



18 January 2022

Dear parents/carers

As part of our continued drive to improve standards at Tewkesbury School, we are continually reviewing curriculum provision to ensure that we are able to offer the very best quality of education for your child and also ensure that our curriculum reflects the most up to date research, thinking and best practice within education.

You may know that, until recently, the school has structured year groups into two ability 'streams' called core and extension. The school is in a significantly better place in so many ways than when this model was first introduced in 2013. Over time, and as a result of improvements in the quality of teachers, leaders at all levels and support staff, we have begun to question the ongoing relevance and impact of this model.

The onset of the global pandemic provided both an opportunity and an imperative to re-evaluate our practices. Our system of vertical tutoring, driven by a house system has reverted to a more traditional, horizontal, year group structure. New remote parents' evenings have been warmly welcomed and the large-scale student ownership of Chromebooks has facilitated remote learning when necessary and created enhanced learning opportunities in classrooms.

Having considered progress data and research evidence, we took the decision in September 2021 to remove the core and extension pathway for our current Year 7 students, in favour of a single, mixed ability curriculum pathway that all

students are required to follow. Year 7 students are now split into two, equal ability, half-year group populations labelled x and y. In simple terms, there is no difference in the ability profile of students on either half of the year group. Students in 7x1 and 7y4 are, therefore, of equal ability and access exactly the same subjects in exactly the same quantities. We are pleased with the outcomes we are witnessing in Year 7 and, consequently, intend to roll this model out throughout the school in September 2022.

Some of the planned benefits of the creation of a single curriculum pathway for all students from September 2022 are shown below:

- All students will have the same curriculum hours allocated to them in all subjects.
- We will be able to deliver a fairer, broader and more balanced curriculum for all students.
- All students will be able to follow a 4 GCSE pathway in Year 10, meaning more opportunities to achieve a broader set of qualifications for all students, which in turn gives them more chance of progressing onto their chosen Post 16 pathway in our Sixth Form.
- Students will be able to develop their learning with students of a broader ability range and be given access to higher grade and higher level work across the school, from Year 7.
- Research increasingly shows that middle and lower ability students benefit more from mixed ability teaching.
- We will be able to remove the negative 'labelling' and unconscious bias that are associated with students being placed on the 'core' pathway.

How will this affect my child from September 2022?

- Current Year 7 students will be unaffected when they move into Year 8.
- Current Year 8 students will see their teaching groups change as they move into Year 9 but not their tutor groups.
- Current Year 9 students will ALL have the opportunity to take 4 GCSE options, unlike in previous years and will move into Year 10 where they will be in 'sets' for Maths and mixed ability groups for all other subjects.
- Current Year 10 students will be unaffected as they move into Year 11 following the second year of their GCSE programme.
- Sixth Form students are unaffected and have always been taught in mixed ability groups.

How will we ensure your child continues to be stretched?

All children are set targets from the moment they arrive at the school based on

a range of factors including formal tests and teacher assessments from their primary school and cognitive ability tests taken on arrival at Tewkesbury School. Regardless of which class they are in, it is down to the school, in partnership with the child and their parents/carers to ensure that the child meets or exceeds those targets. It is on that basis that schools are judged and we judge ourselves.

Our experience suggests that children of whatever baseline ability, can either exceed or fall short of their targets based on a range of factors. It is self-evident that the quality of teaching and learning, parental support and individual work ethic are the key factors that determine educational success.

Teachers have received training and will continue to develop the curriculum, schemes of learning and their pedagogy to ensure that all students can be taught successfully and to the same high standards, regardless of their prior attainment in primary school and/or their socio-economic background.

Should you wish to discuss any aspects of this letter with me, or curriculum provision from September, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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