



Dear Parents and Carers,

Changing the pastoral structure from the summer term 2020: Consultation

I am writing to you as part of a consultation process to make changes to the pastoral structure. The changes, alongside the rationale for change and timescales are set out below. We would like to take on board your views before putting in place any changes for the summer term 2020.

What is a pastoral structure?

It is the way a school organises itself to meet the social and academic needs of students to ensure personal development and an overall feeling of wellbeing.

What are the different types of pastoral structure?

Secondary schools organise themselves in different ways for the purposes of pastoral organisation. These can be characterised as either a Year Group or Vertical (House) structure, depending on whether a Year or House system has been adopted.

The most common and popular approach for secondary schools to organise pastoral care is based on Year Groups in which Heads of Year have overall responsibility for students in one age-group.

South Dartmoor College has always operated a Vertical system with Houses. However, discussions have taken place within our staff body about whether it is time to change and adopt a Year Group structure.

Why is South Dartmoor College considering a change?

We believe we have many existing strengths in the way we care for and support our students based on our current House structure including:

- A family environment, everyone is approachable, no “year group” cultures or perceived blocks against talking to older students.
- All students from Year 7 onwards have the benefit of guidance from older students in their tutor group. There is the chance to discuss issues including bullying, harassment, careers, homework, option choices and post 16 course decisions.
- Working with people of different ages is a more normal social environment.
- Older students act as role models and student mentors and can be credited for responsibility and peer mentoring.

However, our current system requires that much of the pastoral support we provide has to be applied to large groups of students experiencing differing issues at the same time, e.g., supporting new students at the College, helping students choose GCSE options and preparing them for the challenge of examinations. It also makes communication with year based classes and whole year groups



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challenging and discussing sensitive issues can be difficult when the audience ranges in age from 11 to 16.

With increases in tutor group numbers the role of the tutor is becoming increasingly challenging when caring for students who are at different stages of development and academic pressure. We feel a Year Group structure would allow tutoring to more closely match the 'rhythm' of the College academic year therefore a more efficient and effective vehicle for giving students in all year groups a higher level of personalised support when they need it most. In essence students would receive a better deal.

How will my child benefit?

Staff have discussed at length a possible change and have identified the following potential advantages that a change could bring:

- The ability to target academic guidance and support for year groups based on the 'rhythm of the year.'
- Easier delivery of specific age related PHSE and careers advice.
- Help clarify and simplify the role of the tutor – focusing on one age group and their needs at the time of their development.
- Enable tutors to become 'experts' in their tutor group as they progress with their students – a greater sense of ownership and belonging.
- Encourage tutors to develop closer links with the families of their tutor groups.
- Allow Y7 students to be developed into 'South Dartmoor Students' without the influence of older students.
- Aid communication and consistency in tutor groups – allowing the tutor to focus on one-year group.
- The structure complements the national Key Stages structure.
- Tutors specific skills or interest may be able to be utilised and aligned to specific year groups.
- Heads of Year will have less students to support and therefore able to react quickly when issues arise.
- The year group structure better reflects the external academic pressures students face enabling tutor teams to support students at pressurised times.

Won't this split up friendships?

Tutoring will be potentially reduced to 15 minutes a day. For the remainder of the College day students are taught in year groups. From conversations with students, the vast majority identify their friends as being in the same year group. Therefore, it is likely that students will spend more time with their friends.

What does this mean for assemblies?

Assemblies would continue broadly as they do now but rather than a House assembly they would be held in Year Groups. This would allow assemblies to be age relevant and reflect year group issues instead of being targeted towards student from year 7 to 11.



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How will Tutor time be organised?

We expect that students will be involved in varied activities that reflect the 'rhythm of the year' for that particular Year Group as well as activities to support their House.

Why can the tutor offer better support under this system?

The Year Group tutoring structure provides staff and students the opportunity to really get to know each other. Tutors can focus on the issues of the day for their tutor group as they approach significant points in their College life, such as when students are applying for option choices.

Is Year Group tutoring already decided – Why are you consulting?

South Dartmoor College Governors and Senior Leadership Team have decided that a change to our tutoring system is worth extensive further investigation to ensure it is the right structure for the College in the future. It has not been decided when that would be, or what it would look like. It is very important that the structure comes out of consultation with all involved.

Consultation Arrangements

Alongside this consultation with parents & carers there will also be consultation with members of the Local Governing Body, students, staff and other stakeholders running concurrently.

If you would like to share your views, please complete this online form:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/sdcc-pastoral-structure-consultation>

The consultation period will end at 12am on 20th March 2020. We will then consider the comments and will inform all stakeholders of the outcome before the end of Term 5 to facilitate any changes that may occur from September 2020.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Dyke
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Assistant Principal