

What will it mean to be a tutor in 2020/21?

We introduced vertical tutor groups in 2016 as part of our restructuring of the year groups into Houses; over the past 4 years, tutor groups have given opportunities for students to support others across the year groups and for students of all ages to develop their leadership skills. As the government guidance was released about our return to school, it became clear that vertical tutor groups were going to be impossible. We had to make a choice between returning to horizontal tutor groups or reducing the number of tutor sessions and meeting with a small group each morning. We went for the latter. The reason being because we have heard it said many times since March how important the relationship between the tutor and the tutee has been, it was a central cog in keeping the relationship between school and home alive. We do not want to lose this by reverting to horizontal tutor groups.

In February we started a coaching circle pilot with eight tutor groups. Eight non-tutors were attached to an existing tutor group, rather than doing the traditional tutor type activities, we sat in two circles, we talked, and we listened. We talked about things in the news, what we wanted to celebrate, what we were worried about, what we had done over the weekend and if Monster Munch were appropriate for adults! The initial student and staff voice was positive and we were ready to go into phase 2 of the pilot when COVID hit.

As we return in September, your tutor group sessions will follow this pattern and it will follow a circle time approach, **this is a crucial part of our recovery.**

Monday	Year 7
Tuesday	Year 8
Wednesday	Year 9
Thursday	Year 10
Friday	Year 11

Circle time rationale

Why?

One of the six basic human needs is **connectivity** (food, water, shelter, sleep and novelty being the others); we require connection (physically and emotionally) with other humans to release certain hormones like oxytocin. If we have this connection, our brains develop properly. Regular connection allows us to maintain a sense of well-being that ultimately means we are able to care for ourselves.

Connection brings care; care brings honesty; honesty brings challenge; challenge brings progress (both personally and academically); progress means our students leave Brimsham as more rounded, successful human beings.

Connection also means people feel like they **belong**. When people belong, they are more motivated, more committed, they work harder. Everything we would want our students to be.

You may think I am expecting too much from sitting in a circle for 15 minutes, once a week. I don't believe so. Over time, when you sit down with somebody and you get to know them, barriers are broken down and meaningful relationships are formed.

This is not a therapy session; it is an opportunity to reflect the kind of conversations that happen around breakfast tables, or in the pub, or on the bus. It is an opportunity for us to model listening to one another. It is an opportunity for students to talk more and develop their vocabulary. It is an opportunity for students to be heard.