

Grouping students at Chesterton Community College

2009-10

At Chesterton Community College we employ a mixture of 'setting by ability,' 'mixed ability' grouping and single sex group teaching. Setting by ability is where students of similar ability are placed together for their lessons in specific subjects. Mixed ability grouping is where students of all different abilities are taught together in the same group. Single sex grouping is where boys and girls are taught separately.

How we group students

Each year group at Chesterton is divided into two bands, which we call 'halves,' the A half and the B half (or the R half and the F half in Years 10 and 11). In some year groups, where there are 7 classes, one 'half' will consist of 4 classes and the other 'half' will consist of 3 classes. The names A and B, R and F have no particular meaning; the halves are mixed ability. Splitting year groups in two is common in secondary schools as it allows classes to be taught by specialists in specialist facilities. For example, we would not have enough teachers or rooms to enable us to teach a whole year group music or art at the same time.

There are 4 main ways of grouping students at Chesterton Community College:

1. **Tutor groups:** when students begin at Chesterton in Year 7 they are allocated to a tutor group by the Year 7 Coordinator. In deciding on the tutor groups the Coordinator attempts to achieve a reasonable balance of boys and girls, students from different feeder Primary schools and students of different abilities, as well as taking account of students' declared friendship groups. Tutor groups are mixed ability groups. Most lessons in Year 7 are taught in tutor groups and a number of subjects continue to teach students in tutor groups throughout Key Stage 3 (Key Stage 3 is Years 7, 8 and 9).
2. **Single sex groups:** where boys and girls are taught separately (eg in PE)
3. **Sets:** sets are groups where students of similar ability are placed together for a particular subject. For example, in maths there may be 3 sets, sets 1, 2 and 3, where set 1 represents the most able mathematicians and set 3 represents the least able. Some subjects set students during Year 7 (e.g. maths and modern languages), whilst some other subjects set students from the beginning of Year 8 (English, Science, and the Humanities)
4. **Mixed ability groups (other than tutor groups):** these are most common in Years 10 and 11 in option subjects.

How we set students

Managers of subject areas decide on the nature of student groupings in their area. In subjects that are set, student attainment data is used to inform the process. For example, in maths the Year 6 maths SAT result, together with data about students' attainment in maths in the first half term of Year 7 and the teachers' general knowledge about the students' progress will together determine the sets; and in

science, students' average test scores in Year 7, together with teacher assessment information, will determine the sets for Year 8.

The nature of student groupings can vary from year to year depending on the make up of the year group. For example, in some subjects faculties may move away from strict setting 1 to 3 to a set 1 and then two mixed ability groups, if they think that is most appropriate for the particular year group.

Reviewing sets

Where students are taught in sets, we review their set at least once per term. We do this to help us ensure that students are placed in the set that best reflects their ability and performance.

Student grouping by subjects: school year 2009-10

Maths

Year 7: sets 1, 2 and 3 in both year halves plus 7M (7M is an additional group that has been created by the Year Coordinator, based on information from the Primary school, for students whose key skills need extra attention).

Year 8: sets 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the A half of the year and sets 1, 2 and 3 in the B half.

Year 9: A half: extension set (gifted mathematicians), set 1; sets 2 and 3 are middle ability and single sex; set 4 (the least able mathematicians); B half, extension set plus sets 1, 2 and 3.

Year 10: R half: extension set, set 1; sets 2 and 3 are middle ability and single sex groups; set 4; F half: sets 1, 2 and 3.

Year 11: R half: extension set; set 1; set 2H (students taking higher tier); set 2F (students taking foundation tier); sets 3 and 4 are an all girls group and an all boys group of similar ability; F half; set 1; set 2H (students taking higher tier) set 2F (students taking foundation tier); sets 3 and 4 are an all girls group and an all boys group of similar ability

English

Year 7: students are taught in their mixed ability tutor groups

Year 8: set 1 in each half year group; other groups are mixed ability

Year 9: set 1 in A half and sets 1 and 2 in B half; other groups are mixed ability

Year 10 and 11: one top set in each half year group; other groups are mixed ability

Science

Year 7: students are taught in their mixed ability tutor groups. 7M is an additional group (see note explaining 7M in the Maths section).

Year 8 and 9: A half: set 'T' (students whose ability suggests they are most likely to do triple science in Years 10 and 11. Triple science is separate lessons of Physics, Chemistry and Biology); sets 1, 2 and 3; B half: set 'T'; sets 1 and 2.

Year 10: 3 classes of students doing triple science; 2 classes doing combined science (middle ability); 3 classes of students doing BTEC science (a more vocational course aimed at students who would be unlikely to achieve a grade C or better at GCSE but who have a better chance of achieving a higher grade doing a BTEC course).

Year 11: One triple science group in each half year group; two combined science classes in each half year group; and one BTEC class in each half year group.

Humanities - History, Geography, RE, Citizenship and PSE

Year 7: 7M is taught separately; otherwise students are taught in their tutor groups.

Year 8: A half: sets 1, 2, 3 and 4; B half, sets 1, 2 and 3.

Year 9: A half: sets 1, 2, 3a and 3b (3a and 3b are of similar ability); B half: sets 1, 2 and 3.

Years 10 and 11: History, Geography and Travel and Tourism are optional subjects and students are taught in mixed ability groups. PSE is a core subject and it is taught in mixed ability groups. RE and Citizenship are delivered through PSE and in other ways at KS4.

Languages

Year 7: students in 7M do not do a foreign language; in both A half and B half, tutor groups until the October half term, then set 1, 2a and 2b (2a and 2b are mixed ability). All students study French but only set 1 students study an additional language, German.

Years 8 and 9: students in 8M and 9M are taught separately and do one lesson of French per week; in both A half and B half, students are grouped in sets 1, 2 and 3.

Years 10 and 11: French, German and Spanish are optional and students are taught in mixed ability groups.

ICT, Music, Design Technology, Art, Drama

Students are taught in mixed ability groups in all year groups, with the exception of core ICT in Years 10 and 11, where students are taught in their maths groups (this is for timetabling reasons).

PE

Years 7 to 9: single sex sets 1 and 2 in each half year group

Years 10 and 11: core PE is taught in mixed ability groups; in the options both BTEC Sport and GCSE PE are offered, with students set according to their ability.

All other option subjects in Years 10 and 11: students are taught in mixed ability groups, with the exception of sport (see note under PE above).