

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Puxi, Shanghai



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25 August 2014

RE: INITIAL PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN TEACHING GROUPS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back to a new school year, I hope you had an enjoyable and relaxing summer holiday. As the Head of Secondary I am acutely aware of the need to start the year well for the whole school community, so please take a few moments to understand some important academic arrangements for your child in the first 2 weeks of term.

We have taken the decision to teach all students in Years 7 to 10 in their form groups in the first week, although Year 10, 11 and IB option choices will run as normal. We've done this partly to simplify the timetable for students in their first week in school, partly to help integrate new students into form groups and importantly to allow us to assess the students and accurately place them in the correct academic sets for the rest of the year. This will ensure that your child has the right level of challenge and development and settles into school life without unnecessary anxiety or stress related to levels of work.

If your child is a continuing student who was at BISS last year we will already have plenty of data and information about them and this data will not be ignored. If your child is new to BISS PUXI (and has not completed the tests pre-arrival) or if your child is making a move into a significant new area of the school, such as last year's year 6's coming into year 7, we have arranged for testing known as CATS and Oxford Placement Tests to be carried out in this first week. There is no preparation necessary for your child to complete these tests. At the end of the first week we will use these test results and all of the information that we have about students to make initial placements to teaching groups, and new timetables will be issued to students on the second Monday of term.

Placement in teaching groups is not rigid and students will still have the opportunity to move sets during the year if their academic progress indicates it is necessary. Teachers will continually assess students and will recommend moves between teaching groups when they feel that this is beneficial to a student. However, we do not plan to make any moves until the end of this half term so that students have the chance to settle into life in school without frequent, disruptive change.

Finally you should know that rather than simplistically ranking students and placing the 'top' group of students in the 'first' group and next best group of students in the 'second' group, we will construct several parallel ability groups in each subject, usually with three parallel ability bands in each year group. This provides a broader academic mix of pupils designed to increase the challenge to a greater number of pupils in each band rather than a select few in "top" set.

I hope that you find this information useful in clarifying our approach to placing students. Please feel free to contact me (c-share@bisspuxi.com) if you would like to discuss this in more detail.

With kind regards,

Christopher Share
Head of Secondary

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