



CATERHAM SCHOOL

16 May 2011

To Parents and Guardians of First to Fourth Year pupils

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Mathematics Department – Setting Policy

At Caterham, we believe that a student's understanding of Mathematics is best served by delivering the subject at a pace and depth that enables the student to gain sufficient practice of techniques while still providing the challenges to stimulate interest in the subject. Our experience has shown that this is done successfully by using a setting process that provides movement between the sets but strives for stability as the GCSE years approach.

As the Summer session of school examinations approaches, this document explains the way we decide upon the make up of the sets for each year group.

In general, relative performance in the school examinations is taken as a starting point followed by input from the student's current teacher: it is worth remembering that a good performance in the school examinations may be down to the student already being in the correct set and we are keen to avoid a yo-yo effect of someone continually moving 'up' and 'down' after each set of examinations. The final decision lies with the Head of Department who has an overview of the sizes of the sets and how this will be managed.

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First Year:

The First Year intake is from a variety of schools where different experiences of Mathematics will have been encountered; the students take time to settle and over recent years we have avoided setting for this year group. However, we are able to put in place some setting in January following the November examinations if we feel that this would be beneficial.

Second Year:

Following the major summer examinations at the end of the First Year, the students are ranked and put into four sets; the sizes of the sets are more or less equal and the topics covered in the Second Year scheme are the same for each group, with the 'upper' sets tackling extension material rather than moving ahead: this enables easy movement between the sets following tests towards the end of the Autumn term if any changes are thought necessary.

Third Year:

There is an intake of more students at the beginning of the Third Year nearly all of whom will have completed the Caterham Entrance examination and Common Entrance; six or seven sets are created for the whole year group with the upper sets larger than the lower ones. This setting is naturally a rough one since there was no common examination involved. Thus, after the examinations at the end of the Autumn term, the setting is looked at again using the results of a common test and teacher input. The top two sets will then move in parallel for the rest of the year since some of these students will be identified as candidates for an early entry for IGCSE at the end of the Fourth Year. The major summer examinations of the Third Year will then inform the setting for the start of Fourth Year. It must be noted that being in the 'top' set during the Third Year is no guarantee that a student will remain in that set for the Fourth Year; in fact, statistically at least six of those students will need to make way for a number of high ability overseas students who will join the School for the Fourth Year as well as those from set 2 who have shown that they are capable of moving at a fast pace and have a high chance of an early A* at GCSE level.

Fourth Year:

The sets should now be fairly stable. Those students who make up the 'top' set will accelerate and sit the IGCSE in the summer; for them, an Additional Mathematics course will be undertaken and examined in the Fifth Year; for set 2, the IGCSE course and the Additional Mathematics course are covered over two years alongside each other and both public examinations are taken at the end of the Fifth Year; for set 2 and the other sets, the school examinations in January may produce limited movement between the sets and finally, there are major school examinations in the summer: it is very rare that any set changes are made for the Fifth Year. These students sit the IGCSE examination in the summer of the Fifth Year.

I hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely,

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Head of Mathematics

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