

# Bridging the gap to AS and A Level

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# Introduction

- ▶ What the research can tell us
- ▶ Thinking about and discussing how we can support learners moving to AS and A Level
- ▶ Feedback on the '*Next Step Guides*'

# What the research can tell us?

- ▶ Compared to transition at other academic stages, there is little research on the move to AS and A Level.
- ▶ We have to draw on the literature which has considered other transition points.

# What challenges do learners face?

- ▶ Increased level of academic challenge
- ▶ Working with new teachers or known teachers in new settings
- ▶ Changing teacher expectations
- ▶ Increased independence
- ▶ The need to develop new working strategies



*I think it's more the fact that opposed to the teachers feeding you the information you've actually got more of an active role in your workload and what you are doing, you're not just relying on the teacher anymore.*



# How is transition positive?

- ▶ Study at AS and A Level allows learners to express their increasing social maturity
- ▶ Learners are often excited about the opportunity to develop new friendship groups, study new subjects and be treated in a more adult way.
- ▶ Study at AS and A Level offers learners an opportunity for a fresh start
- ▶ AS and A Levels provide learners with opportunities to fulfil their aspirations after school



*...I like having a sense of more freedom, instead of being given all of these set rules. Obviously we still have the set rules, but it changes because now we're slightly older we're treated in a more adult way.*



“

*For some the experience will be exciting. These students will tackle the challenges thrown up by new learning and social experiences. For others, the experience will be far less enjoyable and may even be traumatic*

Burton and Dowling (2005)

”

# Which learners are most at risk?

Those learners at greatest risk are those who have:

- ▶ experienced problems or failures in subject areas they were previously comfortable with
- ▶ a lack social maturity
- ▶ low self-confidence
- ▶ underdeveloped organisational skills
- ▶ low self-efficacy
- ▶ come from familial backgrounds in which they are the first to study at this level
- ▶ struggled with the pressure associated with examinations.

# What can we do to support learners?

- ▶ Encourage the development of self-regulative strategies before the move to AS and A Level
- ▶ Support learners in setting clear and manageable goals
- ▶ Share expectations and sources of support
- ▶ Encourage older learners to share their experiences of transition to AS and A Level

“

*... it really is helpful to talk to teachers about how you are doing or what you can do to improve because it gives you something to aim for.*

”

**What does this mean for our schools and classrooms?**



# What problems do we face?

- ▶ Is the curriculum content as expected?
- ▶ Are the teaching approaches different?
  - ▶ Independent research
  - ▶ Communication expectation
- ▶ Is the workload as expected?
  - ▶ Reading round the subject
  - ▶ Lesson time vs independent study

# Why is there a problem?

- ▶ Why do learners choose particular subjects?
  - ▶ Subject content or teacher personality
- ▶ How are learners informed about courses?
  - ▶ Information share or sales pitch
- ▶ Do school targets have an impact?
  - ▶ Focus on examination grades

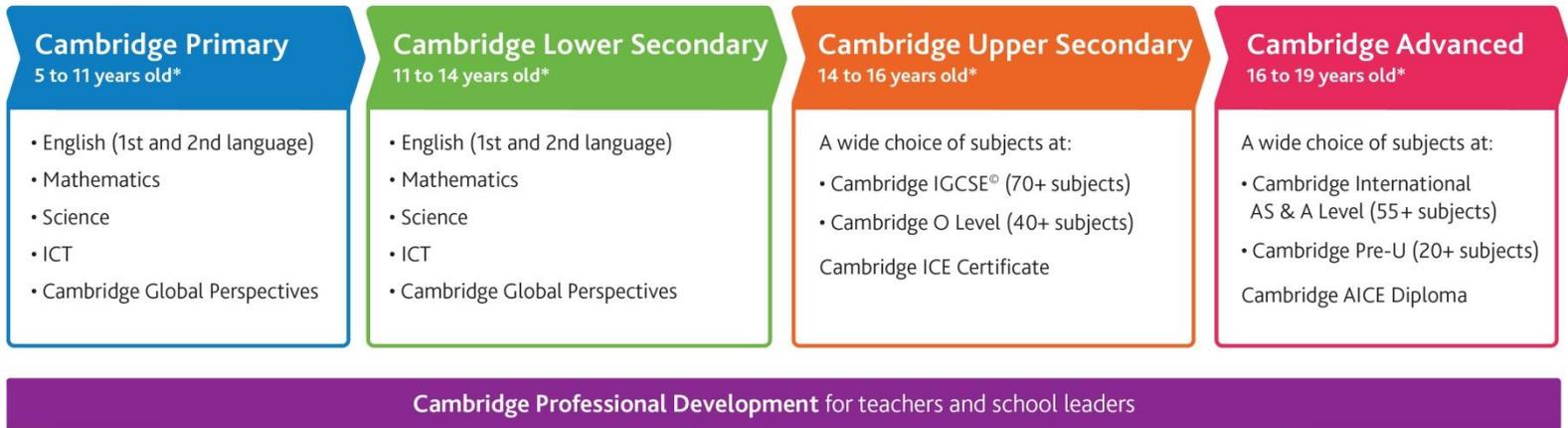
# The bigger picture

- ▶ When do you need to start planning for the move to AS and A Level?
  
- ▶ What is the focus of life in school?
  - ▶ Learners
  - ▶ Parents
  - ▶ Teachers
  - ▶ Management

# The Learning Pathway

## Cambridge Pathway

A clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19

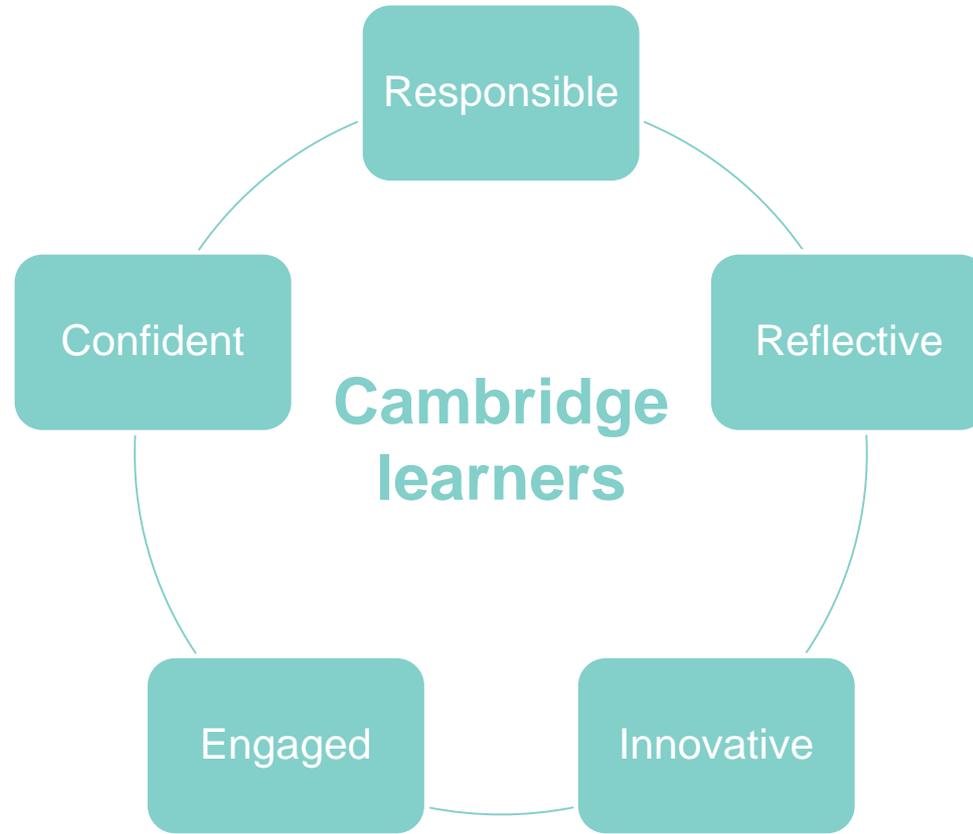


\*Age ranges are for guidance only

Learn • Discover • Achieve

▶ Are the foundations strong?

# The Cambridge Learner



- ▶ How can this be a focus in the classroom?

# Preparing for change

- ▶ Are there opportunities to develop new skills?
- ▶ Is there time to fail?
- ▶ How are expectations communicated?

# Development of skills

- ▶ As their current teacher, do I know what skills are needed at AS and A Level?
- ▶ Do I use different teaching approaches in lessons?
  - ▶ Group work, learner presentations, investigations
- ▶ Do my learners take responsibility?
  - ▶ For their, and other's, learning
  - ▶ For monitoring their progress



Mistakes are the portals of discovery

**James Joyce, author**



# Making time to fail

- ▶ Empowering 'not getting it right'
- ▶ Encouraging perseverance
- ▶ Developing reflection
  
- ▶ How much time is allocated to IGCSE?

# Summary

- ▶ Not just the class teacher – but a whole school approach
- ▶ Skills developed in advance
- ▶ Engagement at an early stage
  - ▶ Group work
  - ▶ Learner presentations
  - ▶ Investigations
- ▶ Do my learners take responsibility?
  - ▶ For their, and others, learning
  - ▶ For monitoring their progress

# Next Step Guides



# Next Step Guides

- ▶ We are developing these guides to support you in creating the conditions for success as your learners prepare for their AS and A Level courses.
- ▶ The guides we are going to share are in development and we would like to know what you think.

Their current format:

- ▶ FAQs
- ▶ Skills and topics
- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Suggested classroom activities
- ▶ Bridging exercise.

# Next Step Guides

Tell us what you think ...

- ▶ What elements do you think are most useful?
- ▶ What would you like more information on?
- ▶ What format would you like these in?
- ▶ Who should they address – learners or teachers?
- ▶ What have we missed?
- ▶ How might you use them in your school?

Thank you  
Any further questions?

