

FAQs on Vertical Tutoring (VT)

What is Vertical Tutoring?

Tutor groups are arranged into groups made up of students of different ages. Currently we have single year tutor groups with two forms from each year making up a House. A vertical tutor group would contain 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. The school's Leadership Team has considered this system for some time and believes that there are significant advantages to be had.

Why does Henry Box wish to change? 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 naturally 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

Will vertical tutoring split up existing friendships?

When the new tutor groups are compiled, we will take students' friendships, personalities and interests into account on order to create balanced groups and to avoid isolating anyone.

Tutor time will account for 30 minutes, or about 8%, of the school day. Students may then see their friends in lessons and are free to mix with whomever they please during break and lunchtime.

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 will be 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 non-teaching staff as co-tutors so that targeted students are better supported.

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

Standard subject lessons will not be mixed-age. Students will be in their vertical group for morning registration and for tutor time or assembly. However once a week we intend to deliver a 20-minute Personal Development lesson in tutor time which will be in peer groups.

How will tutor time be organised?

A typical week might consist of the following:

- 5 x morning registrations
- 2 x tutor time sessions which may include literacy/silent reading/Quick testing/revisiting knowledge organisers
- 1 x academic mentoring session on Wednesday afternoon
- 1 x House assembly per week
- 1 x 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 options, 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 presently the case.

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 and sanctions will continue to be operated through the houses, fostering a sense of loyalty and responsibility to others in the house. In this way, we expect that vertical tutoring will develop positive values and a stronger community ethos.

Will students have a role to play in implementing this?

Following the assemblies introducing vertical tutoring, all tutor groups will be able to share their views and ask questions in tutor time. Some of students will visit two other Oxfordshire secondary schools to meet their School Councils and ask them about their experiences. These students will then feed back to the student body in tutor time and assemblies and to parents at the Information Evening on 28th March

How can parents/carers find out more about this?

Please refer to the linked documents on our website in the first instance. There will also be a Information meeting in the School Hall on Wednesday 28th March 2018 at 6pm where you are cordially invited to ask questions and seek further clarification.

Who decides which tutor group students will be placed in?

Heads of House, tutors, Student Managers, 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 and in some cases the tutor may remain as it is now to ensure consistency.

When will students find out which tutor group/ House they are in?

We aim to inform students in term 6 (June/July 2018).

If you have any questions that remain unanswered after the Information meeting on 28th March, please contact Mr Gilkes via office.4050@henrybox.oxon.sch.uk in the first instance.