



June 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians

## Re: Setting Arrangements for Students joining Year 7 in September 2019

I am writing to inform you of the setting arrangements for students starting Year 7 in September.

At New Hall, students are set in a number of subjects in order to help teachers differentiate their delivery to ensure that students are stretched and challenged appropriately in all subjects, and are given extra support where they may need it. At the start of Year 7, however, we initially place students in mixed ability sets for all subjects, with the exception of Mathematics. The mixed ability groups allow students to get used to their new surroundings and to find their feet, whilst also allowing our teachers to get to know their students as individuals before any judgements are made about which groupings would facilitate their learning best.

In Mathematics, we have found from experience that a students' performance in the entrance assessments is a reliable measure and that students can benefit from more clearly differentiated groups from the outset. As such, students will be placed into one of three sets from the very start of term. These sets are named simply 1, 2 and 3 and this setting will be reviewed in the first few weeks, after which a small number of changes may be made to ensure all students are in the group that benefits them most.

In the first weeks of term, all students in Year 7 will also take the MidYIS (Middle Years Information System) assessments that are put together each year by the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University. MidYIS is a baseline assessment for secondary school students aged 11-14, designed to measure a student's academic strengths. The assessment is computer-based and is adaptive, meaning that each student will see a unique set of questions that are tailored to a level that is suitable for them. The assessment comprises four separate, timed modules, always following the same order of vocabulary, mathematics, non-verbal reasoning and skills (such as proofreading, speed and accuracy). The results of these assessments will then be used by teachers in three main ways. Firstly, we are able to identify each individual's personal strengths and weaknesses, aiding teachers to adapt their teaching to best suit the students in their classes. Secondly, we can use the results to best group together individuals with similar profiles and baselines in order to assist teachers in differentiating their lessons. Finally, the tests are a valuable tool for our Learning Development department to identify students who may benefit from extra support. These tests will take place during their timetabled Computer Science lessons and the exact timing will be communicated to students by their teachers.

Please be reassured that there is no need for you or your child to worry about the MidYIS testing. Students tend to find the tests enjoyable; more like a computer game than an

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examination. The students cannot enhance their performance with practice or revision, so there is nothing they need to do to prepare for them.

It is important to stress that we are aware that these assessments only represent a snapshot of our students, on a single day. Their performance on these tests may be affected by a whole range of factors. We do not therefore use these tests in isolation to make long-standing judgments about our students. In all cases, the judgement of teachers and the on-going performance of students in class is used primarily to determine the best group for each individual..

At the end of Year 7, we collate all the information on our students' performance over the year and use this alongside teachers' professional observations from their work in class to place students into sets as follows:

- Science and Computer Science: three sets named 1, 2 and 3
- Spanish and French: two sets for each subject named 1 and 2
- Latin: three sets named 1, 2 and 3

English, Theology, History, Geography, Art, Drama and Music remain in the same mixed ability groups named A, Aleph and Alpha until the end of Year 8, however we may implement some setting earlier if this best suits the needs of the year group.

Setting is reviewed each term and adjusted periodically. If at any point teachers feel that a student is better suited to work in a different set, parents will be consulted in advance of any change.

I hope that your son or daughter has an enjoyable start to their education at New Hall and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding the above, or indeed any matter regarding the curriculum at New Hall.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Tiffen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Paul Tiffen  
**VICE PRINCIPAL**  
**(CURRICULUM, GROWTH AND INNOVATION)**