



19th December 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

Year 9 Maths and Science Groups January 2024

From January we have made the decision to teach maths and science in mixed prior attainment groups rather than setting students into traditional sets. There are several reasons behind this decision which are summarised below:

- More even class sizes across all groups.
- More inclusive environment and higher aspirations for all to raise student engagement.
- The schemes of work in both maths and science mean that final decisions about which tiers students will sit for exams (higher/foundation) do not need to be made until Spring in Year 10, (e.g. leaving the door open for students as long as possible).

By implementing mixed prior attainment groups, we aim to provide every student with equal opportunities to be challenged and grow academically, regardless of their prior attainment. This approach acknowledges that each student possesses unique strengths and areas for development, and all should be challenged to achieve to the very best of their ability. We believe that this approach will allow us to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all our students and help to raise the general aspirations of the students in Year 9.

In maths, we are now following a new scheme of work which links directly with the online maths homework platform SPARX. Topics are ordered in a way that every group, regardless of setting, will be taught the same topics throughout Year 9 and the start of Year 10. This allows for the decision to tier students at either foundation or higher maths to be left open until spring in Year 10. Students are not restricted too early on in their maths education and have a longer window of opportunity to access more of the maths curriculum before we make this decision.

In science, our existing schemes of work are structured in such a way that we do not start to make decisions about tiering until spring in Year 10. Our students are already successfully taught in mixed prior attainment groups in Year 10 and 11 and we are enthusiastic about implementing this effective approach to science education in Year 9. Additionally, the introduction of our new online homework platform 'Educake' provides students with regular, structured retrieval homework quizzes to support their learning in class.

We have carefully considered the implications of this change and have designed our curriculum, teaching strategies, and assessment methods to ensure that each student receives a high-quality maths and science education. The introduction of standardised DO NOW's at the start of each lesson ensures that all students receive long term retrieval of the same topics areas every half term. This enables staff and students to be more selective about which topics to revise for assessments. Our experienced and dedicated team of teaching staff will employ a range of techniques to cater to the varied needs of students in the groups, while maintaining a focus on academic rigor and individual progress. We want to ensure that there is consistency across all groups in terms of the content being delivered and the quality of the education students receive. As always, we will regularly review teaching and assessments to ensure we are best meeting the needs of all students.

In addition to this, there will be opportunities for higher ability students to be challenged with independent tasks and paired or small group activities.

We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and the positive impact this change will have on our students' learning experiences. With your continued support, we are confident that we can create an environment where all students can thrive and excel in their studies.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Brankin

Curriculum Leader of Maths

Miss E Hindes

Curriculum Leader of Science