15 June 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Teaching Groups in Year 9

I wanted to write to you as a number of parents have contacted us with questions and concerns regarding the new teaching group arrangements for next year. I hope to address each of these issues and would also like to ask for your input into the composition of the teaching groups.

Teaching Group Composition

Several parents have informed us that their son/daughter does not have friends in their form group. They are concerned the change of groups will have an impact on their son/daughter’s happiness and as a result, their educational achievement. Other parents have said they welcome the change to teaching in form groups. We want our students to be happy and settled in the new groups and would therefore like your input on which of the two following options you would prefer:

- Teaching in form groups
- Teaching in new groups, where several students from each teaching group who work well together are placed into each new group. This would mean that each student would remain with around 3 others from their teaching group.

Please select one of the above options at the end of this form by the end of Friday 23 June 2017. Following this, we will inform you of which option has been selected by the greatest number of parents and how we will form the Year 9 teaching groups.

Whichever of these options parents select, I would like to reassure you that your son/daughter is likely to have many of their lessons with students in their current teaching group anyway. With students being set in English, Maths, Science and PE, which make up 24 of the 50 periods in a fortnight, students will be in classes with many of their current classmates in almost 50% of lessons.

Teaching to the middle

Some parents have contacted us with concerns that moving to mixed ability teaching will mean the teacher ‘teaches to the middle’ resulting in students who find the subject very challenging or excel in it receiving insufficient challenge or support. Whilst we understand this concern, our teachers are very experienced at differentiating their teaching to meet the needs of a wide range of students, as GCSE classes beyond the core and all A Level subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. These groups are of students who have chosen...
the same GCSE or A Level options, so in a typical GCSE class, the target grades may range from A*-D or E. Whilst all students will study the same topics, the teacher inevitably has to provide a range of tasks and levels of support to facilitate each student’s learning.

Setting in English, Maths and Science
In forming the English, Maths and Science sets, Heads of Faculty will take into account all assessments throughout the year along with the end of year examination level. Where a class has had gaps in their teaching due to teacher staff illness or supply, Heads of Faculty will ensure that other information, such as Year 7 assessments and target levels are taken into account. There will be fluidity in the setting, with assessments used to identify any students who are struggling or significantly exceeding the class average and set changes in the subject will be made as a result. We are confident that this will be a significant improvement over the current arrangements, where if a student’s performance changes significantly, they move to a different group and are faced with establishing new friendships and getting to know many new teachers.

If you have any further questions regarding the teaching groups and core setting next year, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Townshend or myself.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Wilshaw
Assistant Headteacher, Key Stage 3
To: Mrs C Wishaw
Teaching Groups in Year 9

Student Name ............................................................................................................

Form & Teaching Group .............................................................................................

Please select which teaching group composition you would prefer in Year 9:

☐ Form groups

☐ New groups with around 4 students from each current teaching group placed together

Please submit your response by Friday 23 June.

Signed: .................................................................................................................. (Parent/Guardian)

Date: .........................................................................................................................