



CASTLE MEAD
ACADEMY

SCHOLAR GROUPING POLICY

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy. The Local Governing Body will review the policy, unless there are significant changes in the interim period.

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Author:	Principal
Ratified by:	Tom Hague
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Revision History:

Version:	Date:	Author:	Summary of Changes:
V1.0	01.09.2021	Tom Hague	<i>Page 1, Paragraph 4: 'In any given year scholars will study lessons in setted groups. The make-up of all classes will be monitored closely to avoid an over or under-representation of particular groups' has been removed. Page 4, Paragraph 1: Principal has been changed to Head of Achievement.</i>

Introduction:

At Castle Mead Academy our aim is to equip every scholar with the knowledge, learning power and character necessary for success at Castle Mead and beyond. Careful consideration as to the optimal scholar grouping arrangements for learning is central to achieving our ambitious goals.

What research tells us about the impact of mixed groupings vs setting:

Academic research suggests that while 'mixed ability' teaching is undoubtedly harder for teachers (due to the attainment range within the class), it boosts achievement for lower and middle performing scholars. Conversely, research by James Kulik and Chen-Lin Kulik of Michigan University found that 'gifted and talented' scholars achieved significantly more when grouped with like-scoring peers, but only when they were provided with programmes to specifically meet their needs. The same study found that scholars who were grouped by performance for a specific subject had a better attitude towards that subject.

The Sutton Trust concluded from an extensive study in 2011 that: "the evidence is consistent that though there may be some benefits for higher attainment scholars in some circumstances of setting, these are largely outweighed by the negative effects on attitudes for middle and lower performing learners, with an average effect size of about 0.12 (one month over an academic year), although some reviews suggest the overall impact on learners is negative (-.06)

Our challenge at Castle Mead Academy is to ensure that scholars performing at all levels are challenged and supported appropriately, whatever the grouping arrangement. We need to ensure that there is a healthy mix of criteria used to determine scholar grouping arrangements, not just academic performance levels. Tutor groups will be created in such a way as to ensure a complete mix in terms of prior attainment, gender, socioeconomic, background, ethnicity, SEN, EAL and month of birth.

Research has shown that typically, after a scholar has been placed in a set, he or she is unlikely to move to a different one: a 2002 report noted that 88% of scholars organised into sets at the age of 4 remained in the same group until they left school.

Our challenge at Castle Mead Academy is to review group arrangements at the end of each cycle and to move scholars from one group to another if their performance level in relation to their peers has changed or, for other educational reasons, a move is desirable.

At Castle Mead Academy we need to strive to ensure that all in the school community have and communicate the highest aspirations of all scholars, whatever their current performance level.

Scholar Grouping at Castle Mead Academy:

At Castle Mead Academy we believe that, in determining how to group scholars in each curriculum area, the key question has to be, what grouping arrangement will best enable us to meet our aims?

Thus we will consider:

- Whether scholars are most likely to acquire knowledge and understanding and make the most rapid progress in classes where there is fine setting, loose setting or mixed prior performance grouping.
- Which type of grouping is most likely to lead to the highest examination outcomes for scholars and best chances of progression to a top university?
- Which type of grouping is most likely to support the development of the Castle Credo learning dispositions and characteristics?
- Which type of grouping is most supportive of our ethos and values?

However, we recognise that often budgetary and timetabling constrictions will limit the viable options available to us regarding the grouping of scholars.

Decisions about how to group scholars within a subject area will always be taken in consultation and following dialogue with the subject leader. Once a grouping arrangement has been decided on, the subject leader will produce details of how all scholars will be supported and challenged. At the end of each cycle the relative progress of scholars in each group will be compared within each subject area by the subject leader and Head of Achievement. Any variance that is a cause for concern will be discussed with the subject team and line manager and monitored for patterns. If concerns persist, the options, including changes to the grouping arrangements, will be discussed with the senior team and an action plan formulated.

The prior attainment profile of a cohort of scholars will always be used as the starting point in considering the optimal grouping arrangements for them.

Every effort will be made to ensure that there is a healthy gender, ethnicity, SEN, EAL, month of birth and socio-economic mix in each teaching group. This will be monitored and tracked carefully by the head of subject and leadership team.

Optimal grouping arrangements will be reviewed and reconsidered on an annual basis, with reference to scholar progress and attainment data.

Where classes are set according to prior attainment, they will never be referred to as top or bottom sets, or higher ability and lower ability, as this directly contravenes what we know about ability and our brains' capacity for growth. We will, however, be straight and open with scholars about how they are grouped and which classes are attaining which levels. The criteria for selection for each class will be made clear and transparent to parents/carers and scholars. Movement between sets will be determined by scholar performance, as measured by on-going formative assessment.

Higher performing sets will contain more scholars than less high performing sets to enable scholars performing at lower levels to get more individual attention.

All teachers and Inclusion Team Key Workers will have and communicate the highest expectations of the potential of all scholars, whatever their current performance level and regardless of which set or group they are currently in.

Occasionally, Inclusion Team Key Workers will be deployed to support class teachers in teaching the scholars performing at the lower levels. However, it is important that scholars performing at lower levels get 1:1 attention from the class teacher, not just the key workers.

All lessons, regardless of whether they are being planned for a mixed or setted group, will be planned in the knowledge that there is a spread of prior attainment within the group. Every class will require consideration of the full range of needs within it.