

7 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We have lived through unprecedented events in 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic; it has had a huge impact on us all. I would like to say thank you for the incredible support that our academy has received from all of our families. I am reminded, often, that we serve a very special community - one we are proud to be a part of.

We have remained open since 20 March for the children of key workers and some of our most vulnerable children. Over the past half term the vast majority of Year 10 students have returned to us for 1:1 tutorials and some small group lessons. Our Year 12 students have had a 1:1 tutorial and some online lessons and whilst we wanted more students to return to us, we have followed all the guidance carefully to try and keep everyone as safe as possible.

In this letter I would like to take the opportunity to outline a change we are putting in place for September.

In the new academic year the academy will be moving away from our current Vertical Mentoring Group (VMG) structure, to the **Horizontal Tutoring** structure as outlined below.

What is Horizontal Tutoring?

- This is where all tutor groups will be made up of students from the same year group.
- This is a move from the current structure where each tutor group consists of a number of students from each year group.

What are the benefits?

- We feel that students will benefit from sharing experiences with children of their own age.
- There will be more 'year' focused tutorial time which is invaluable at key points during the year. Messages, activities and sessions will be directed to meet the needs of one year group within one form. We feel that this is a more effective use of time and will benefit all students.
- There will be opportunities for clearer and more differentiated tutor programmes and assemblies. For example, CV writing for Year 10 students, guided pathway conversations etc.
- Tutors will be able to focus their efforts towards one year group; this will aid communication across the school and supports the tutor's delivery of sessions.
- Tutors and Learning Managers will be able to ensure greater consistency in the monitoring of attendance and punctuality and rewards and sanctions.
- There will be increased opportunities to create a year group identity and competitions across tutor groups.

How will my child be supported?

- Your child will have a tutor who will follow them on their journey, tutors take pride in this role and will be an important point of contact for a child with a concern.
- There will remain a Learning Manager for each Year Group as well as a member of the Senior Leadership Team linked to a Year Group. They will have an overview of the year group and will strategically lead their team. Pupil welfare, behaviour and achievement will be the centre of everything that they do.
- The Learning Managers are non-teachers and will continue to provide the pastoral care required for our young people.

How will assemblies now work?

- Each year group will have a designated day for their assembly. This will take place on a weekly basis and they will have a specific focus, for example on achievement, progress, cultural capital, personal responsibility and citizenship.
- There will also be opportunities to address current issues.

Key Summary of Horizontal Tutoring:

- Students will be in a tutor group with pupils of their own age group.
- Learning Managers will continue as non-teaching members of staff.

Last Thursday, the government released detailed guidance for schools and colleges regarding September 2020 when we will fully re-open to all students. One of the safety measures for all schools is that students will stay in a Year Group at all times during the day. This new system of Horizontal Tutoring will be an important part of our planning and preparation. We understand that this is a significant change for our students, but I hope the reasons are clear and the advantages it provides in the more age specific support and guidance will benefit all our students.

We are working hard to plan and prepare for our students' return in September. Further information and updates will be with you soon. We know that school, lessons and how we structure the day may have to be different in many ways, so that students and staff can return to work in a safe and controlled way. However, we are confident that our community will respond to these challenges in the dynamic and positive way that they have so far and soon we will have a school that is full of life and learning again.

Yours faithfully



Brian Kelly
Principal