



Teesdale School & Sixth Form

Teesdale School and Sixth Form
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Dear Parent and Carer,

At Teesdale School we are committed to our Trust vision of ensuring that every child experiences excellence, every day. Academic excellence is achieved through a diet of bespoke teaching experiences – experiences which our teachers are skilled in tailoring to meet the needs of young people, each and every lesson.

I am writing to provide you with information regarding a key change that we have made to our classes. From September 2024, we have moved from mixed ability class groupings to a model of creating classes with a much narrower academic range, applying this approach from Year 7 through to Year 11. This approach is supported by a wealth of academic research, and we see this approach achieving excellent outcomes currently within other Trust schools.

Previously at Teesdale School, KS3 has seen students learning within mixed ability classes. As a Senior Team, we believe passionately that we are providing our teachers with better opportunities to specifically tailor their lessons and meet the needs of students by adopting an ability-set approach. Being surrounded by peers of a similar performance extends students' peer learning opportunities, which in turn generates greater collaboration and improved opportunities to build confidence.

Practically, we have seen that grouping similar levels ensures the pace of the learning can be adapted appropriately, subsequently ensuring maximum progress at each step of a student's learning journey. Whilst an ability-set approach allows us to drive towards the highest level of achievement - ultimately providing access to A levels at our Sixth Form and access to top universities - it also provides the opportunity for students who require higher levels of support to work within smaller, more bespoke teaching groups.

It is important that students appreciate how much is to be gained from ability streamed teaching groups. Please help your child to understand that we will place each student in the group where they can flourish; we do not want them to fixate on which 'set' this is. Following assessment windows, we will continue to review student performance and at times we may recommend a change to a child's class set within the academic year.

We look forward to continue working with your child to secure the best possible academic outcomes for them.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Emma Gargett-Gillens
Assistant Headteacher - Curriculum and Achievement