

GORDON'S SCHOOL

STUDENT GROUPINGS IN SUBJECTS POLICY

The core principle that guides everything we do is **Putting Students First**.

1. Introduction

In the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and Modern Foreign Languages, students are taught within both traditional academic 'sets' as well as mixed attainment cohorts.

Gordon's recognises the specific and relevant difference between *ability* and *attainment* when discussing student setting – *ability* can be subjective and open to question and is difficult to quantify, therefore our setting decisions are based on *attainment*, which can be evidenced through assessments and classwork/homework, and thus fairly and consistently measured/applied across all students.

Where subjects are 'set', students may be in different sets across different subjects.

2. Principles

There are several reasons for this:

It is the belief of Gordon's School that students at Key Stage 3 learn most effectively in mixed attainment groups in the majority of subjects. This is based in long-standing educational research such as the Education Endowment Foundation which found that *"On average, pupils experiencing setting or streaming make similar progress to pupils taught in mixed attainment classes."*

However, we do recognise that, particularly in Mathematics, setting can aid the progress of students across the attainment range when teaching is specifically targeted to student knowledge and understanding. It is also understood that, as students' progress through KS3 and into KS4, setting by attainment across all the core subjects becomes more appropriate and can aid learning for the majority of students.

In non-core subjects, students are taught in mixed attainment classes, usually in their Tutor Group at KS3 and then in Options groups at KS4. Adaptive teaching plays an important role in these lessons to enable all students to be appropriately challenged and to learn at a pace that suits them.

3. Subjects

For the reasons outlined above, Gordon's groups students as outlined below:

Mathematics: Students in Mathematics are set from Year 7 through to the end of Year 11. The Department uses the mathematics component of MidYIS as the primary source of data for initial setting in Year 7, with KS2 data and teacher judgement used to support these decisions. All students follow the same scheme of work at KS3, regardless of their set, and a student's placement at this stage will have no bearing on their tier of entry for GCSE at KS4.

Modern Foreign Languages: Students in Modern Foreign Languages are allocated to one of French, German or Spanish at the start of Year 7 and are taught in mixed attainment classes during Year 7. Students will be set at the end of Year 7 into two ability groups per language. Setting into two sets per language will remain until the end of Year 11 according to attainment as outlined below.

English: Students in Years 7 and 8 will be taught in mixed attainment sets. Students in Years 9-11 will be placed into sets according to attainment as outlined below.

Science: In Years 7 and 8, Science is taught in mixed attainment classes across two mixed attainment streams based on Maths setting. The first stream will contain students in Maths sets 1-2 who will be re-allocated to mixed classes, and the second stream will contain students from Maths sets 3-5 who will be re-allocated to mixed classes.

In Year 9, when the GCSE course starts, Science moves to three attainment streams, each containing two parallel mixed attainment classes.

In Years 10 and 11, students will be placed in sets according to attainment, as outlined below.

Non-core subjects: No setting takes place in non-core subjects.

It must also be remembered that, even where setting does occur, any one set is still a mixed attainment group to a certain degree. Therefore, the normal expectation for appropriate adaptive teaching still applies.

3. Setting Criteria

Key Stage 3: Where setting does occur, it will be based largely on internal assessments, classwork and the teacher's professional judgement. Information from the student's previous school and Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Tests will also be used where available. In Year 7, the Surrey LEA baseline MidYIS tests are given early in the Autumn Term. This is another source of data for Heads of Department to use in their setting decisions. Throughout their time in Key Stage 3, ongoing assessments, classwork and the teacher's professional judgement will be used to determine appropriate setting decisions.

Key Stage 4: At the end of Key Stage 3, students will take internal examinations in the core subjects. The results of these examinations, along with internal assessments, classwork and the teacher's professional judgement will be used to determine core subject sets as students enter Key Stage 4. Heads of Departments may also make use of the data available from the Yellis tests students take at the start of Year 10. Throughout their time in Key Stage 4, ongoing assessments, classwork and the teacher's professional judgement will be used to determine appropriate setting decisions.

Sixth Form: Each student has achieved the minimum entry requirement for the Sixth Form and for the individual subjects they are studying, therefore groups in the Sixth Form are not set by attainment. Any variations in allocated classes is determined by the needs of the whole-school timetable, not student attainment.

4. Changing of Sets

Traditionally, students joining Gordon's will have an attainment profile above the national average, and it is important to remember that a student's set is reflective of their relative position within their specific cohort. It follows, therefore, that student attainment will vary relative to their peers over the course of their education. Set changes are an inevitable consequence of this and will take place throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

At Key Stage 4, however, set changes are less frequent, but do still occur at the discretion of the Department when teachers feel that a student would benefit from changing sets. It is important that sets are not seen to be static with no movement of students. Individual students will mature academically and make progress at different rates and, because of this, may need to change sets. It is important to understand that students may go up or down in their allocated set and any such changes are considered carefully and implemented in the best educational interests of individual students and the wider cohort. *Parental or student preference for a specific set allocation cannot, and will not, be taken into consideration in this process.*

It is the direct responsibility of Heads of Department to ensure that students are in the appropriate set for their attainment level, and to have a strategy for monitoring this. Each of the Departments that sets students, have arrangements in place to consider changes to the composition of the sets throughout Key Stage 3 and 4.

The decision to change the set of a student will be based on factors such as:

- Internal assessments
- Classwork
- Prep
- Teacher judgement

It is not always possible to forewarn parents when a student is being considered for a set move. This is because a set move does not constitute an academic concern, merely an acknowledgement that a student would be better served in a different set. Should specific academic concerns arise, however, Departments will always aim to be proactive in flagging them to parents as they occur.

When it is necessary to move a student to another set, either higher or lower, an explanation should be given to the student. Parents/Carers should also be informed in writing by the Head of Department or relevant Key Stage lead about the move and the reasons for it.

Jacqueline Pierce
Deputy Head (Curriculum)
Review date: September 2027