

Proposed Change to Tutorial Structure from Vertical to Year Groups: September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

We have reviewed the feedback from staff, students and parents and taken into consideration the concerns that have been raised through the consultation process. In summary, 54 students wrote individual comments of which 43 raised concerns and 11 presented positive views. 2 staff gave written feedback and 8 parents kindly wrote in with their thoughts. We have also spoken to many students informally and worked with Peer Parliament to seek views and answer questions raised.

The outcome is that we are going to change the way we structure our tutorial time so that students are in Year groups first thing in the morning from September 2018.

Where there were concerns from parents the concern often revolved around the Tutor and not wanting to change their Tutor who they valued immensely requesting that they stay with that specific Tutor. Every year we have staff changes and you will know that this year particularly we have had significant staff changes already in some subjects such as DT and Maths. We have 11 Tutors leaving us in July due to early retirement, relocating to other places or changing careers and coming out of teaching to work in other industries. We have more super teachers joining us in September who will be great Tutors so we are confident students will very quickly settle because their new Tutor will ensure that the group bond well and are looked after and cared for, safe and happy, engaged in a wealth of opportunity and positive Tutor and House activities appropriate to their age group. What we are keen to build is that stability for all students by retaining the new staff and current staff that we have but we have to accept annually that change in staffing always happens which impacts on children. Teaching children how to adapt to change is a valuable lesson that will stand them in good stead for a very fast changing world in which we all now live.

The other concern raised revolved around the fact that in vertical tutor groups, there is a mix of age groups, which is beneficial because older ones can help and look out for younger ones and younger ones can look up to older ones and it was felt this may get lost with a Year system. We are mindful of this and will be making sure that there is opportunity for Year groups to mix. For example we are just about to recruit Year 9 and 10 students to mentor Year 7 and 8 students both for academic support and for pastoral support for those who need it and/or request it. Also we have just recruited 90 Prefects going into Year 11 who will be supporting students, SEND students, and Departments in their work with students from younger Year groups, which clearly shows the commitment that our older students have to mixing with younger students and supporting them in their life in school. Of course one of the great benefits of Year groups as we wrote in the proposal is that the bonding and sense of belonging will be increased within Year groups, which we feel is very important at Court Fields.

Some students raised the same points as above particularly liking the vertical system so that they can mix with different age groups in the mornings. Another main point that students raised was that they would be with the same students all day. However students will be reminded that teaching groups are different to Tutor groups so the mix of students will be different for lessons.

The other point that some students raised was the fact that in Year groups they may not be able to help each other with homework in tutor time. Currently some older students may have been in a position to support younger ones with homework. However there is limited time in tutorial to do homework and it won't be part of our tutorial programme as the pastoral curriculum will focus very much on the needs of the Year group in terms of Personal, Social, Health, Economic (PSHE) and Careers Education that we have to deliver to students of all ages. We are also keen on developing our Character Education for all students in tutorial, which reflects our commitment to developing every young person's character enabling them to be confident and competent young adults in the future.

To ensure that all students have transitioned well to their new tutor group we are moving our Academic Monitoring Evening / Day from February to the end of September 2018 to give parents and students the opportunity early on in the academic year to meet with their Tutor and discuss student Achievement, Belonging and Participation for the year ahead. The meeting will be based around the end of year report that you will receive at the end of this summer term and enable us to set goals and targets with you to secure your child's success in the year ahead.

Once we have allocated students to tutor groups this term we will write you to informing you of who their tutor will be so that in September if any issues arise you know who to contact directly to support you and your child.

Finally, you are most welcome to attend our next Parent Forum Meeting on 26th June if you would like more information regarding this system, have any questions that you would like answered or want to give us further feedback or ideas that will support us in transitioning students across from one system to another. I trust that you understand that the rationale for this change is based on sound educational principles that will lead to school improvement and raised standards for all children.

Kind regards

RACHAEL BENNETT
Headteacher