17. Group Discussion.

Give your own views on the problems below and speak against your oppo­nents.

**Topic** 1. *Mixed-ability grouping in the classroom*

Talking points:

1. Mixed-ability group — the usual basis of classroom organiza­  
   tion in Russia. Results.
2. Mixed-ability grouping — a controversial innovation for the  
   English, having occurred partly as a reaction against streaming.

3. Introduction of mixed-ability groups in English primary  
schools (the dominant form of organization), the first and second  
years of secondary schooling (relatively unproblematic), later  
years of secondary school (cautious and tentative). 4. Considerations relating to preparing pupils for public exami­nations— a major obstacle to the introduction of mixed-ability groupings in senior years of secondary school in England,

1. Mixed-ability grouping means harder work for teachers. En­  
   glish teachers' possible reactions. The ways to solve the problem  
   used by Russian teachers.
2. Advantages and disadvantages of mixed-ability groups.

**Topic 2.** *Is school a place for the imparting of knowledge (understood as certain material to memorize) or a place for the creation and development of a child's personality?*

Talking points:

1. Children before school. Do they have opportunities to learn? Are they eager to find and figure things out? Inquisitive? Confi­dent? Persistent? Independent? Have they achieved a degree of

2.

3.

4.

success without any formal instruction in school to help them solve the mystery of the language?

1. Learning— a passive or an active process on the part of  
   a pupil? Don't teachers often make children feel that they are  
   inadequate, worthless, unworthy, fit only to take other people's or­  
   ders, a blank sheet for other people to write on? Isn't what we say  
   about respect for the child in school usually opposed to what  
   teachers do?
2. "To be wrong, uncertain and confused — is a crime; right  
   answers are what the school wants" — the motto of certain (if not  
   many) schools. Do children in such schools or classes acquire  
   some undesirable habits? Do they not learn to dodge, bluff, fake,  
   cheat, to be lazy, to be bored, to work with a small part of their  
   mind, to escape from the reality around them into daydreams and  
   fantasies?

**Topic 3.** *Pupils' norms of behaviour*

(The document given below was produced by the Deputy Head of a large com­prehensive school for discussion at a special staff meeting.)

Talking points:

1. Pupils should enter classrooms and sit down with books and  
   pens ready for teacher to arrive unless the room has a notice on the  
   door indicating that pupils should not enter until the teacher ar­  
   rives.
2. a) Pupils should stand when teacher enters classroom (not  
   compulsory for fourth and fifth years), b) Pupils should stop talk­  
   ing as soon as the teacher enters the class.
3. Anyone arriving after the teacher has started the lesson  
   should wait at the front of the class until the teacher has asked for  
   explanation.
4. Jackets should be removed as soon as the pupils have entered  
   the classroom.
5. Anyone bringing a message to a class should wait at the front  
   until asked by the teacher to speak. Only written notes should be  
   accepted.
6. When the teacher is addressing the class nobody should raise  
   his hand but not call out.
7. Any pupil wishing to answer a question or attract the teach­  
   er's attention should raise his hand but not call out.
8. Chewing should not be allowed since it prevents articulate  
   speech and singing.
9. At the end of lessons pupils should not make any move to  
   pack up or leave until teacher has given permission and the class  
   should all sit quietly when they have packed until dismissed by  
   teacher but teachers should not abuse this rule by detaining pupils  
   so causing them to be late for their next lesson or, at the end of the  
   day, a school bus.