

## Questions asked at meeting for parents 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018

- 1. My son is coming into Year 7 in September. Can you guarantee that he will be with at least one friend from his current school?**  
We will make sure that new students are paired with at least one other person they know and get along well with.
- 2. What were the negatives experienced by the school that reverted to horizontal tutoring?**  
The feedback provided by the school about vertical tutoring was universally positive. Their decision to revert to a horizontal system appears to have been driven both by financial need and the implementation of a new data management system called Pixel. The data management system works better in a year group format - and the school formerly had 6 House Leaders and wanted to reduce staffing costs and so reverted to 5 Heads of Year.
- 3. Will parents be balloted before the changes are imposed?**  
We are confident that this is an exciting and positive step forward and our preparations for September are well under way. Although we do not plan to ballot parents, we will conduct reviews from term 1 and take into account any feedback we receive.
- 4. Will parents be invited back to hear the results of the Term 1 review?**  
The review findings will be shared in school publications and on the school website.
- 5. Will vertical tutoring alleviate bullying? Could it become worse in smaller groups?**  
We aim to reduce incidents of bullying by promoting a team ethos within tutor groups and through vigilant and proactive management of the group by the tutor. Our investigations into case studies of other schools suggest that a reduction in bullying followed the introduction of vertical tutoring.
- 6. How can you ensure that students of different ages will not be a bad influence on each other? How will younger students be protected from the views and opinions of older students?**  
The role of the tutor will be essential in making sure that positive relationships across age groups are developed, monitored and maintained and that students are courteous and considerate towards each other. Staff training is scheduled for term 6 and further training will follow from September.
- 7. Why are tutors deciding pairings of students?**  
Current tutors have the widest knowledge of the relationships between students in their groups and are well placed to make initial recommendations. These will then be reviewed by House Leaders and changes made where necessary.
- 8. Why has vertical tutoring been announced only after Year 6 parents had chosen HBS?**  
Terms 1 and 2 were used to consult with an external expert, introduce the concept to staff and research vertical tutoring in other schools. Unfortunately it was not possible to complete this before parents made their school choice in the autumn.
- 9. Who will the extra, non-teaching tutors be? What are their qualifications?**  
Additional co-tutors will include teaching assistants, the school librarian, the school's exams officer and the school's Alternative Curriculum Supervisor. They will be paired with teacher tutors and will act under their direction. The majority of groups will have one lead tutor only but over time we aim to increase the number of co-tutors.

**10. How will mentoring be quality-controlled to make sure that influences are positive? How will you deal with students who are reluctant to mentor others?**

The majority of mentoring will be led by tutors on Wednesday afternoons. Some student mentoring will occur during other tutor times, but only once appropriate support and training has been put in place. It will be the responsibility of House Leaders and the Assistant Headteacher Ethos to monitor mentoring in tutor time through observations and feedback from students.

**11. Why was another school cited as an example of vertical tutoring in action when its OFSTED verdict is 'Requires Improvement'?**

Although the overall judgement was 'Requires Improvement' with a need to accelerate the pace of improvement, the judgement for Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare was 'Good'. Report comments include;

'Pupils typically feel safe and are encouraged to respect each other, regardless of any differences they may have. This promotes a harmonious atmosphere around the school.'

'Their courteous interactions with each other and the adults around them contribute to the positive atmosphere around the site.'

'They demonstrate mature relationships with staff, younger pupils and each other. They value greatly the support they receive from pastoral leaders, which contributes to their well-being.'

As a result of experiencing vertical tutoring in action and how well it is managed there and the positive reaction of our student council team following their visit, we are confident that this is a system that we will be able to develop at HBS with academic and pastoral benefits for students.

**12. How will you be able to teach appropriate material to mixed-age tutor groups?**

The Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE) curriculum will be taught in same-age year groups.

**13. How can you avoid putting undue pressure on Year 11 students who have an already stressful workload and guarantee their revision time for GCSEs?**

We are aware that Year 11 students will be under significant pressure and we will make sure that no unreasonable demands are made of them in tutor time. Their time spent helping younger students will be reduced as they move through Year 11. In addition tutors will have more time to support Year 11 students at key points in the year such as the exam season.

**14. Students in Year 11 will lose key friends. How will you deal with reduced morale as a result?**

Although Year 11 students may not share tutor time with all of their friends, there will be many opportunities throughout the rest of the school day when they will be able to see each other and spend time together.

**15. Could pastoral care be expanded by recruiting another counsellor or a nurse?**

We have a School Health Nurse available 5 days a week and a counsellor for 3 days. Although we very much value the services that they provide, it is unlikely that we will be able to recruit any additional staff in the immediate future as a result of financial constraints in schools.

**16. How will you ensure that tutors tutor effectively, particularly those who don't do it properly now?**

We are working with the tutor teams across all four houses on staff training needs to ensure all staff feel confident leading vertical tutor groups.

**17. Why was there no consultation with parents or students before the decision was made?**

The school leaders and governors chose to proceed with this change without consultation as they believe that it will bring only benefits to the students.

**18. Will there still be a Lower/Upper school split at break and lunchtime?**

No. We plan to allow students to move freely around the site.

**19. Will the students have a say in who they are put with or not put with?**

The new tutor groups will be created by House Leaders in consultation with current tutors. We aim to make sure that each student shares a tutor group with at least one other person they work well with.