

FAQs on Vertical Tutoring (VT)

What is Vertical Tutoring?

Tutor groups are arranged into groups made up of students of different ages.

A vertical tutor group contains some students (approximately four to five) from each year group 7- 11.

Is this a new idea?

No. Vertical Tutoring is already established in schools locally and nationally.

Why does Henry Box operate in this way? What are the advantages?

We believe that the role of the tutor is central to developing successful relationships for learning.

Despite our best intentions, there are too many 'invisible' children, many of whom go through the system doing the right things, day in and day out, and not having at least one adult in the school who knows them well. Learning relationships between people (student, parents/carers and tutors) are the basis for successful outcomes. Tutors are the key to learning as a whole school process and vertical tutoring will provide the time and structure to achieve this.

Schools where vertical tutoring is in place report the following:

- There is a better family atmosphere in the school where everyone is approachable. A year group mentality has been dispelled and perceived obstacles to interacting with students of different ages have been removed.
- Peer mentoring happens as a matter of course as older students talk to younger students e.g. Year 10 students advise Year 9 students about GCSE option choices.
- Smaller year group clusters in each tutor group mean more time for tutors to mentor students as individuals about personal as well as learning matters.
- It provides students with better leadership opportunities

What does this mean for assemblies?

We will have House assemblies in vertical tutor groups, but there will be occasions when an entire year group may need to come together, e.g. Year 9 Careers Day

Will younger students be influenced negatively by older students?

Research suggests that the opposite is true. An in-group loyalty develops as students get to know each other and grow in confidence. Tutors will have responsibility for making sure that any unacceptable behaviour is addressed and that the tutor group bond remains strong.

How many students are in a tutor group?

Each House will have 10-11 tutor groups and each tutor group will have 21-22 students made up of clusters of approximately four to five students from each age group. The students will remain in the same tutor group for their whole school career. We aim also to utilise some of our support staff as co-tutors so that students are better supported.

Will students be taught lessons in these mixed-age groups?

Subject lessons will not be mixed-age. Students will be in their vertical group for tutor time or assembly. Once a week we deliver a 30 minute Personal Development session in year groups as these are often age specific.

How will tutor time be organised?

A typical week might consist of the following:

5 x morning tutor times of 30 minutes each including:

- One academic mentoring session on Wednesday morning
- One House assembly per week
- One reading session where the group is read to by an adult (the whole school reads the same novel)
- One Personal Development lesson, mostly delivered within year groups

Why can the tutor offer better support under this system?

The Vertical Tutoring structure enables staff to get to know students, to recognise their achievements and address their concerns more effectively. Tutors can focus on small clusters of students as they approach significant points in their school life. When Year 9 students are applying for GCSE choices, the tutor will generally only have to offer guidance to 4-5 students at a key point in the year instead of to 24-26 students as is the case in the horizontal system.

How do students of different ages work together and support each other?

In a Vertical Tutoring structure, we believe that students can learn a lot from each other. When new Year 7 students join our community, the transition from primary school will be made easier with a warm welcome by older students. When Year 9 students are about to choose GCSE subjects, they might discuss with students in Year 10/11 what the subject content entails. In addition, we expect students to listen to and respect the perspective of others.

What other benefits are offered to the school community?

The structure will offer further opportunities to extend our House competitions in sport, performing arts, quizzes etc. Recognition will continue to be operated through the Houses, fostering a sense of loyalty and responsibility to others in the House. In this way, vertical tutoring will develop positive values and a stronger community ethos.

Who decides which tutor group students will be placed in?

House Leaders, tutors, the Learner Engagement Team, teaching staff (including Year 6 teachers) and members of the Leadership Team will contribute to the process. More vulnerable students will be matched with appropriate tutors.

If you have any questions that remain unanswered, please contact Mr Gilkes via office.4050@henrybox.oxon.sch.uk in the first instance.