

29<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Consultation on the pastoral structure at Carr Hill**

For several years now Carr Hill has operated a vertical pastoral structure with the 6 Colleges and mentor groups of mixed ages from Years 7-11. There are undoubtedly many strengths to this system which has become a feature of the school but there are also a number of drawbacks which are perhaps becoming more apparent as a result of the educational changes nationally. It is also the case that we need to review structures in face of the very difficult financial situation which all schools are facing. Staff, the Parents Forum and Governors have reflected on the advantages and drawbacks of the current system and, after careful consideration, the Governors have agreed to consult on reverting to a year group structure from September 2018 onwards. This would be an important change and one which is not to be taken lightly, but any change will only be made for what we believe to be in the best interests of all the students at Carr Hill.

Rationale for the proposal:

1. We are increasingly needing to spend time with whole year groups especially in Years 10 and 11 as they prepare for public exams or in Year 8 as they prepare for options. This means that there are very few days where the whole mixed age mentor group is present.
2. Single age mentor groups will allow for age appropriate input on a variety of issues either in mentor or assembly time
3. There are concerns that when addressing any issues within a year group or a class, the current system means that there are 6 college leaders potentially involved as opposed to one Head of Year. A single Head of Year can ensure consistency of approach within a year group.

Further thoughts on the advantages and drawbacks of the current system which have arisen in discussions are to be found at the end of this letter.

Proposal:

- From September 2018 students will be in year group structures with a member of teaching staff as Head of Year. Mentor groups would therefore be made up of students from one year group
- The Head of Year and Mentors would follow the students through the school in order to provide continuity and effective communication with families. However we would appreciate comments on the idea that the Year 7 team be fixed to provide expertise in welcoming new students into the school and leading transition- if this were to be the case then the Head of Year and mentors who pick students up in Year 8 would take them through the rest of their school years
- One member of the School Leadership Team will take overall responsibility for progress of students at KS3 and another at KS4
- There will be two Pastoral Support staff who are not teachers to support the Heads of Year
- There will continue to be a Pupil Premium Mentor to work specifically on attendance and progress of those students who are in receipt of pupil premium as a result of free school meals, being on free school meals in the past 6 years or being Armed Service families.
- The changes, if agreed by Governors at the end of the consultation, will not have any financial impact on families

If you have any comments you wish to make on this proposal please forward them to [pastoralstructure@carrhill.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:pastoralstructure@carrhill.lancs.sch.uk) . The consultation will close on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2018.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Waller  
Headteacher

In the course of our discussions over the past few months these are some of the ideas which have been raised regarding the advantages and drawbacks of the current College system:

### **Some strengths of the current College system**

- The opportunities for peer support between age groups
- Vertical mentor groups can break up the divides between students that can exist among year groups
- Older students can help younger ones
- Older students can be good role models for younger ones in mentor time
- There can be good interaction between different aged students.
- The College system can create a real sense of belonging
- The College system allows mentors the opportunity to know a wider group of students and their needs than year groups would
- It's good for year 7 – breaks down worries
- The advantage of families only having to deal with one set of pastoral staff who know the sibling links and families well
- It can help the aspirations of younger students
- It is a selling point of the school – the USP
- Mentors can offer support to particular groups of students at key times because there is only a small number of any year group in a mentor group
- It has allowed for smaller mentor groups which is a benefit

### **Some Drawbacks of the current system**

- Real integration between year groups in mentor time is sometimes limited
- It is difficult to have age appropriate input when dealing with 11-16 year olds in one group
- Mentor time is disrupted by assemblies for different year groups so it is rare to have everyone present
- Does the mixed age system make it harder for students to make friends with their own age group?
- There can be a lack of consistency for students in a year group when there are 6 college leaders
- If there is an incident or concern with particular year group staff have to speak to several different pastoral leaders
- It makes it difficult to focus on a common issue across a year group
- It makes communication in school harder – a message for a year group has to go to all mentor rooms
- Mentors end up prioritising their time between the needs of different age groups – and some year groups lose out
- Prevents a lack of overview of the whole year group
- Mentors don't get to hear what a year group is being told in assemblies
- Students are not in mixed ages for the rest of the day so why have it for the first 15 minutes?