Dear Parents and Carers

Vertical Tutoring at Tupton Hall School

We would like to inform you of an important improvement that we plan to introduce to our student support system from September 2019. As a school community we believe that nurturing the very best in all who are engaged in learning will lead to continued success and improvement of Tupton Hall School.

In September, following extensive research, school visits and discussions with staff and students from other schools, we plan to organise all students in Years 7-11 into new tutor groups which contain a balanced mix of students from each of the 5 year groups. These groups will also include, for some of the week, a number of Sixth Form students who will act as mentors for lower school students. These groups are known as ‘vertical tutor groups.’

Key aims of vertical tutor groups (not an exhaustive list):

- Parents and families have one point of contact in the school.
- The creation of a structure which enables all students to support and peer mentor each other.
- A culture where it is 'cool to learn' – high self-esteem and high expectations throughout the school community.
- More effective tutoring and a clear focus on progress towards higher attainment.
- Students contributing to their own individual learning plans and being part of setting and reviewing their own targets.
- The creation of smaller tutor groups – so that the tutor can give more valuable time to students at certain stages during their learning journey.
- Access to high quality study support and advice and guidance within the school, plus support from external agencies where needed.
- A house system used successfully for extra-curricular activities to promote a sense of belonging, representation and healthy competition.

Organisation of students for Tutor / Challenge Time:

- All students currently in Years 7-10 will be placed in a new, vertical tutor group consisting of 4-5 students from each year group.
- New Year 7 students will join these groups in September 2019.
- Tutor time, which we call Challenge Time, will be for 30 minutes each day.
- All lessons will continue to be delivered in year groups, meaning students will be with students of the same age. (This is no different to how lessons currently operate).
- Each tutor group will belong to one of five Houses with approximately 10 tutor groups in each House. (We propose to maintain current House names: Cavendish, Turbutt, Gladwin, Hunloke, and introduce a new House, chosen by students).
- Each House will be led by a Head of House, supported by a Deputy Head of House and tutor team.
- A new tie will be designed for each House, with our students voting on their design preference, with the first tie being presented to each student free of charge.

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What will happen in Challenge Time?

- There will be a range of learning activities delivered through Challenge Time each week. A carefully constructed personal, social and health education programme of activities will be delivered in support of students’ learning. Clearly there will be times when topics in this programme, such as relationships and sex education, will be most appropriately delivered horizontally with students of their own age. Arrangements will be made to manage the delivery of sensitive topics that are age related in order to protect our children’s emotional development as they move through the school. There will be opportunities for peer mentoring about achievement and progress, target setting, cross curricular activities, community and charity activities and House challenges to engage all of our students. In addition, private reading, buddy reading, student voice contributions and House assemblies will operate through the Challenge Time Vertical Tutoring system.

School day organisation

We also propose to take this opportunity to ‘balance’ the school day more effectively, rather than continuing with a heavily loaded learning morning with limited breaks and opportunities to eat. The proposed new day can be seen below:

8.30 am. Lesson 1       9.30 am. Lesson 2      10.30 am. Break          10.50 am. Challenge Time
11.20 am. Lesson 3     12.20 pm. Lunch         1.00 pm. Lesson 4       2.00 pm. Lesson 5
3.00 pm. End of school day for students

Communication and discussion

We recognise that any change to routines can be challenging and generate anxiety amongst students, staff and parents. Moving to a vertical system is a significant change in school and requires careful planning, explanation and communication. We have met with staff and this week have addressed students in assemblies. There is now an opportunity for students to discuss the proposals with their current tutors and to gather feedback and respond to any matters that may not be clear for them. We are also committed to supporting our students to help them appreciate the genuine benefits and opportunities that the vertical system of tutoring will offer to them. We also hope to alleviate any anxieties that students may have, particularly in our younger years and Year 11 so that they can look forward to these changes with enthusiasm and optimism.

Training for all school staff is essential if this change is to be successful in school. We have been granted permission by the Board of Governors to have an additional Inset day on Thursday 27 June 2019 in order to train staff. There is already a planned Academy Trust Inset day on Friday 28 June 2019. We understand that early notification for parents of this date will be appreciated in order to plan for an additional day when your child will not be in school. We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause but hope that you can understand the reasoning for this.

We also want you to feel informed and to have the opportunity to comment. For more information, about vertical tutoring and the answers to some of the frequently asked questions, please follow the link on our school website to a number of documents that may be of interest. If you would like further clarification or have any questions, there will be an information evening in the Richard Smith Hall on Thursday 11 April 2019 at 6.00 pm. If you would like to attend please complete the attached slip and return it to Students Services or email school directly at headteacher@tuptonhall.derbyshire.sch.uk to reserve seats.
The benefits that vertical tutoring will bring to our school will ensure that we continue to value and support each student, enabling them to make the most of every opportunity to be successful whilst supporting their needs as they move through the school.

We look forward to your support in this important matter.

Yours faithfully

[Signatures]

Mr A J Knowles
Headteacher

Mrs A Webb
Senior Assistant Headteacher

THS Parent Meeting: Thursday 11 April 2019
Vertical Tutoring at Tupton Hall School - 6.00 pm in the Richard Smith Hall

Please reserve _____ seats.

Signed _________________________________________________

Student _________________________________________________

Year group __________