BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL

SETTING STRUCTURE 2026-27

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Section A Introduction

The purpose of 'setting' is to help teachers match their teaching to the needs of individual learners and thereby enable each learner to reach or exceed their academic targets.

Section B Statements and procedures

- In general, setting will be based upon academic ability or aptitude and must follow a transparent process and be based on evidence

- Setting is inevitably about ranking students. However, we recognise that ranking pupils can never be an exact science and at times a decision may have to be based upon a professional judgement that exceeds set criteria if it is deemed appropriate or in the best interests of a pupil or class

- Progress in learning is not linear. The learning of individuals may vary during the year and therefore setting decisions will be based on the evidence of sustained progress rather the individual achievements, such as a good mark in a single test

- Even though set changes need to be long term, at times it is appropriate that short term changes are made. Additionally, whilst the majority of set changes that happen follow the annual interim cycle, some changes may happen during the year

- The organisation of sets within the band is managed by the respective Key Stage Coordinator, Head of Department, or Head of Faculty (subject heads) in consultation with the Deputy Headteacher in charge of the curriculum

- Whilst behaviour may be a factor in setting, in general it will not be the determining factor as setting will be based upon a pupil's ability or aptitude

- Where a pupil is at risk of moving down a set, appropriate steps will be taken to alert the pupil and parents to the likelihood of this happening, mainly through the Interim

- There may be times when a change of set is deemed appropriate because of exceptional circumstances. Such changes can only happen, with the approval or direction of the relevant Deputy or Assistant Headteacher

- There are no fixed limits for set sizes. However, in general the higher sets are larger than the lower sets. Equally, there are no "waiting lists" as it is possible that changes to the school population during the year may change a rank order. However, where a pupil joins during the year, he or she will not in the short term displace an existing child from their set. However, in the context of

the routine review of setting the admission of a new student may alter an overall rank order

- In order to ensure equal opportunity and consistency, setting arrangements must be regularly reviewed

Decisions regarding setting, the constitution of bands and tutor groups are for the school to determine and whilst they will always be subject to discussion, they are not ultimately negotiable. As a school we cannot accommodate parental/pupil requests to be in a particular class, with a particular teacher or with certain pupils.

Criteria

The main criteria for setting will be:

- Performance data including SAT results, CAT results, external exam results and standardised tests, etc
- Interim data
- Performance data from in-school assessments such as tests, exams and QMAs.
- Professional judgement and recommendation

Bands and tutor groups

When joining in Year 7, pupils are placed in a band called Stockton or Appleton. The bands are of equal ability and broadly equal gender distribution. Within each band, pupils are then divided into five equal tutor groups. These groups take into account:

- Gender balance
- Prior performance data
- Group dynamics

Where possible, they will also take into account preferred friendship groups as expressed during transition work. However, there can be no guarantee that pupils will have friendship choices accommodated.

Normally a pupil will stay within their band and tutor group till Year 11. However, there may be times when a pupil is moved between bands. Under such circumstances, the decision will be discussed with the parent in detail and clear reasons will be given. Normally, a move will take place only with parental consent, but where this is not forthcoming and if a reasonable justification is put forward by the school, we retain the right to move a pupil between bands or sets.

In Years 10 & 11 pupils remain in their band and tutor group but for teaching purposes pupils are put into different bands to accommodate option choices and exam tiers; friendship requests will not be a determining criterion.

Y7 Prior performance data & CATs testing

With the removal of National Curriculum levels from Key Stage 2, the outcomes of Year 6 English and Maths SATs are now supported by internal testing in KS3 subjects including, where appropriate, the use of CAT data. The data provided by the internal tests is looked at by both Departments when determining sets alongside the KS2 data.

Types of set

There are a variety of sets used that best reflect the needs of a curriculum area. These include;

Mixed ability set
This is where a set contains a mixture of ability and/or aptitudes.

Vertical setting
This is where groups are organised in strict rank order across each band according to ability or aptitude. Normally this will mean that there are six sets where set 1 is the highest and set 6 is the lowest. It is important to note, however, that it is often the case that pupils "cluster around" the boundaries of sets meaning that there is an overlap between sets. In other words, where there is vertical setting dependent on rank order students ranked 27-34 may technically be 27th equal. However, since there must be a cut off in set size it is the professional judgement of the teacher that must ultimately determine where the line is drawn between sets. Under such circumstances the teacher will need to exercise their overall judgement in making their decision. However, because we recognise this overlap between the bottom of one set and the top of another set this is taken into account in terms of planning.

Parallel or equivalent sets
This is where two or more sets are of equal standing in a subject. Generally this means there may be two equal set ones, two equal set twos and two equal set threes. This does not have to be a rigid setting system across a band as sometimes there may be a mix of setting where the first set, for example, is vertically set and the subsequent sets follow a parallel setting system.

Setting by exam tier
This is where the set is determined by the tier of exam a pupil is entered for to enable teaching to better meet the needs of pupils.

Supportive setting
This is where a pupil or group of pupils are placed in a set or group for a short period of time to support them in their learning. The circumstances vary. An example might include the need to provide effective reintegration following prolonged absence or because of other exceptional circumstances. Any supportive setting decisions will be reviewed regularly.

Collaborative set
This is where pupils are taught in the same set for different subjects. The set is constituted by pooling evidence of pupils' aptitudes and abilities from the different departments.

Inherited set
This is where pupils are taught in a class in one subject constituted on the basis of

aptitudes and abilities in another subject. We recognise that this can present some constraints and is only used where this outweighs the advantages of any other setting system

Gendered setting
This is where gender is the first criterion in the setting process. Currently only PE adopt this approach.

Setting arrangements in KS4 Option Subjects

At KS4 there are a wide range of subjects available, some of which lend themselves towards a setting structure and some of which are more appropriate for mixed ability teaching. Constraints with timetabling, the number of pupils choosing a subject and class size also impacts on the opportunity for providing a setting structure. Consequently, curriculum structure at Key Stage 4 must balance the appropriate provision of setting within a subject against the ability to offer subjects in more than one option block.

The process of setting

At the start of each academic year teachers are issued with objectively set targets for their pupils. This is generally based on prior achievements such as SATs or other standardised tasks completed in the previous academic year.

Over the academic year, teachers assess pupils' work and record outcomes against these targets. Progress is then reported to parents through the termly Interim and Parents' Evenings.

To ensure consistency across a faculty or department, subject leaders also give guidance to their teams on assessment policy and procedures. They also determine common assessment tasks (Quality Marked Assessments) to be used across classes and maintain and analyse this assessment information within their departments. This allows the existing setting arrangements to be monitored in line with the termly Interim.

During the summer term-or potentially at other key times in the academic year such as after the receipt of external performance in modular exams, these set lists will be reviewed. In consultation with teachers, draft lists are then refined and discussed to inform any set changes which are then communicated to parents by letter.

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 should be referenced to existing behaviour profiles recorded in Arbor; advice should also be sought from the relevant Pastoral and Achievement Manager.

Furthermore to ensure equal opportunity in drawing up lists, subject leaders must also pay attention to how expectations of and trends for the following groups of pupils are being reflected in setting decisions – vulnerable and ethnic minority pupils, looked after children, pupils with special needs and those in receipt of free school meals.

Whilst it is primarily the responsibility of the subject leader to determine setting, final decisions will always remain with the relevant Assistant Headteacher or Deputy headteacher.

At the end of each academic year, details all sets for the start of the following year will be sent to all parents (Section C).

A parent is entitled to seek a full explanation for any set change. ***However, decisions regarding setting, the constitution of bands and tutor groups are for the school to determine and whilst they will always be subject to discussion they are not ultimately negotiable.***

Section C Additional Information & Guidance

Current setting arrangements

Year 7

SUBJECT	DETAILS
Maths	in ability order, 1a 1b 1c, 1d, then two parallel sets 2s & one set 3
PE	Girls : sets 1 to 3 on ability Boys : sets 1 to 3 on ability

Humanities, Science and Ict classes are taught collaboratively
All other subjects are taught in classes of broadly mixed ability

Year 8

SUBJECT	DETAILS
Maths	Appleton: in ability order, 1a 1b 1c, two parallel set 2s & one set 3 Stockton : in ability order, 1a 1b 1c, 1d, then two parallel sets 2s & one set 3
English	Appleton : Two parallel set 1s, two parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability Stockton : Two parallel set 1s, three parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability
PE	Girls : sets 1 to 3 on ability Boys : sets 1 to 3 on ability

Humanities, Science and Ict classes are taught collaboratively

All other subjects are taught in classes of broadly mixed ability

Year 9

SUBJECT	DETAILS
EPA	Mixed ability dependant on EPA subject choices
Maths	Appleton : in ability order, 1a 1b 1c, then two parallel sets 2s & one set 3 Stockton : in ability order, 1a 1b 1c, 1d, then two parallel sets 2s & one set 3
Technology	Mixed ability dependant on Technology Choices
English	Appleton : Two parallel set 1s, two parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability Stockton : Two parallel set 1s, three parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability
PE	Girls : sets 1 to 3 on ability Boys : sets 1 to 3 on ability

Humanities Science and Ict, are taught collaboratively
All other subjects are taught in classes of broadly mixed ability

Year 10

SUBJECT	DETAILS
English	Two parallel set 1s, three parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability
Maths	In ability order sets Higher Tier : 1a 1b 1c 1d Foundation Tier : two parallel set 2s and then set 3
Science	Separate Science (option) : Two parallel higher classes, two parallel Higher/Foundation classes Trilogy Science (core) : five classes of equal ability

RS	mixed ability
PE	Girls : sets 1 to 3 on ability Boys : sets 1 to 3 on ability

Year 11

SUBJECT	DETAILS
English	Two parallel set 1s, two parallel set 2s & two parallel set 3s on ability
Maths	In ability order sets Higher Tier1a 1b 1c 1d Foundation Tier : two parallel set 2s and then set 3
Science	Separate Science (option) : three classes of equal ability Trilogy Science (core) : K band : five classes of equal ability L band : four classes of equal ability
RS	mixed ability
PE	Girls : sets 1 to 3 on ability Boys : sets 1 to 3 on ability