

## Using MidYIS at Trent College

Ian Sanderson

Head of Academic Development

**Trent College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in the East Midlands.**

There are approximately 770 pupils in years 11-18 and Trent also has its own junior school, The Elms, on site. Trent College has used the CEM centre projects for over 10 years: MidYIS in years 7-9, Yellis at KS4 and Alis in the sixth form. The Elms also makes use of Pips.

### Why choose MidYIS?

Trent College has three principal aims in subscribing to the MidYIS project.

#### 1. An objective Baseline measure and comparisons over time.

We need to establish an objective assessment of pupils' academic potential on entry. As a selective school, we find that our intake is coached very well in preparation for the entrance examination and for their Year 6 SATS so the MidYIS test provides an accurate and reliable indication of pupils' academic strengths and weaknesses. This is an important first step in knowing what realistically to expect from them and how to assess their academic performance during KS3, for example, we would obviously expect pupils with high MidYIS scores to be achieving well across the board. Although we don't maintain a formal Gifted and Talented register, as we prefer to make opportunities for enrichment available to all, we do keep a weather eye on those in the 125+ bracket and ensure they are encouraged to make the best of their abilities. We also look out for any pupil whose score in any component may suggest that some parts of the academic programme may prove challenging, so that we can be ready to intervene to help them when they find things tougher going, particularly in Maths and English.

*"We also look out for any pupil whose score in any component may suggest that some parts of the academic programme may prove challenging, so that we can be ready to intervene to help them"*

At the end of Year 7, once we have really got to know our pupils, we establish a benchmark against which to measure their academic achievement in Year 8 and this process is repeated in Year 9. The MidYIS score is the starting point for this, but we also use professional judgement, based on pupils' academic performance during the year and our knowledge of them as individuals.

*"The MidYIS score is the starting point ...we also use professional judgement"*

As we have been running with the project since 1999, we also can compare the overall standard of our intake with that of previous years. As the results are standardised, this enables us to see clearly not just what the average standard is, but also the proportion of pupils that lie on a scale ranging from 'far above average' down to 'below average' over a period of years. The effectiveness of initiatives to recruit a higher overall standard of pupil into Year 7 can thus be effectively measured and queries from teaching staff as to how one particular cohort compares with another can be reliably answered.

#### 2. Identify pupils in need of learning support

The second, and equally important, reason for using the MidYIS test is to identify pupils in need of learning support. The results are processed very quickly and are passed on to our Head of Learning support as well as pupils' tutors. In this way we can quickly identify any individuals who may have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. They are then

screened using a sophisticated, dedicated program and learning support can then be provided where necessary. Using the MidYIS test as a first filter in this way has meant that we have been able to act much more quickly to help pupils with learning difficulties that had not been picked up by their junior schools, before these children start to fall behind their peers and suffer the frustration and unhappiness that comes with this.

***“Using the MidYIS test as a first filter we can help pupils with learning difficulties that had not been picked up by their junior schools”***

**We always publish the MidYIS results to parents**, providing a summary sheet as well as a detailed appendix explaining the tests in more detail. This has been predominantly a positive step, as parents have generally welcomed an objective assessment of their children’s potential and all parties have nearly always found it helpful to explore any problems or unexpected results at an early stage in a child’s senior-school career. In many cases the results have backed up what parents already knew, informally, about their child. The parents of a Year 7 pupil, for example, were worried about their daughter’s relatively low non-verbal score. In discussion it emerged that she had always found it more difficult to work with shapes than with numbers and words and the MidYIS test result merely confirmed this. The focus of the consultation could then move on to what difficulties in subjects such as Maths and Design Technology this could cause and how best to resolve them. We test our pupils again in Year 9, as we have some new pupils joining us at this stage and we also think it important not to rely on just one baseline test. There are few significant discrepancies between scores in years 7 and 9, but these cases are often the basis of helpful dialogues with parents and tutors.

***“There are few significant discrepancies between scores in years 7 and 9, but these cases are often the basis of helpful dialogues with parents and tutors.”***

### **3. To assist in GCSE option choices**

This brings us to the third reason we use the MidYIS test: to provide high-quality information to assist Year 9 pupils with their GCSE options choices. On the CEM centre secure website there is a spreadsheet we can download which provides predictions for pupils based on their MidYIS score. This is very helpful, as we can adjust the predictions to take account of our school’s value-added history and we can also choose between predictions based on national results or independent schools’ results. From the spreadsheet we are able to print off chances graphs for each pupil, based on their individual score and our adjustments. Rather than just giving a bare prediction, these show what percentage chance they have of obtaining any particular grade. This helps pupils think about what they are most likely to achieve and what they will need to do to get there.

### **We switched to the computer-based test**

Initially we chose the paper-based tests for MidYIS, but recently we have moved over to testing on-line. At first we did this very early in the September term, but now we wait for a couple of weeks as the turnaround time for the on-line tests is very rapid – initial, prestandardised results are available almost instantly – and it's proved less stressful for the pupils to settle in before being tested. Pupils have enjoyed the on-line testing much more than the paper-based test. It feels much less like an examination, as they are comfortable with computers and the experience is more interactive. We are also able to fit in absentees more easily and take a bit longer over the testing process as it doesn't all need to be done at the same time on the same day, so scheduling the test in an ICT lesson is an easy job. More detailed feedback is also available by downloading charts showing a pupil's answer patterns, making it easier to see why he or she obtained a particular score.

***“Pupils have enjoyed the on-line testing.... feels much less like an examination”***

### **Prompt, efficient support from the MidYIS Team**

Interpreting baseline tests and value-added data inevitably raises occasional questions and we have appreciated the fact that our queries are quickly and efficiently dealt with, both by phone and e-mail.