

7 practical ways of helping GCSE students improve their grades

1. **The 4 strikes.** The specification is divided up into sections, preferably the key questions. Students are then given four opportunities over the two year course to answer variations of that question. There might be one done in class during the normal teaching programme in Y10, one in the Y10 exam, one in the Y11 mock and then one in class as an essay plan during revision time. That way you know that students have had lots of experience of thinking of different ways of approaching that topic not just trotting out one standard answer.

2. Providing **typical answers** at grades E, C and A/A*; students work on the grade above their own, seeing what might be missing from their answer.

3. **Putting indicative content** in mark schemes especially showing depth of detail. Pupils can then mark scripts on the basis of what is included and what is left out.

4. Working on **improving answers** not just assessing them. Can you turn this E grade answer into a grade D answer? Have you succeeded?

5. Students answer a past question for 30 minutes. They are then shown the mark scheme and given a **further 10 minutes to improve it before handing their improved answer in.** Pupils in pairs explain to a peer, who is working on the grade below them, what they need to do to improve.

6. Students are given space to **add supporting detail** to an answer where it has been deliberately left out. Under the teaching approaches section there

are a host of model answers to GCSE questions which also appear in the outstanding lessons section at KS4.

7. Students are given **8 starter sentences** in answer to 8 examination questions. They guess, simply from the one line, which type of question is being answered. This encourages them to see what is meant by analysis and evaluation.