



St Mary's School

CAMBRIDGE

Setting Policy

Ethos

A central tenet of Roman Catholic education is that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, should be treated as a unique human individual. St Mary's is committed to the belief that by embodying this principle in the delivery of the curriculum we are taking necessary steps to fulfilling Mary Ward's vision that in time women will come to do much.

Rationale

Setting enables teachers to match their teaching to the needs of their students more closely. Through a more personalised learning experience students are able to reach or exceed their academic targets.

Students have an entitlement that:

- Teaching and learning will be differentiated to meet their needs
- They will have opportunities to experience personal success
- They will be treated with care and encouragement by teachers with high expectations of them.

In addition, parents and teachers are entitled to expect that class sizes will be managed so that students will be known as individuals and that time can be taken to support them with their learning.

Review of Policy

The Deputy Head (Academic) and the Head of Juniors are responsible for this Policy.

The Policy will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team in March 2018.

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Junior School Procedure

Setting is not generally employed in the Junior School, however children are grouped from time to time as appropriate.

Senior School Procedure

Approaches

- All-ability classes – a class not grouped by aptitude and ability
- Assertive classroom grouping – students are allocated to short-term groups for a specific task which may, or may not, be ability based
- Sets – where students are grouped by aptitude and ability
- Parallel sets – two or more sets of an equal standing in a subject
- Inherited sets – where pupils are taught for one subject in a class grouped according to aptitude and ability in another subject
- Collaborative sets – where students are taught in the same set (established by pooling information across a number of subjects) for different subjects.

Criteria for Setting

Setting is used at St Mary's in English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Studies. Setting will be introduced in some Modern Foreign Languages from September 2013 and in Latin from 2014. When timetabling, the Deputy Head (Academic) is advised by Heads of Department about how best to group students to achieve these goals. Heads of Department will consider the following evidence when allocating students to sets:

- Entrance examination results (where appropriate)
- Additional entrance information (where appropriate)
- Topic tests
- End of term internal examinations
- Class work marks
- Homework marks
- Pastoral needs
- The teacher's professional judgement

Sets may be determined before the start of Year 7, during the Autumn Term of Year 7 or at any further point. In languages, although some pupils arrive with several years' study behind them whereas others arrive as beginners, all pupils learn at different rates and setting will need to be reviewed frequently in the first year.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers should assess students' work and record marks in a way that enables students to take responsibility for their learning by tracking their progress against expectations.

Heads of Department should guide their teams on how to apply assessment policies. They should determine the character of common assessment tasks. They should take an overview of the students studying their subject in consultation with their departmental teams and in response to this advice draft set lists for discussion among their team. Where setting is determined by an issue such as learning English as an additional language then this must be acknowledged within the department and the student's Head of Year should be consulted. Heads of Department are responsible for communicating set changes to parents.

Heads of Year should be informed of setting changes so they can form an overview of any patterns in a student's progress across the whole curriculum. They should inform the Deputy Head (Academic) of any concerns arising from setting arrangements.

The Deputy Head (Academic) is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and for its annual review. The Deputy Head (Academic) should follow up any concerns passed on by Heads of Year regarding patterns in a student's academic progress.

Setting and Public Examinations

St Mary's enters students for public examinations at a level best suited to gain the highest grades possible commensurate with the ability of the student. The set into which a student is placed does not, of itself, determine the level of paper sat or the highest grade available to a student.

Review of Setting

Setting arrangements will be reviewed regularly but no less frequently than at the end of each term.

To gain a holistic view of the needs of the students and to share the responsibility for decision-making about setting changes this discussion should form an agenda item at a department meeting.

Discussions relating to setting changes should be recorded in department meeting minutes submitted to the Deputy Head (Academic).

Communication with Parents

Heads of Department are responsible for communicating setting changes to parents. Parents will be informed of changes to sets by letter prior to their taking effect.

Right of Appeal

St Mary's recognises that setting is a matter of great importance to parents and every care is taken to ensure students are placed in a set where provision is matched to their needs.

If a parent believes that the School's Setting Policy has not been applied properly, the School welcomes the opportunity to investigate the matter further. An initial query should be addressed to the Head of Department. If the query is not investigated to the parents' satisfaction then parents should contact the Deputy Head (Academic). Where the School's policy has been followed properly a student would not normally be moved sets until clear evidence emerges that this step would be appropriate. The Headmistress reserves the right to make a final decision on any query relating to setting.

Setting decisions involve comparative judgements about students. Parents should note it is the School's policy not to disclose information about the progress of students other than the daughter of a parent making a query.

Setting decisions can raise the question of the relative merits of teachers and the pupils' preference for one teacher's style over another's. Assuming that the Head of Department and Headmistress have confidence in all teachers, parents should note that pupils are expected to adapt to any teacher assigned to them and that preferences for one teacher over another cannot be allowed to influence a decision about which set their daughter is placed in.