

Simon Balle All-through School

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KS3 Hybrid Grouping: Information for Parents and Carers

This September at Key Stage 3, we are introducing a hybrid grouping model in some subjects. This is designed to accelerate progress for all students by combining the strengths of mixed-attainment teaching with an accelerated pathway group for students who are ready for greater pace and depth at that point in time. Our aim is simple: every child will be taught an ambitious curriculum, feel successful, and make strong progress.

Why are we making this change?

This model is intended to:

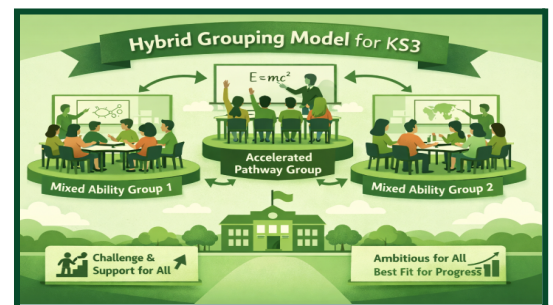
- maintain high expectations for all
- provide more pace and depth where appropriate
- avoid fixed labels or a sense that one group is 'better' than another
- keep movement between groups open and possible

In other words, this is about finding the best fit for progress, not placing limits on potential.

What will this look like?

In each half year group, within each teaching block, there will usually be:

- **one accelerated pathway group**, where learning moves at greater pace and depth, with a strong emphasis on challenge, independence and academic confidence
- **two mixed-attainment groups**, where students are taught through an ambitious curriculum with carefully planned support, stretch and adaptive teaching
- different possible groupings in 5 key areas:
 - Block 1: English and all remaining subjects
 - Block 2: Maths and Science
 - Block 3: PE
 - Block 4: Languages
 - Block 5: Rotation (Art, Textiles, D & T, Food tech)



All students will work towards the same curriculum end points. What may differ is the route taken, the level of support, and the pace of learning.

What this is not: it is important to be clear about what this model does **not** mean.

- It is **not** full setting or streaming. The majority of students will continue to learn in mixed-attainment groups.
- It is **not** a fixed judgement about a child's ability or future potential. Group placement is a starting point and will be reviewed.
- It is **not** a reduced curriculum for students in mixed-attainment groups. All students are entitled to, and will receive, an ambitious learning experience.
- It is **not** based on behaviour. Grouping decisions are based on learning requirements, evidence over time, and where a student is most likely to thrive.

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How will movement between groups work?

Movement between groups will be fluid and considered at planned review points, typically mid-year and end of year. In exceptional cases, adjustments may be made at other points. Any decision to move a student will be based on a range of evidence, including assessment information and classwork, teacher judgement, wider learning context.

This means no single test or isolated result will determine a student's pathway. We will always describe this as a pathway adjustment for best fit, never as a reward or punishment.

How do we make sure this is fair?

Fairness and equity are central to the model as we want to ensure that access to the accelerated pathway reflects potential and readiness. We will monitor:

- progress and outcomes across all groups
- representation within the classes
- movement between groups and the reasons for this

What does this mean for Modern Foreign Languages?

Students currently studying two languages will continue to study in the same way until the end of year 8. At this point they will be able to choose which to continue and they will have the opportunity to continue both. Those studying one language will continue to study one language and will be able to continue this language to GCSE.

Will children in mixed-attainment groups still be challenged?

Yes. Absolutely. Every student will study an ambitious curriculum and drive to the same end-points. Groups reflect current learning needs and pace, not fixed ability.

Is this just setting by another name?

No. Most students will remain in mixed-attainment classes. The model includes one accelerated pathway group alongside mixed-attainment groups, with planned opportunities for movement.

Will students in mixed-attainment groups receive a less demanding curriculum?

No. All students will study an ambitious curriculum and work towards the same curriculum goals.

Does being in the accelerated pathway mean a child is 'more able'?

Not in a fixed sense. It means that, at that point in time, the pace and depth of that pathway is the best fit for that student's current learning.

Can students move into the accelerated pathway later?

Yes. Movement is built into the model. Students are reviewed at planned points, and changes can happen in either direction where the evidence shows a different pathway would be a better fit.

Can students move out of the accelerated pathway?

Yes. Sometimes a different pathway is more suitable for a student's confidence, pace of learning, or long-term progress. This is about best fit.

Is this based on behaviour?

No. While strong learning habits matter in every classroom, grouping is based on sustained learning evidence and where students are most likely to make the best progress.