believe that the ability to monitor our students using data provided by Alps, helped us to achieve our best ever A Level results. There was a 100% pass rate at A Level with 86% of all examinations sat awarded an A – C grade, with 41% of examinations

awarded the top grades of A\*-A. 90% of our Year 13 students went on to study their chosen degree at university. The results of the academic year 2017-2018 gave us an Alps T score of 2, meaning that we have made progress at least equivalent to the top 10% of Alps schools nationally.



### Summary

Alps provides Cowbridge Comprehensive School with a joined up, cohesive approach. It allows the school to analyse, reflect and celebrate on the achievements of our students and staff through self-evaluation and focused target setting.

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IS 621807