

This policy should be read along with appendices A, B, and C. It is closely associated with the Assessment Policy and procedures for target setting and tracking progress. It is intended to support all the aims of the school and the ECM outcome Enjoying and Achieving.

1. The Purpose of 'Setting'

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.**

2. Principles

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

3. Alternative Pupil Groupings

There is a wide variety of ways of grouping pupils for the purposes of teaching and learning. 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.

- **Assertive Classroom Grouping**

The practice of the teacher allocating pupils within a class to small, short-term working groups for specific learning activities. 'Assertive groups' may or may not be ability groups. Their composition is normally varied from one occasion to another.

- **Set**

Pupils taught together as a class, constituted on the basis of their aptitudes and abilities in that subject.

- **Equivalent Sets**

Two or more sets of equal standing in a subject. The term "parallel sets" is sometimes used. The term "subject bands" is **to be** avoided as "band" is also used in a more general sense (see below).

- **Band**

A subset of the year-group, identified on the basis of general (**i.e. not subject-based**) aptitudes or abilities.

- **Inherited Set**

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

- **Collaborative Set**

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

- **Stream**

Pupils taught together as a single **class** across a wide range of subjects, on the basis of general aptitudes and abilities.

4. Statement of Policy

At the Friary School, 'assertive grouping' within a class is encouraged and expected. 'Setting' is supported subject to the conditions detailed below. 'Inherited setting' and 'collaborative setting' are not favoured but may be given approval in 'small' subjects, if the alternative is not to set at all. General ability 'banding' and 'streaming' are not supported.

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;
- Social and behavioural considerations play a minor role (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 line-manager only in exceptional circumstances;
- The current assessment information used alongside targets in finalising set lists is 'fit for purpose' and comparable across the cohort;
- There is an awareness of the later development of boys compared with girls and, through early setting, that there is a risk of institutionalising boys' underachievement. Proposed set lists should therefore be screened for gender bias and where this is significant discussed with the line manager before lists are finalised and published;
- 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 leader;
- Schemes of work and learning resources are modified to support teachers in achieving the purpose of setting and in working to the stated principles.

5. Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

- Teachers assess pupils' work and record outcomes in ways which both help pupils to improve and track progress against targets;
- Subject Leaders 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 targets. In consultation with teachers, draft lists are then refined paying attention to the requirements set out in Section 4. 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 Head of Year and approval sought from the subject leader's line manager. In drawing up lists, Subject Leaders maintain a keen awareness of how expectations on the following groups of pupils are being shaped - boys, ethnic minority pupils, looked after children and pupils with special needs. Subject Leaders provide setting information for parents and are accountable to parents for setting decisions made. Subject leaders 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(see appendix A, section 4).

- Years Heads are given the opportunity to comment on proposed set-lists before they are published to pupils and parents. Heads of Years 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 Head of Year must be given the opportunity to comment and the approval of the line-manager received.
- The Deputy Headteacher (curriculum) is responsible to the Headteacher for keeping the setting policy of the school and its implementation across the curriculum under constant review.
- Members of the School Leadership Group monitor setting matters within departments which they line-manage and provide both support and challenge to subject leaders. Members of the SLG also support the policy from the perspective of their own roles and major areas of responsibility.
- The school Governing Body moderates and approves proposed changes to Setting Policy, ensuring that the policy is compatible with the strategic development of the school.

Setting Policy Appendix A. Assertions Which Underpin The Policy

1. Setting is **inevitably** about ranking and sorting pupils. 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.
2. 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**.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Research evidence shows that organising classes by ability does not necessarily promote an overall rise in attainment across the ability range. Unless departments go into setting with a strong commitment to using it as a strategy in maximising the

learning of pupils of all abilities, there is a serious risk that the learning of a significant number of pupils may be disadvantaged.

Setting Policy Appendix B. Practical Considerations

Timetable

The timetable needs to reflect the School Statement and 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.
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.

SUBJECT	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
Mathematics	S	S	S	S	S
English	S	S	S	S	S
Science	M	S	S	S	S
Modern Languages	S	S	S	S	S
Geography	M	M	M	S	S
History	M	M	M	S	S
Religious Ed	M	M	M	IS	IS

Key: M = all ability; S = setting; IS = inherited setting.

Setting Policy Appendix C. The Nomenclature Of Pupil Groupings

All teachers, students, parents and governors need to understand the significance of the names and nomenclature of sets. Therefore, standard nomenclature is to be used.

- M This is an all-ability class
- 1/1 There is only one (ability) set.
- 3/4 There are 4 sets (taught simultaneously). This one is the third set of four.
- 1/4T There are 4 tiers of sets (taught simultaneously). Some sets are parallel. This is the (only) top set.
- 2a/3T There are 3 tiers of sets (taught simultaneously). This is a set in the second tier.