

## Teaching Set Protocol

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### Outline

The purpose of this document is to outline the process that will be followed when making changes to teaching groups for subjects that are set by attainment or taught in mixed attainment groups. The school believed that such changes should be both fair and consistent across subject areas.

It will outline the decision-making process, information used to inform these decisions and how set changes will be communicated to both students and parents.

The school believes that, where subjects are taught in attainment groups, students should move groups where assessment shows they are performing either higher or lower than their peers. This flexible approach means that students are given equal opportunity across their time in school to progress through sets.

Working with students and making them aware of where their performance may result in changes of set can also help students see how their effort is translating into attainment.

### Mixed Attainment Teaching

#### Tutor Based Groups

Across all school years some subjects are taught in tutor groups to help deployment of staffing and resources. This means the teaching set will match the tutor group of the student (for example, Computing across Years 7-9). These sets do not normally change unless a change is made in the student's tutor group. Tutor groups are placed together at the start of Year 7 with information received from the primary schools to establish considered mixed attainment groups.

#### Not linked to Tutor Groups

Some subjects are taught in mixed attainment sets which are not linked to tutor groups. In this case it is usual for more than one subject to have linked teaching sets. For example, it is likely that a student will be in the same teaching group in Geography as they are in History. This is done to enable two or more subjects to agree teaching groups separate from tutor groups.

#### Single Sex Teaching Groups

Where subjects such as PE have a need for single sex classes then it is usual for two tutor groups to be taught together with the male/female students split across two sets.

### Attainment Set Teaching

#### At the start of Year 7

When students join the school any subjects that set by attainment will use the Key Stage 2 SAT results to create the initial sets, with these then being adjusted after internal assessments have been completed and combined with the SAT results. This approach allows the school to immediately start the curriculum with students in their likely teaching sets and offers time for the initial assessment to be carried out, yet also allows students to move sets if their SAT result does not represent their true attainment.

Where SAT results are not available information from previous teachers or other internal testing such as the Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT's) or baseline assessments will be used.

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### Use of Assessment Information to inform set decisions

Attainment Sets will primarily be based on assessment information tracked over time by subject areas.

As an example, students may be assessed at the end of a unit via testing or other assessment and if they have performed under or over expectation for the teaching set (or below/above other students in other sets) their teacher would discuss this with the student. At the next assessment, if the performance is again below/above the expectation of the teaching set/peers, it is possible that a discussion would be held about a possible teaching set change should this continue (both up or down). Discussions are likely also to occur at subject evenings or via telephone with parents.

The approach of using assessment information over time means that no single assessment will be used to establish teaching sets after the initial setting in Year 7. It will allow students to move in to higher or lower attainment sets, remain in their existing set.

In all subjects set by attainment there is likely to be a cross-over between the attainment of the lower-attaining students in the higher set and the higher-attaining students in the lower set. When this occurs, the department will consider the future pace of content, how any change may impact on a student, and attainment over a longer period of time before making any changes.

### Tiered Examination Subjects

In subjects such as Maths, Science and Languages the GCSE exams are tiered at entry, meaning that a different style of examination and a different variety of content is examined. Where possible the school will link teaching sets as far as possible to the correct tier of entry to help with students' confidence and the delivery of the right content/examination style to improve student outcomes.

The use of Year 7-9 to establish these sets allows student to have a full three years to demonstrate their attainment and move across teaching sets ready for tiering decisions later in Year 11.

### Other Factors impacting on Teaching Sets

#### Attitude to Learning

A student's attitude to learning will also be considered when teaching set changes are being made. This could be both for attainment set or mixed attainment set changes. Where the attitude to learning of a student is not in line with expectation this may be used to inform teaching set changes.

Attitude to Learning, Commendations and Demerits will also be used where assessment information results in two or more students being eligible for a single place in a teaching set.

#### Teaching Set Size

All schools have a limited amount of resources that includes teachers and facilities, which restricts the number of teaching sets the school can provide across different subjects. The school has to restrict the number of students in any one teaching sets to manage staff workload or where health and safety issues may exist if class sizes become too large (for example Design Technology).

#### Exceptional Circumstance

Sometimes there are exceptional circumstances which result in a student needing to be placed in a particular group/set and the school will endeavour to do this where required.

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### Final Decision

The school welcomes input from parents and students. However the final decision regarding sets is the school's, and must take into account all students across the school.

### Timings

#### When will changes occur?

Teaching set changes will generally happen at 'break points' across a school year such as end of term or end of school year (ready for the start of next school year). However it is also possible that changes are made at other times of the year where key assessment information becomes available (such as after internal examinations).

#### Do changes occur throughout all years?

It is normal for most teaching set changes to occur between the start of Year 7 to the start of Year 10 with the intention being to have more flexible groups up until the start of the GCSE year groups. This does not preclude teaching set changes being made across Years 10 and 11, although these are less likely.

### Notification and Communication

The school intends that no teaching set change should come as a shock to students or parents.

The school makes progress/attainment information available via Continuous Assessment (Years 7-9), Progress Checks (Years 10-13) and subject evenings where teaching set changes may be discussed. Parents are encouraged to look at performance over time and their child's Attitude to Learning scores. Attitude to Learning guidance can be found at <https://goo.gl/HV4wkq>

The table below outlines how communication will be carried out in a variety of situations.

Situation	Method of Notification/Communication
Student performs below expectation in a formal assessment	Teacher will discuss with student and identify areas that student needs to improve upon. The importance of the next assessments will be discussed.
Student performs below expectation in a formal assessment (once again)	Teacher will discuss with the student and where appropriate discuss the student's Attitude to Learning. Teacher may decide at this point to discuss with parent either by phone or via a subject evening.
Continued underperformance after formal assessment	A teaching set change may be appropriate. This will be communicated to parents via letter or phone call. Teacher will discuss with student, including how they have the possibility to move back up should it be appropriate. In many cases a move to a lower set can help the student as the content may be more appropriate (especially in tiered subjects).
Student outperforming peers in other teaching sets (in formal assessments, over time)	Teacher will discuss this with student and discuss possible move to a higher set or tiering. Students will be informed of where they still need to improve or suitability of moving to next set.
Student outperforms peers and to move to next teaching set	A teaching set change may be appropriate. Teacher will discuss with student the suitability of this change and how the student's attitude to learning has resulted in this opportunity. Any teaching set change will be communicated to parents via letter or phone call.

### Temporary Teaching Set Changes

Temporary set changes may occur where it is felt that a student may be more suitable for a teaching set above/below the existing class. These will be discussed with parents/students, and initially be time-limited to allow a student to 'try out' the other set, and for teachers to see how the change impacts on performance within the subject. Temporary changes may become permanent changes, or result in the student being reverted back to the original set.

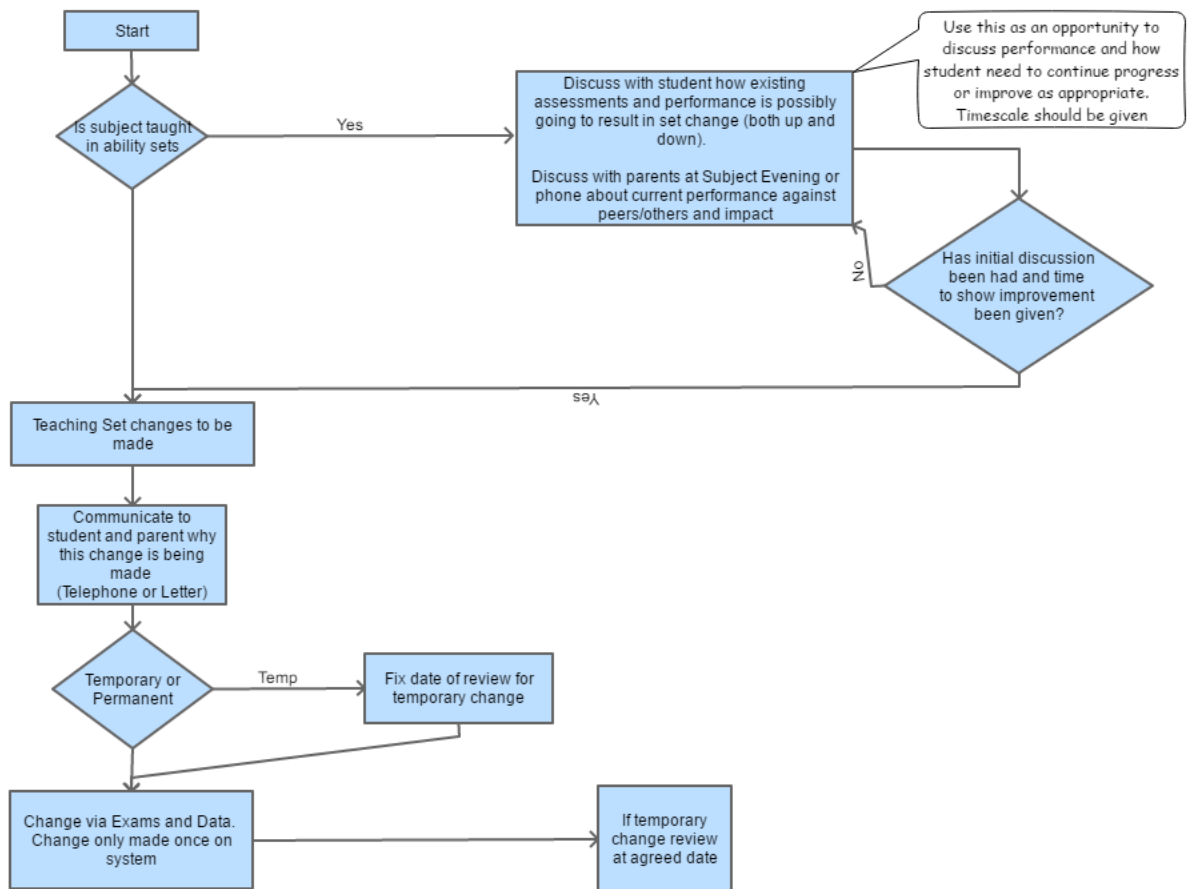
When establishing if a temporary change should be carried out, the primary driver will be the attainment ~~tracking~~ of the student in recent assessments. Should this information show that the student is not achieving as highly as the set being proposed, then the school will not carry out the temporary change.

Should a temporary change be made permanent then the normal process of teaching set changes outlined in this document will come in to use. This means that a student could:

- Have a temporary change where attainment information shows this is justified
- Have the set change become permanent where attainment/ATL information shows the set change has been successful
- Have the set change reversed if future tracking information shows their attainment is lower than their peers in the new and/or former set

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### Change of Teaching Set Process (Flowchart)



### Discussing Teaching Sets

If you wish to discuss the teaching set of your child you are advised to contact the following people:

A subject which is set by attainment such as Maths	The Subject Leader/Director of Learning
A subject not set by attainment OR where multiple subjects are involved	Your child's Head of Achievement

All contact can be made via calling the school office or emailing [office@highcliffeschool.com](mailto:office@highcliffeschool.com)

## Appendix – Example/Template Letters

### Warning letter example content

Dear Parent

Recent [subject] assessments, classwork and the [most recent assessment] has shown that [Student Name] is at risk of being moved to a lower teaching set as they are not yet achieving the academic standard of their peers in the present teaching set. It is important that in subjects set by attainment students are appropriately set, and that any move between sets is based on the best interests for [student name].

[Teacher Name] has spoken with [Student Name] about their recent assessment and the actions they need to take to make sure that their next assessments show sufficient improvement. [Student Name] has been made aware of how they can access support in these areas by [insert details of support here including any interventions they must attend].

I am confident that through the combined efforts of [Student Name] and [Teachers Name] we will see an improvement in [his/her] attainment and I would be grateful for your support in discussing this letter with [student name] to make sure they are aware.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss the areas in which improvement is required or if you have any other queries regarding [subject].

Yours faithfully,

### Moving to set above letter example content

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that [Student Name] will soon be moving to a higher set in [Subject]. This decision has been reached in light of recent [subject] assessments, classwork and overall attitude to learning. It is important that in subjects set by attainment students are appropriately placed, and I would like to take this opportunity to say “well done” to [Student Name] for this achievement.

[Teacher Name] has spoken with [Student Name] about this move and we intend for the changes to be made by [date or term name etc]. The new teaching set will be [set name] with [staff name].

I am confident that through the combined efforts of [Student Name] and their teacher, this higher level of achievement can be sustained and we will see [student name] reach their full potential.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this move or if you have any other queries regarding [Subject].

Yours faithfully,

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### Moving to set below letter example content

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that [Student Name] will soon be moving to a lower set in [Subject]. This decision has been reached after analysing classwork, past assessment information, attitude to learning and the recent [most recent assessment].

This set change is being put in place to make sure that the set is the most suitable for [Student Name]. It is important that, in subjects set by attainment, students are properly placed so that the content and pace of lessons is appropriate. Often a more appropriate set can help a student consolidate their understanding and make rapid improvement.

[Teacher Name] has spoken with [Student Name] about this move and we intend for the changes to be made by [date or term name etc]. [Teacher Name] will hand over to [New Staff Member], including identifying any gaps in knowledge or skills, which need to be addressed.

We will continue to monitor assessment information and it is possible for [Student Name] to move back to their previous set over time if assessment information shows a marked improvement.

A reminder that support is always available for [Student Name] in [Subject] by [insert details]

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this set change or if you have any other queries regarding [subject].

Yours faithfully,

### Example Letter from Maths (November 2018)

Dear Parent,

I am writing to inform you that [Student Name] will soon be moving to a new set in Maths. This decision has been reached after analysing classwork, past assessment information, attitude to learning and a recent assessment for all of Year 7.

Your son/daughter will be moving from [Current set] to [New set] with [Staff Member].

This set change is being put in place to make sure that the set is the most suitable for [Student Name]. It is important in Maths, where we set by prior attainment, that students are placed appropriately so that the content and pace of lessons is suitable. This ensures students are given opportunities to consolidate their understanding whilst also being challenged at the right level.

We will continue to monitor assessment information and it is always possible for students to move back to their previous set later on. We encourage students to become neither demotivated after being moved down or complacent after being moved up, and expect all our students to work to their full potential regardless of the set they are in.

A reminder that support for Maths is always available for our KS3 students on Monday, Wednesday and Friday lunchtimes in MA2.



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Following this letter, your child's Maths teacher will speak to your son/daughter about this move to inform them of the change and let them know when it will happen. We intend for the changes to happen in the next week.

I am confident that, through the combined efforts of [Student Name] and their teacher, a high level of achievement can be sustained and we will see [student name] reach their full potential.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this move or if you have any other queries regarding Maths.

Yours faithfully,

### Subjects with setting (as at January 2019)

#### ***English Language and Literature***

All Year Groups are set with a top teaching set and one lower set for each half of the year group. Other sets are mixed ability

#### ***Mathematics***

All year groups are set by attainment across all teaching sets.

#### ***Science***

Year 7 – Mixed teaching sets

Year 8 – One top set on each side of the year will all other sets mixed ability

Years 9 to 10 – all teaching sets are set on attainment.

#### ***Modern Foreign Languages***

Year 7 – Mixed teaching sets.

Year 8 and 9 – all teaching sets are set on attainment.

Year 10 onwards – depending upon option choices.