



6 March 2018

Dear Parent(s) / Carer(s),

I am writing to inform you about an exciting new change to the pastoral system we will be implementing at Huish Episcopi in September 2018. With affect from next academic year we will be moving to a vertical tutor group and House system.

Since taking on the role of Principal I have been very impressed by the willingness of students to take on responsibilities and feel that there is a fantastic opportunity to build a strong community here at Huish Episcopi Academy based around a shared vision and a sense of belonging to a House within that community.

Having been involved in House systems in previous schools, I have seen the huge benefits this brings to a school and feel that now is the right time to transform our pastoral system to deliver a successful vertical system.

Below I have attempted to address the key reasons why I believe this is the right thing for our school.

### **Tutoring**

In each House there will be up to 10 vertical tutor groups, each with around 5 or 6 students from a year group, giving an overall tutor group of between 25-30. Whereas historically tutors in a year based system have seen a cohort through five years of education and have therefore only had to manage key events such as Year 9 options, Year 7 transition, work experience and GCSEs every five years, in a vertical system every tutor will be part of these key events each year, but for a far smaller number of students, giving the opportunity for much more support. This is also helpful for professional development as all tutors will remain up to date with developments for all age groups.

In the vast majority of cases our older students will act as positive role models for younger students; giving advice, mentoring and supporting during key events through their own personal experience. Vertical groups also help to minimise bullying, as students will mix with other age groups routinely and will develop friendships across a range of age groups. This system will also create a positive and nurturing environment for incoming year 7s. Quieter less confident students will have the opportunity to develop friendships across different year groups and on their first day would be walking into a family atmosphere and be welcomed by students that know the school well and so can help them settle quickly.

#### **Huish Episcopi Academy**

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Principal: Mr C J Wade BSc Registered in England and Wales: 7341553

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It is often said that the tutor is the most important person for a student, as this is the one member of staff they see every day. In a vertical system tutors can spend time with all students in an age group on a regular basis and build strong relationships. The tutor should remain the key person for each student and be able to offer a deeper level of support for everyone in their group.

In order to ensure every tutor is prepared for the change a full INSET day will be dedicated to training and preparing for this change in September.

As well as tutors being in a House, all other staff (teaching and support) will also be allocated to a House. The only exceptions would be myself as I need to remain impartial and staff involved in coordinating competitions and points.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Form we would combine Year 12 and Year 13s to make vertical groups across two years. The positive aspect is that tutors will have fewer students to work with on UCAS applications, but again will keep current due to doing this every year.

### **Houses**

Students will be placed in one of 5 different Houses based on different criteria to ensure balance. These will include academic attainment, effort / attitude to learning, attendance, behaviour records and sporting achievements. Siblings will be placed in the same house, but not the same tutor group. Cousins may be placed in the same house, but this would not be the default position.

In a vertical system, because all siblings are in the same house the Head of House will have knowledge of an entire family and be able to give support much more effectively than in a year based system where for example there could easily be two or three heads of year working with a family. Having one Head of House as the main point of contact is a much more effective way of dealing with a family that requires support and intervention.

The sense of community that being in a house brings will enable us to establish regular competitions in a wide ranging programme. These will range from a termly academic or behaviour focus, which house has the highest attainment in progress checks, or which house has the highest score for attitude to learning to smaller competitions on a weekly or fortnightly basis which focus on different subject based activities (quizzes, music, art, cooking, sport etc.). The possibilities are huge and all allow students to represent their house with pride.

At the end of the academic year there will be a presentation assembly where the House Champions for the year will be named and presented with a trophy. This would lead to a celebration event for the winning house in the afternoon.

Each House will have annual elections to elect House Captains (2) from the Year 11 cohort, and to elect tutor group representatives for the House Council. This will feed into the school council. House leaders would be nominated / elected to help arrange teams for competitions and to help with assemblies etc. Creating different roles for students within their Houses will improve

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leadership qualities, develop resilience, allow for the modelling of good behaviour, promote maturity and independence. All positive benefits of the House system.

6<sup>th</sup> Formers will also be part of the House and will be involved in mentoring / supporting younger students during the tutor period on a regular basis.

### **Uniform**

The school uniform will largely remain unchanged, with the exception of two items. Firstly, there will be a House tie. Once House colours and names have been finalised we will order new school ties. Secondly, school skirts will need to be purchased from our online supplier. No other style or brand of skirt will be allowed. Further details will follow after Easter.

The changes, whilst significant, are only to the pastoral system and will have no impact on lessons. Students will remain in their classes as they have done to this point, along with students from all the other Houses.

I am sure there will be myriad questions that arise from this significant change, but I sincerely hope that you will see the benefits and the opportunities this presents us to create a culture in the school built around competition, support and a sense of community. To help us shape the vertical House system I would encourage parents or carers to attend a parent meeting to discuss this in more detail. We are holding two meetings in the main hall on Tuesday 10 April and Thursday 12 April, 6pm-7pm. Please click on the relevant hyperlink below to book your place.

10 April 2018, 6pm <https://form.jotformeu.com/80643892089367>

12 April 2018, 6pm <https://form.jotformeu.com/80644107189358>

Chris Wade  
Principal

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