



Using Alps to Support a Relentless Focus on **Aspiration**

Heather Lewis
(Assistant Headteacher at **Cardiff High School**)

Context

Cardiff High is an exceptionally high achieving and aspirational school of approximately 1680 pupils, 490 of whom are in the Sixth Form. The school was inspected in March 2019 and the following is an extract from Estyn's report.

"Pupils' achievements have been amongst the highest in Wales over recent years, and yet the school has striven relentlessly to improve in every aspect of its work. In particular, the school has focused on refining its approaches to supporting all teachers to hone their craft. This has resulted in highly engaging teaching, confidently and imaginatively delivered, and rooted in a strong understanding of subject knowledge and learning."

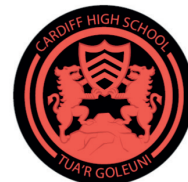
Estyn Inspection Report - Cardiff High School March 2019

The school was particularly proud that Estyn appreciated that, despite consistently high outcomes, as a school we are not complacent, that we are always striving to improve. Our use of Alps to enhance data analysis is very much part of that ongoing process.



Alps at CHS - Past and Future

For a number of years we have used Alps at Key Stage 5 to promote and support ambitious target setting and as a self-evaluation tool at both whole school and departmental level. Right from the start of KS5 students are part of the process. They spend time learning about the Alps methodology and calculate their own Alps MEGs as part of their induction. We encourage our students to use these as a starting point when setting targets for themselves. They are encouraged to consider not just the target itself, but more importantly, the steps they need to take in order to achieve their goals. These targets are re-visited at key points throughout KS5 and students' performance in relation to these targets is a very useful starting point for learning conversations and mentoring activities. We also involve parents and carers in the process and they are guided through the Alps methodology at a welcome evening at the start of Y12. This enables them to take part in meaningful conversations about aspiration and progress.



More recently we have extended our use of Alps to KS4 and we are now making strategic use of the Alps Connect interactive software across both key stages. The flexibility offered by Connect has allowed us to enhance both our self-evaluation and our in-year tracking. Using Alps has enabled us to analyse the value added performance of specific groups of learners at whole school, departmental and individual pupil level. Data analysis obviously cannot provide the answers, but it does often pose interesting questions or possibly throw up unexpected suggestions. No data analysis system is perfect, but the huge advantage of Alps is that due to the transparent nature of the methodology, we can see exactly where Alps outcomes have come from. This allows us to use it intelligently; to determine when the analysis has identified an issue which needs addressing and when, as sometimes happens, it is simply an anomaly of the mathematical model. This means that we can have confidence in our analysis of the findings. Our responses are strategic, measured, and most importantly, have impact.

We are now using MPZ (monitoring point zero) reports in order to pro-actively focus on the achievement and progress of Y11 and Y13 pupils right from the start of the Autumn term. MPZ reports are invaluable in allowing us to identify potential under-performance, while there is still time to do something about it. Alps allows us to consider every pupil in every subject at every grade level and this approach is proving an effective way to address the concept of “tracking” the capped 9. Our belief is that if every department is aspiring for every pupil to achieve the very best grade they can, then the capped 9 does not need to be tracked! Pupils themselves do not aspire to meet a threshold or a performance indicator, they talk about achieving the best grades they can, so it makes sense for us as teachers to be doing the same thing. Our use of Alps is still evolving and with the support of the Alps team, we are constantly discovering new ways it can enhance what we do. Both the education and the technical team from Alps are extremely professional, well-informed and helpful. Their first-hand experience working in schools means that they have a clear understanding of what we need as teachers and leaders and do everything they can to provide it.



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9am-5pm – **01484 887600**
or you can email us at:
info@alps.education

Please visit our website
for more information:
www.alps.education



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