



Friday 5th September

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you firstly, to introduce myself to you as the Acting Head of English for the academic year 2025/26 and, secondly, to inform you that the English Department will be introducing a new approach to how we organise teaching groups at Key Stage 3 (Years 8–9) and Key Stage 4 (Year 10 – to roll into Y11 in September 2026.) We want to share these changes with you now, explain the thinking behind them, and reassure you about the benefits for your child.

Changes to English Grouping from September 2025

As you will be aware the English Department has previously set students into three teaching groups in the House that they are in. For this academic year (2025/26) and moving forward into future years, each House will still have a “Set 1” for higher-attaining pupils. However, the remaining two groups (Sets 2 and 3) will become **mixed-ability classes**. We will still be using the same class codes on student timetables, but it will be made clear to students that sets 2 and 3 are equal.

Why are we making this change?

We want to continue to stretch our high-attaining students by retaining set 1. However, regarding the other sets, research shows that mixed-ability (or “mixed-attainment”) classes provide more significant benefits for students, particularly in English. Students tend to be more confident and to engage more during discussions and group work. Indeed, mixed-ability teaching has been shown to raise the aspirations of all students leading to better progress. Having two mixed ability classes also means that the class sizes are smaller than the middle sets last year.

Movement between groups

The groups will be reviewed after every main assessment point. Based on the data and the professional input of teaching staff, students may move from a mixed ability group to set 1 and vice versa. Any movement between sets would be precipitated by a conversation between the department, the student and the parent/ carer. As any group changes will be data driven, we hope that you can understand that we will not be able to consider changes based on friendships.

We believe this approach combines the best of both worlds: continuing to offer a clear pathway for our highest attainers, while also creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Thank you for your support as we make this change. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the English Department.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Cathy Burke
Acting Head of English
Great Marlow School