

19th March 2010

TO: ALL PARENTS

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

Proposed Pastoral Reorganisation

Following initial discussions with staff and students, we are in the process of reviewing and possibly changing our pastoral organisation for September 2010. Our options include keeping things as they are, implementing a 'house' system combined with our current system or changing our current provision to a house system that also uses 'vertically arranged' tutor groups. I write to you to inform you of this process, provide some explanation about vertical tutoring and invite your comments and questions.

This consultation is only reviewing the time that children spend together during tutorial, Form time, and how our Form Tutors work with your children. It does not apply to the five hours that students spend in curriculum time, which will remain largely the same. In the process of this review, we are trying to improve the outcomes for both students and The Albany as a school so that we can provide a better level of service and prepare the children that we work with for an ever changing society. Therefore, we wish to:

- Improve the level of personalisation for every individual child and enhance the tutor/tutee relationship;
- Improve the exchange of information between child, tutor and parent, by reviewing the style/frequency of meetings and allowing you to spend more time with your child's Form Tutor;
- Enhance the opportunity for students to learn from each other, in a positive and supervised climate;
- Improve the chance for students to gain leadership opportunities-something which is becoming ever more important to employers;
- Reduce some of the barriers that exist between students from different year groups and therefore continue to reduce the frequency of bullying or other worrying concerns for younger students;
- Consider creating a small but significant opportunity for students of all ages to mix (approximately 1.5 hours out of a possible 31.5 hours).

Our discussions so far have focussed on gaining more information about students being grouped into vertically arranged tutor groups, as this is the least known way of organising students, in our area. In the future, if adopted, this could mean that four/five students from Year 7 are placed together with four /five students from Year 8 and Year 9 and so on. Therefore a typical tutor group would contain approximately twenty students of mixed ages. **THIS WOULD NOT AFFECT TEACHING GROUPS OR LESSONS!** This is only for registration and assemblies.

Additionally, many schools who have already implemented this have also then placed all students into 'houses' which are used for competitions and assemblies. Whilst we need students to be organised in Year Groups for many situations (lessons, timetable blocks etc), we are very aware that society doesn't work in such restricted ways. When students do have the chance to mix, for example, Business and Enterprise days, we are always astounded by the way that older students work superbly with younger students!

So far, we have discussed this amongst the staff, and I have given students a very brief introduction to this consultation via assemblies. Our School Council have visited another school in Bedfordshire where they have organised their school like for this for many years.

Some Year Leaders and I have also had an opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff from Abbs Cross School where this system has been in operation for two years. Both schools, along with the other schools that I have investigated or researched, report the following:

- Once in place, students get used to this very quickly;
- Improved relationships between students;
- Improved relationships between parents and tutors;
- Improved academic work as students gain hints and direction from older students on a daily basis;
- A reduction in bullying or other such incidents;
- Improved ethos amongst the student body with new opportunities to mix, competitions and learning situations.

However, all schools have noted that during the proposal stage, students tended not to like the idea of this type of system, mainly as they believe that they will lose friends or do not want to change tutors or think that many of the older students are too big and scary to talk to! Once in place, students in many schools have been given the chance to change back to the old system and none of them wanted to.

If you would like more information, or want to ask questions about this consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me by writing, telephone or e-mail at school. The consultation will last until 1st April, when the Leadership Group will meet to make a final decision based on all findings. Any decision that we make will only take place with the best interests of the children at heart.

Yours sincerely,

S Trimble
Deputy Head Teacher i/c Pastoral