

HONITON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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“Success for All”

Principal: Glenn Smith BSc (Hons)

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to inform you of changes to Year 10 classes this September in order to address class sizes and gender inequality.

In Year 9, one of the classes was fairly small, and contained some students who needed additional support. However, in order to keep the other class sizes reasonable, the group also contained students who did not need additional support.

This year we have decided to retain Sets 1 and 2, but make Sets 3, 4 and 5 more mixed ability. The advantage of this is to create three equally sized classes of around 19 students, which will benefit the students through GCSE. I understand that parents of students with additional needs may be concerned, but evidence suggests that ‘low ability’ sets do not help students to achieve. Instead, we will ensure there is LSA support in class and withdraw the students on a rotational basis to give additional support as necessary.

Set 1 has been retained, but I have made some changes to ensure a fairer gender balance. We have had great success in recent years with single sex groups, and our boys have achieved well above national average. Despite this success, we have moved to mixed gender groups in order to concentrate the most able in one class, but as boys tend to develop English skills later than girls the top set always contains a disproportionate number of girls. This then creates gender imbalances in the remaining groups. I have addressed this imbalance because the previous few years’ results have convinced me that boys do as well as girls if setting is equal and fair.

As some girls have inevitably been moved from Set 1, I decided to retain Set 2 to limit the extent of the changes. Sets 1 and 2 are roughly the same size as last year.

The English Department has always maintained a flexible grouping policy, treating each cohort as individuals with different needs. We spend a lot of time deciding on what is best for our students, so be assured these changes were the result of careful analysis and consideration. This consideration is an ongoing process and we will review the classes again before the end of term and make any amendments we consider necessary.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sarah Flynn (Head of English)

