

The relationship between teaching for mastery and ‘ability grouping’ in secondary school mathematics

1. The majority of secondary schools put pupils into sets or streams for maths in Key Stage 3, according to perceived ability or measured maths attainment.
2. Some secondary schools have an established policy of mixed attainment maths classes throughout Key Stage 3, or are experimenting with such an approach.
3. The essential features of teaching for mastery in maths: working to develop understanding, keeping the class together working on the same content and believing that every child can succeed, can be applied in either mixed attainment, setted or streamed classes.
4. Hence, **alongside promoting a teaching for mastery approach in KS3 maths, the NCETM neither encourages nor discourages streaming, setting or mixed attainment teaching at KS3.** It is for each secondary school to make this decision individually, taking into account the pupils in question, their KS2 experiences, and the experience and disposition of the maths teachers in the school.