

## ***The Student Grouping Study: Investigating the impact of setting and mixed-attainment grouping***

### **Aims of the study**

UCL Institute of Education are investigating whether it is more effective to group pupils in sets or in mixed attainment groups. The research is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation.

### **The project**

The project is investigating the effect of setting and mixed attainment (mixed ability) grouping in maths on pupils' attainment and self-confidence. The project will involve all the Year 7 classes starting secondary school in September 2022 from around 120 schools. The project will last until the end of Year 8 (Summer 2024). We are comparing schools that already group pupils for maths in mixed attainment groups to schools that already group pupils for maths in sets. **We are not asking you to change anything about what you already do in your school.**

### **Structure of the study**

This is an observational study with matched schools design. Schools are eligible for participation based on their current grouping practices for mathematics in Year 7 and Year 8. Each school that uses mixed attainment grouping in maths will be matched to two similar schools that use sets.

1. **Mixed attainment group** - Schools in this group will teach mathematics to mixed attainment groups in Year 7 (2022-2023) and Year 8 (2023-2024). Pupils grouped in 'mixed attainment groups' are grouped so that the range of prior attainment in each teaching group is similar to that of the year group as a whole. Schools may additionally have a 'nurture group' for the lowest attaining pupils.
2. **Setting group** - Schools in this group will teach mathematics to attainment sets in Year 7 (2022-2023) and Year 8 (2023-2024). Schools in this group will be matched to schools in the mixed attainment group. Pupils grouped in 'attainment sets' are grouped by attainment/'ability' in mathematics only for teaching in mathematics. Schools grouping in streams are not eligible to participate.

All schools in both groups will continue with their usual grouping and teaching practices for the duration of the study (September 2022 – July 2024).

The Study Team (IOE) will use school and pupil information provided by schools, and information from the National Pupil Database to assess the effectiveness of mixed attainment grouping and setting.

**All schools will receive £1000 following the completion of all study requirements with staff/school and with the required pupils. An additional payment of £500 is available to case study schools to facilitate data collection.**

If you are interested or have further questions, please email the study team at [ioe.groupingstudents@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ioe.groupingstudents@ucl.ac.uk)

## What commitment would this project require?

- All schools are required to return pupil information for all Year 7 pupils starting in September 2022 (pupil first and surnames, date of birth, Unique Pupil Number (UPN), pupils' mathematics class and teacher) to the Study Team in September – October 2022.
- All schools will provide the study team with contact details for their data manager to facilitate the return of the requested data.
- All schools will sign a data-sharing agreement with UCL (appended to this Memorandum of Understanding) to establish the terms and conditions for sharing of personal data.
- All schools will deliver letters to parents giving them information about the study and an opportunity to discuss the research with their child and withdraw them from data processing in line with GDPR. Schools will inform the Study Team of any withdrawals by the end of September 2022.
- All schools agree to the Study Team obtaining the relevant pupils' KS2 mathematics and English scores and demographic data (gender, FSM status, ethnicity) from the National Pupil Database. The school's data manager or equivalent will provide the information requested above, i.e. pupils' names, date of birth and UPNs to enable this to be achieved (unless a parent/carer or pupil has requested that their data be withdrawn from processing, in line with GDPR).
- All schools will follow UCL Institute of Education guidance on the secure transfer of data.
- Facilitate a short, paper-based questionnaire for all Year 7 pupils in September 2022.
- Facilitate an online survey for all Year 8 pupils in June 2024.
- Facilitate all Year 8 pupils to take the GL Assessment Progress Test in Mathematics in Summer 2024. This will be at no cost to the school and will be supported by an administrator provided by the project.
- All mathematics teachers will be invited to complete questionnaires towards the end of the project (June 2024).
- The Head of Mathematics will be invited to complete a questionnaire during the project.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team will be invited to complete a short questionnaire during the project.
- Some schools will be invited by the Study Team to become case study schools during the course of the project, although agreeing to do so is not a requirement of the study. Case study schools will allow the research team access to collect data (for example through observations and interviews). **An additional payment of £500 is available to case study schools to facilitate data collection.**
- To work closely with the Study Team.
- **If the school has to withdraw from the project for operational or other unavoidable reasons, it will notify the Study Team straight away and wherever possible still provide test data for the evaluation.**

## Ethical approval

The study has been granted full ethical approval by UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee, reference REC 1139. If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact Professor Phil Jones, Chair of the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee, using this email address: [IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk)