

Vertical Tutoring

From September 2013, Chesterton Community College will introduce a new structure known as Vertical Tutoring. This system is explained below, as well as the benefits we expect to see as a result of implementing this new structure.

What is Vertical Tutoring?

Vertical Tutoring is not a new concept. Many highly successful schools around the country have adopted this system. Currently, our school is organised horizontally, in year groups, and students are placed in tutor groups with up to 30 students of the same age. Vertical Tutoring involves a house-based structure with smaller tutor groups made up of students of mixed ages. Schools using the vertical system report better attendance, better results and improved relationships between students.

What are the benefits of Vertical Tutoring?

- Vertical Tutoring creates an extended family approach to tutoring, where students will be able to support each other more effectively.
- Vertical Tutoring creates more opportunities for student leadership within the House system and within the tutor group.
- Students are better supported at key times throughout the year. For example, the tutor would only have to support six Year 9 students in making their GCSE options choices instead of 30 students.
- Vertical Tutoring creates an opportunity for on-going monitoring by the tutor. The tutor will be able to conduct effective mentor meetings throughout the year which will focus on personal and academic development.
- Vertical Tutoring will ensure that every student is well-known. The tutor will get regular up to date data on their students and they will have the opportunity to sit down and talk to each student individually.
- A Vertical Tutoring system will help create better communication with parents. Outcomes of the mentor meetings will be passed on to parents which will enable the parents and the school to work effectively together in supporting each student.
- Better progress, higher attainment: students' progress will be enhanced through regular focused mentoring, more effective communication between school and home, and better support from other students within the 'family' tutor group. This will lead to better progress and higher attainment.

Will all year groups be included in the Vertical Tutoring system?

Year 7 will remain in a horizontal system and Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 will move to a Vertical Tutoring system. During the summer, Year 7 students will be phased into the vertical system.

Does this mean Year 7 will miss out on the benefits of Vertical Tutoring?

Year 7 will miss out on the benefits of Vertical Tutoring, however, there are a number of other benefits they will gain by staying within a horizontal group. By students being in a tutor group surrounded by other year 7's when they join Chesterton this will allow them to network and build up strong friendships with each other. All students in their Year 7 tutor groups will be new to the school, so students can support each other in finding their feet and settling in (they will also receive support from the older students in their House). Our current induction programme is excellent and has been very successful in integrating Year 6 students into Year 7. Students will feel less apprehensive about the move to secondary school.

How does this work in practice?

The school will be divided into four Houses. All students and staff will be assigned to a House for the duration of the time that they spend at Chesterton.

In Year 7 there will be 6 tutor groups, and each tutor group will consist of 30 students of the same age, from a mixture of Houses.

Once students reach Year 8 they will move to a new House tutor group. Each House will have 8 tutor groups of approximately 22/23 students led by a tutor and co-tutor. Each tutor group will have a mixture of students from Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 (about 5 or 6 from each year group). The students will remain in the same tutor group for all four years.

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

Students will be in their vertical/horizontal tutor group every morning for 20 minutes from 8.35am – 8.55am. In lessons, students will be in their normal teaching classes, with students of their own age.

Who will be in charge of each House?

Each House will be led by a Head of House who will oversee the work of the tutor teams from Year 8 onwards. There will be approximately 225 students in each House. We also expect that all siblings from one family will be in the same House, although not the same tutor group. Year 7 will be led by a Year 7 Co-ordinator, who will oversee their tutor team.

Will this split up friendships?

To enable students' time to develop friendships when they arrive at Chesterton they will stay in a horizontal tutoring system for one year.

As we plan the vertical tutor groups, students will be able to give the names of three students who they would like to be in their tutor group, and are guaranteed to be with at least one of these students in their new tutor group. If the behaviour of the suggested groupings is not appropriate then we cannot guarantee those students will be put together.

Remember this is only for 20 minutes of the day and does not affect lesson time or social time where students are free to mix with their year group.

Will we put siblings in the same group?

We do not intend to put siblings in the same tutor group unless there are exceptional circumstances. We do want to try to put students in the same House if possible so that families can communicate with one Head of House who knows them well.

How will tutor period be organised?

Students will be involved in varied activities in order to make a productive start to the working day. The tutor period will allow tutors to see and communicate with students much more easily. Older students will be able to assist younger students in many different ways within the vertical system. Tutors will keep a close track of the progress of each student, helping to ensure that all students meet or exceed their personal targets.

How do students of different ages work together?

In a Vertical Tutoring structure, students can learn a lot from each other. For example, when Year 9 students choose their GCSE options, they can discuss the subjects with Year 10/11 students who may already be studying the course. When Year 10 is completing key GCSE work, students in Year 11, who may have already completed the work, can support them.

How can students of different ages support each other?

Older students develop a more caring outlook and watch out for younger students in their tutor group. Sensible advice from older students is often more readily received by younger students. Peer mentoring is easily organised within Vertical Tutoring, benefiting both the mentor and the mentee.

How can the vertical system improve opportunities for students?

We believe that Vertical Tutoring will help us to raise the aspirations of our students. Our Year 11 students are good role models and, as they move on to Sixth Form College, we expect younger students to aspire to follow in their footsteps.

All students will have the opportunity to be a leader in their tutor groups and, if they wish, in their House. Leadership qualities are important life skills that are highly valued by employers and in Higher Education.

What about assemblies?

A House assembly will take place each week. Year assemblies will also be carried out at different times throughout the year.

What other benefits are offered to the school community?

The structure will offer opportunities for friendly competition between Houses in sport, performing arts, quizzes etc. Rewards and sanctions will 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 strong community ethos.

Who decides which tutor group students will be placed in?

The Senior Leadership Team and the current Key Stage Co-ordinators, who know students well, will work together to ensure that students are placed in appropriate groups.

When will students find out which Tutor Group/ House they are in?

Students and their parents will be informed before the end of the summer term.