



# Parent Briefing

## 'Success for All'

### How Students are Grouped for Teaching

There are many ways in which students can be grouped and placed in classes. Ensuring that students are taught in appropriate groups helps to support them to achieve the very best of their ability. This briefing attempts to share our thoughts around groupings and gives an overview of the set labels used.

#### Our Aims

Our priority is to ensure that every student receives high quality learning opportunities and challenge for all to achieve, regardless of which class they are in.

Most importantly we believe some of the essential parts of learning are:

- Appropriate teaching and support is in place to allow students to make good progress
- Marking and feedback takes place regularly to ensure each student knows what they need to do next.

**How We Group** - In some subjects, ability groups may be implemented and in others, more broad ability groups are established. Curriculum Leaders use the following information to help carefully construct these groups:

1. *Performance Data (including SATs results and standardised tests)*
2. *A full range of Performance Data from 'in school assessments'*
3. *The professional judgement of teachers*
4. *Recommendations from primary teachers in Year 7*
5. *Other factors, as necessary, may be taken into account in relation to each student's own needs and situation*
6. *The cohort make up.*

The way that subjects interact to make the school timetable is complicated. Subjects may exist in their own discrete blocks of half year groups, where the Curriculum Leader is able to set students independently of other subjects and allow for set movements without consultation with other subject areas. Some subjects may share common class setting, leading to the need for communication between linked subjects in order to establish and facilitate moves.

Essentially then, while we have to use numbers and letters to identify classes, 1 does not necessarily mean a top set and 6 a lower set.

## Classes at Key Stage 3

Class grouping will vary in its structure across different curriculum areas. The following list shows some of the ways that subjects may group students:

1. **Year 7.** Classes have set labels **T H O R P E**, along with set numbers 1 - 7 for Design Technology. Mathematics and science classes follow the same broad Schemes of Work, with students needing support following an appropriate scheme. Humanities classes (Geography and History) begin the year in House classes (for example, class **T** being Altair students on North and Polaris students on South).
2. **Year 8.** The curriculum needed in Year 8 is more complicated than that in Year 7. As a result, student groups can change when progressing from Year 7 into Year 8. New sets are created, with labels following **A N D R E W** as well as numbers 1 - 6 for PE and 1 - 7 for Design Technology.
3. **Year 9.** Students will have chosen the Design Technology subject that they will study in Years 9 and 10. Students will also follow their preferred humanities choice of History, Geography or both. As we start to consider GCSE courses for Years 10 and 11, subjects tend to exist in their own block in Year 9 (with the exception of PSHEE, Information Technology and Computing (IT and C), Art, Drama and Ethics). Students will be set so that they are following the correct pathways (for example working towards Higher tier in Mathematics). Students will experience Dance during PE lessons.

There are many possible variations to grouping students into classes that could be used within departments to make classes successful. However, the underlying principle is one of grouping to ensure appropriate challenge and effective differentiation of learning for every individual student.

## Classes in Key Stage 4

In Years 10 and 11 there continues to be half year groups of ability classes in the separate blocked core subjects (Mathematics, English, Science, Design Technology). Curriculum Leaders will ensure that the students follow the correct examination pathway relevant to needs and ability.

Preference subjects exist across the whole year group. Where a subject appears only once in a block the class will exist as a broad ability class, where the class teacher will differentiate work appropriately, so that every student is challenged to achieve the best of their ability.

## Procedures and Timings for Class Changes

Throughout the year there will be a need for class changes and teachers are continually assessing students both formatively (lesson by lesson outcomes along with homework tasks completed) and with summative assessments (end of topic/term assessments).

Where a subject appears in its own block, Curriculum Leaders and teachers will consider class groupings at appropriate times of the year and make any changes which will allow students to achieve their full potential.

Where a subject is linked with other subjects, a student may be proposed for a set change (in order to support the student) by any of the linked subjects. It is only when agreement is reached by all subjects that a student may be moved sets.

During the year some of our students will leave us and many more may join. This movement does have impact on the cohort, leading to a further need to make class changes.

A move of class should not be viewed negatively if the student is working as hard as they possibly can. Please remember, the numbers allocated to a class do not always relate solely to ability. We ask you, as parents, to support if a change of class is made, so that your child's motivation is maintained. Indeed, we have seen many examples where set moves that initially are seen as negative, have greater motivation and success. We will talk to students before any changes are made to classes so that they understand any changes.

## In Summary

We come back to our aims of each student knowing their targets, being taught and supported appropriately and knowing what they need to focus upon, whichever group they are placed in.

As you can appreciate from the examples given in this briefing, the timetabling and appropriate grouping for students is a very complicated task!

Just as you, as parents, wish your children to succeed to the best of their ability, Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form shares this desire. The staff are professionals who use their judgements to support, motivate and encourage.