

19th July 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

## **KS3 English and Humanities Grouping**

From September the English and Humanities Faculty will be changing our approach to grouping arrangements and will move from grouping based on prior attainment to mixed ability grouping at Key Stage Three. We have taken this decision as we believe that ability is not a fixed state. All students have the ability to achieve high levels of success and we have high expectations of all our learners across our school.

For English, the move to mixed ability is an exciting one. We have always prided ourselves on having high expectations of our students and this is something that will be reinforced by the change to mixed ability. There will be no cap on learning, no predetermined sense of ability but rather every child will have the scope to excel and show their true ability in a class that absolutely allows stretch and challenge for all. With our sets always having been linked to the MfL choice for students, they have never been a true reflection of rank ability, regardless. In addition, the move means that our group sizes will be smaller for many classes.

The English department sees huge scope for this change. We have made connections with other local schools who teach in mixed ability groups, to visit and share ideas and teaching practice. We have also taken the opportunity to review our programme of study and will be making some changes to our curriculum offering which we think will be stimulating and beneficial to students.

According to evidenced based research conducted by the Sutton Trust, mixed ability grouping can and in many cases does lead to increased academic achievement for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is because mixed ability grouping allows students to learn from each other and to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter, as they are exposed to a wider range of perspectives and ideas. Furthermore, mixed ability grouping can help to reduce social segregation and promote social cohesion, as students from different backgrounds and abilities work together towards common goals.

Research also suggests that mixed ability grouping can be beneficial for teachers, as it allows for more flexible and responsive teaching practices. In a mixed ability classroom, teachers can tailor their instruction to the needs of individual students, rather than teaching to the middle of the class. This can lead to increased engagement and motivation among students, as they feel that their individual needs and abilities are being taken into account.

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This is particularly important for Humanities subjects where students are expected to engage in a range of debates and form evidence based judgements on a regular basis. Mixed ability groupings will help to ensure that students encounter a wider variety of viewpoints before considering and formulating their own. This will support the Humanities faculty in equipping students with the crucial social and analytical skills needed to be active members of society in later life.

We believe that switching to mixed ability grouping will help to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. We will be providing training and support for our teachers to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively teach in a mixed ability setting which will ensure all students thrive. Teachers will be teaching to the top and supporting students with the building blocks needed to access higher level content.

For high prior attaining students, we will ensure we are stretching and challenging them by increasing the depth, rather than the breadth, of their learning. Instead of adding in extra content for them, we'll make space for *any* student to explore the questions covered to a range of depths, depending on how well they are picking up ideas in a particular lesson. This model of 'digging deeper' is integral to ensuring our most able students are stretched and can achieve their full potential.

We understand that this change is different from previous years, but we are confident that it will ultimately lead to improved outcomes for all students. We look forward to working with you to ensure a smooth transition to mixed ability grouping in the upcoming academic year.

Yours sincerely



Mrs H Watts- Principal

Mr J Sayce - Assistant Principal for Progress and Achievement

Mrs A Nethersell Webb - Joint Head of English

Mrs N Hanner - Joint Head of English

Miss S Evans - Head of Humanities

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