



# PRESTFELDE

## The Purpose of 'Setting' or Grouping Pupils

The purpose of 'setting' is to help teachers to better match their teaching to the needs of individual learners (to personalise learning) and thereby to enable each learner to reach or exceed his/her academic targets.

### Principles

With the exception of the Scholarship Stream, all pupils within the same year group will cover the same topics and concepts regardless of the set that they are placed in.

Although, depending on the abilities of the children and the nature of individual teaching styles, the pace and sequence of content may differ from time to time.

All Pupils are entitled to experience:

- Teaching and learning that is differentiated to meet their individual needs and capacities;
- Equality of opportunity to experience personal success;
- High expectations combined with care, concern and encouragement irrespective of level of ability.

### Types of Pupil Groupings at Prestfelde

For the purposes of teaching and learning, there is a wide variety of ways of grouping pupils. To avoid misunderstandings a common set of definitions is required.

**Class** - Pupils regularly taught together for a named course of study – a general term.

**All-ability Class** - Pupils taught together as a class, not constituted on the basis of their aptitudes or abilities.

**Parallel Sets** - Two or more sets of equal standing in a subject. The term "parallel sets" is sometimes used. Generally, this is used to enable smaller groups to be formed within a year group or class.

***Inherited Set*** - Pupils taught in a class in one subject constituted on the basis of aptitudes and abilities in another subject.

***Scholarship Stream*** - Pupils taught together as a single class across a wide range of subjects, on the basis of aptitudes and abilities. In order to prepare the high ability pupils for scholarships examination, it is necessary to group these children separately for most academic subjects.

### **Statement of Policy**

At Prestfelde, '**assertive grouping**' within a class is encouraged and expected. 'Setting' is supported, subject to the conditions detailed below.

The process of 'setting' is supported on condition that:

- It is transparent and open;
- It is primarily organised on the basis of challenging expectations of future performance (targets) which are themselves rooted in prior attainment.
- Gender and social considerations can play a part in considering pupils' best interests (as the understanding is that sets are based on aptitudes and abilities);
- Where there is clear evidence of a pupil's capacity to progress at a rate greater than prior attainment would suggest, the pupil may be placed in a higher set and the target adjusted commensurately;
- Where current assessment indicates that a pupil is working 'below target' there is clear intervention at class/subject/school level before other responses are considered. Demoting such a pupil institutionalises a lowering of expectations and will be approved by the Deputy Head (Academic) only in exceptional circumstances;
- The current assessment information used alongside targets in finalising set lists is 'fit for purpose' and comparable across the cohort;
- The appropriateness of the allocation of pupils to sets and the classroom experience of pupils across the sets is kept under regular review by the subject teacher and the Head of Department;
- Schemes of work and learning resources are modified to support teachers in achieving the purpose of setting and in working to the stated principles.

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures**

Teachers assess pupils' work and record outcomes in ways which both help pupils to improve and track progress against targets; Heads of Department (under the direction of the Deputy Head Academic) give guidance to their teams on assessment

policy and procedures, determine common assessment tasks to be used across classes and maintain and analyse assessment information within their departments.

They first populate draft set lists based on pupil performance and perceived potential. Where it is proposed that a pupil is included in a set on the basis of social or behavioural management rather than aptitude and ability, this is acknowledged and recorded at departmental level, drawn to the attention of the parents and form tutor and approval sought from the Deputy Head (Academic).

In drawing up lists, Heads of Department maintain a keen awareness of how setting will affect pupils' self-esteem and, if necessary, pupils with special needs. The Heads of Department provide setting information for parents, and are accountable to parents for setting decisions made. Heads of Department scrutinise pupil performance data on a 'set-by-set' basis in order to monitor and evaluate the effect on setting of the progress of pupils at all levels of ability.

Form Tutors are given the opportunity to comment on proposed set-lists before they are published to pupils and parents. Heads of School are well placed to bring a 'whole-pupil' perspective to final decisions. If, subsequently, it is proposed to move an individual pupil between sets, the Heads of School must be given the opportunity to comment and the approval of the Deputy Head (Academic) received.

The Deputy Head (Academic) is responsible to the Headmaster for keeping the setting policy of the school and its implementation across the curriculum under constant review.

### **Scholarship Stream Selection Process**

In the latter stages of Year 7, high-achieving pupils are considered for the Scholarship Stream. A number of factors are considered when choosing potential scholars:

- A pupil's internal examinations;
- A pupil's external National Standardised tests (MIDYIS, GL Assessment and Progress tests);
- A pupil's aptitude for learning;
- A pupil's absolute performance in individual subjects; and,
- Staff perception of a pupil's ability to exercise high-order thinking skills and their likely success in the process.

### **Assertions which underpin the policy**

Inevitably, setting is about ranking and sorting pupils to ensure that the highest quality of teaching and learning takes place at all levels of ability and to personalise a pupil's education.

The arguments generally advanced for, and against, setting are finely balanced. They involve a range of factors - academic, behavioural, social, statistical, pedagogical, regarding equality of opportunity. Personal opinions about setting are related to peoples' beliefs and values.

Learning is best when it is interactive and multi-sensory and when the learner is presented with demanding, varied, attainable and relevant challenges. This applies to all types of classes. Setting may make 'personalisation' more manageable, but not of itself assure it.

The notion of 'general ability' based on a single intelligence is not supported by research. At least 7 different intelligences are generally acknowledged. Each learner has a profile of intelligences in which strengths and weaknesses may be identified.

For some individuals, the differences between strengths and weaknesses are marked. An individual's preferred learning style(s) is related to his/her intelligence profile. Different aptitudes for different subjects partially reflect strengths and weaknesses in the intelligence profile.

The setting approved by this policy must promote a culture of high expectation and equal opportunity. Equal opportunity is about recognising differences and then making provision which sensitively takes these into account in such a way that all pupils have a real chance to experience success.

There is a widespread acceptance that there is a greater need for setting in subjects in which the acquisition of skills is particularly dependent on sequential teaching and learning and where teaching is focused on logic and formal theory – particularly, if content is heavily proscribed.

Progress in learning is not linear. Learning of individuals shows spurts and plateaux. Setting decisions based on differences at a particular time may advantage some and disadvantage others.

## **Practical considerations**

### **Timetable**

The timetable needs to reflect the school's aims and policies. However, it must also reflect what is possible being, of necessity, a collection of priorities, compromises and best fits.

1. The highest priority for setting is given to Mathematics, English, Science and Modern Languages.
2. A second level of priority is given to the Humanities and Latin.
3. Other subjects comprise a third priority level - but may set when setting can be timetabled and staffed without unacceptable restrictions on other year groups or other areas of the curriculum.