



— Est. 1859 —

THE ORATORY PREP SCHOOL

— Cor Ad Cor Loquitur —

Academic Setting

**This policy applies all pupils in the school from
Reception - Year 8**

Created: July 2026
Next Review: Aug 2027

At The Oratory Prep School, we recognise that children make progress at different rates and have different strengths, needs and learning profiles. Our approach to academic setting is designed to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and supported whilst maintaining high expectations for all.

Setting is used selectively and reviewed regularly. It is based on a range of evidence rather than a single assessment or test result. We aim to ensure that pupils are placed in groups where they can flourish academically, socially and emotionally.

Our approach is underpinned by the school's commitment to kindness, curiosity and wisdom, ensuring that academic organisation supports the development of the whole child.

Academic setting at The Oratory Prep School is based on:

- Groups should enable pupils to make strong academic progress.
- Pupils should receive work that is appropriately challenging and accessible.
- Placement should be based on a range of evidence, rather than a single assessment.
- Sets should be reviewed regularly and adjusted where appropriate.
- Teachers should use their professional judgement alongside assessment data.
- Pupils should understand that movement between sets is a normal part of their academic development and is not a judgement of their ability or potential.
- Setting should never limit a pupil's future opportunities.

Pre-Prep Phonics Setting

Phonics setting is used within the Pre-Prep to ensure that pupils receive teaching which is appropriately matched to their stage of phonological development.

Children undertake termly phonics screening assessments, alongside ongoing teacher assessment. These assessments are used to identify pupils' current phonics knowledge, any gaps in understanding and the level of support or challenge required.

Pupils are placed into phonics groups according to their individual ability and current level of development. Groups are reviewed regularly following assessment and teacher observations to ensure that pupils continue to receive appropriately pitched teaching.

Where a child's phonics knowledge is sufficiently secure, they will move from the phonics-focused group into a separate word knowledge and comprehension group. This allows pupils who have developed secure phonological knowledge to progress beyond the mechanics of decoding and focus on developing:

- Vocabulary and word knowledge
- Reading fluency
- Comprehension
- Understanding of meaning and context
- Wider reading skills

Movement between groups is based on readiness and progress rather than age alone. This ensures that pupils are able to move forward when their phonics knowledge is secure, whilst those who require additional phonics teaching continue to receive targeted support.

The aim is to ensure that every child develops secure early reading skills, whilst also providing appropriate challenge and progression as their reading develops.

Mathematics Setting

Mathematics is set from Year 3 onwards, with the approach developing as pupils move through the Prep School.

Year 3

During Year 3, pupils are initially taught in their existing class groups. This allows teachers time to get to know the pupils, establish routines and gather a broad range of evidence about their mathematical understanding and learning behaviours.

When considering Mathematics setting, the following information is taken into account:

- End of Year 2 PTM assessment
- Year 3 CAT4 assessment
- Internal assessments undertaken since the beginning of Year 3
- Classroom performance and teacher assessment
- Evidence of mathematical understanding, fluency and reasoning
- A pupil's learning behaviours and ability to work independently

The aim is for pupils to move into Mathematics sets from October Half Term. This provides pupils with sufficient time at the beginning of the academic year to settle into their new year group, whilst allowing teachers to gather meaningful evidence before setting takes place.

The October Half Term point therefore provides a balance between continuity, accurate assessment and appropriate academic challenge.

Years 4–8

From Year 4 through to Year 8, pupils are placed into Mathematics sets from the beginning of the academic year.

Placement is informed by:

- Previous PTM performance – where a child is new to the school, they are invited to do the previous years PTM to allow for us to identify any gaps, strengths and ensure they are placed into the appropriate set.
- End-of-year examination results
- Internal assessment data
- Teacher assessment
- Classroom performance and participation
- Evidence of mathematical understanding, reasoning and application
- Individual learning needs

Set placement is not determined solely by a pupil's previous examination result. Teachers consider the overall pattern of attainment and performance when making recommendations.

Where appropriate, pupils may move between sets during the academic year if assessment evidence demonstrates that a different level of challenge or support would better meet their needs.

English and Science Setting

Formal setting in English and Science is typically introduced from Year 7.

Prior to Year 7, pupils are generally taught within their mixed-ability class groups. This enables pupils to benefit from a broad range of classroom experiences and allows teachers to develop a detailed understanding of their individual strengths, needs and learning behaviours.

From Year 7, pupils are placed into academic sets for English and Science. Placement is informed by a combination of:

- Previous assessment outcomes
- Internal assessments
- End-of-year examination performance
- Teacher assessment
- Classroom performance
- Reading, writing and analytical skills in English
- Scientific knowledge, understanding and application in Science
- Learning behaviours and independence

The purpose of setting is to ensure that teaching can be appropriately pitched, allowing pupils to experience both support and academic stretch.

Spelling Assessment

All pupils from Year 1 to Year 8 complete a Single Word Spelling Test (SWST) at the beginning of the academic year.

The purpose of this assessment is to establish an accurate baseline of pupils' spelling knowledge and identify any gaps in their understanding.

Teachers use the results alongside their professional judgement to:

- Identify spelling gaps
- Establish pupils' current spelling knowledge
- Ensure spelling expectations are appropriately pitched
- Identify pupils who may require additional support
- Inform teaching and intervention
- Monitor progress over time

The SWST is therefore used as a diagnostic assessment rather than simply as a measure of attainment.

Formal spelling tests continue through the Prep School, with formal spelling testing ending at the end of the Lent Term in Year 6. Thereafter, spelling continues to be explicitly taught and addressed through English teaching, writing, feedback and individual pupil targets, but pupils are no longer required to complete formal spelling tests.

French and Religious Education Setting

French and Religious Education (RE) are set in Years 7 and 8.

These subjects are taught back-to-back within the curriculum, allowing the school to consider pupils' performance across both subjects when determining appropriate groupings.

When allocating pupils to French and RE sets, consideration is given to:

- Previous attainment
- Assessment performance
- Classroom performance
- Teacher assessment
- Ability to acquire and apply knowledge
- Learning behaviours
- Progress over time

Because French and RE are taught consecutively within the curriculum, the school is able to consider the overall academic profile of pupils across both subjects when constructing groups.

The aim is to ensure that pupils are placed in classes where teaching can be appropriately paced and where they are sufficiently challenged.

Review of Set Placements

Academic setting is not intended to be static.

Set placements are reviewed using the school's ongoing assessment processes. Teachers, Heads of Faculty and the Director of Studies will consider whether pupils are appropriately placed based on:

- New assessment evidence
- Progress over time
- Classroom performance
- Teacher feedback
- Individual pupil needs
- Evidence of under-challenge or over-challenge

Where there is clear evidence that a pupil would benefit from a different set, movement may be considered.

Any movement between sets should be managed sensitively and communicated appropriately to the pupil and their parents.

Communication with Pupils and Parents

The school will ensure that pupils understand that the academic setting is designed to support their learning and progress.

Being placed in a particular set should not be presented as a fixed judgement of a pupil's ability. Pupils should be encouraged to recognise that:

Academic progress is not fixed, and set placement can change as pupils develop.

Parents may be informed of set placements through the school's normal communication channels. Where a significant change in setting is proposed during the academic year, appropriate communication will take place with the pupil and parents.

Roles and Responsibilities

Director of Studies

The Director of Studies is responsible for:

- Overseeing the school's approach to academic setting
- Ensuring consistency across year groups and subjects
- Reviewing assessment data
- Working with Heads of Faculty and teachers to monitor set placement
- Ensuring that setting supports the school's academic aims

Heads of Faculty

Heads of Faculty are responsible for:

- Reviewing assessment and progress information
- Making recommendations regarding set placement
- Monitoring the effectiveness of sets
- Ensuring appropriate challenge and support within each set
- Working with teachers to identify pupils who may benefit from movement between sets

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate assessment information
- Using professional judgement alongside assessment data
- Monitoring pupils' progress
- Identifying under- or over-challenge
- Communicating concerns regarding set placement to the relevant Head of Faculty

Tutors

Tutors are responsible for supporting pupils pastorally and ensuring that pupils understand that academic setting is one part of their wider educational experience.

Equality, Inclusion and Individual Needs

The school recognises that assessment outcomes may be influenced by a range of factors. Setting decisions will therefore consider the individual circumstances and needs of pupils, including pupils with SEND, EAL and other learning needs.

Assessment data will be used alongside teacher knowledge and professional judgement to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by a single assessment outcome.

Where additional support or reasonable adjustments are required, these will be considered as part of the school's normal academic and pastoral processes.

Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of academic setting will be monitored through:

- Assessment and progress data
- Faculty reviews
- Book looks and learning walks
- Pupil progress meetings
- Teacher feedback
- Pupil and parent feedback where appropriate

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Studies and Senior Leadership Team to ensure that it continues to reflect the needs of pupils and the academic vision of The Oratory Prep School.

Policy review date: August 2027