

MENTOR GROUP AND COACHING PROPOSAL

The crucial first 30 minutes of the school day

PROPOSAL

To restructure Mentor Group from a 15 minute horizontal (Year Group) structure to a 20-25 minute vertical (students from all Year Groups) structure with a coaching and readiness for learning focus.

RATIONALE

The start of the school day provides opportunity for teaching and support staff to work with a tight focus to increase student connection to school, participation at school, access to meaningful learning and access to effective wellbeing support. The first actions of the school day can reflect a collective staff commitment to increasing learning, wellbeing and life-opportunity outcomes for the children and young people in our care.


We are a community of children, young people, employed adults and supporting families and a morning gathering that reflects most of this diversity may be more authentic and purposeful than one that groups children and young people by Year Group.

Students in a typical secondary school spend 1 000 hours a year in age-specific groupings. A vertical mentor group will allow up to 100 hours a year in a grouping that better represents the whole school-attending community.



Leaders of Student Care do not currently lead a team in the same way that Leaders of Learning lead a team. Effective Middle Leaders improve outcomes for students by improving the collective capability of staff. The positive influence of Leaders of Student Care will be enhanced when they lead a team with shared purpose and defined improvement goals.

Students differ as learners and in social emotional development. The start of the day is the ideal time to support students so that the individual enjoys the maximum chance of a successful day as a learner and productive, contributing member of the College community.



A universal and unconditional positive regard for children and young people, and a high regard for the collective capacity of a school staff team to increase learning, wellbeing and life-opportunity outcomes for children and young people.

SHIFTING THE PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF THE MORNING MEETING

Consider: does the current structure, purpose and function provide students with such a great start to the day that we are committed to keeping it? Can we provide a more productive start to the day?

Current purpose and functions:

- Prayer
- Checking student attendance
- Communicating messages
- Year meetings (at times)
- Relational and pastoral

SOME PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS CITED BY SCHOOLS THAT ADOPT A VERTICAL, COACHING AND READINESS FOR LEARNING FOCUS:

- Building relationships across the school years.
- Older students provide a model (usually strong) to younger students of what a maturing and developing young person can be.
- Organised, self-directed, purposeful students use the time to get straight to work.
- Staff work with students to remove barriers to connection and participation, coaching for improved learning and wellbeing, and whatever needs to be done to answer the question: What do I/we do to maximise the chances that this student will have a successful day at school?
- Each student has a precise and concise Learning Plan, constructed and worked on during Mentor Time (What are the 1, 2 or 3 things I need to do to improve my learning? How do I know? Who can help?)

- Leadership Team, Middle Leaders and Intervention Team identify and name (with appropriate processes and protocols, including privacy protocols) students who require additional support. Mentor Group is a key site for supporting these students, and for taking action in response to these intervention questions



WHAT ARE WE DOING FOR STUDENTS:

- who are not learning/not progressing?
- who are already highly proficient?
- who experience barriers to attendance?
- who experience barriers to connection and participation?
- with Social, Emotional or Behaviour Difficulties?
- Who require support to replace an unproductive behaviour?
- who have CSO-formalised Support Plans and College-initiated Support Plans?
- Leadership Team and Middle Leaders typically use the time to remove barriers to participation for students with high-level needs or to resolve existing and on-going student issues requiring support.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO SUPPORT VERTICAL MENTOR GROUPS:

Schools with a similar student population as McCarthy Catholic College typically have six Houses, which makes the Houses roughly equivalent to Year Groups in size.

Proposal

Form 2 new Houses to move from 4 Houses to 6 Houses. Appoint Leaders of Student Care as a House Leader (first role) and a Year Leader (second role). The majority of work is House and Mentor Group-focused. Work that is age-specific or Year Group specific, takes place in Year Groups.

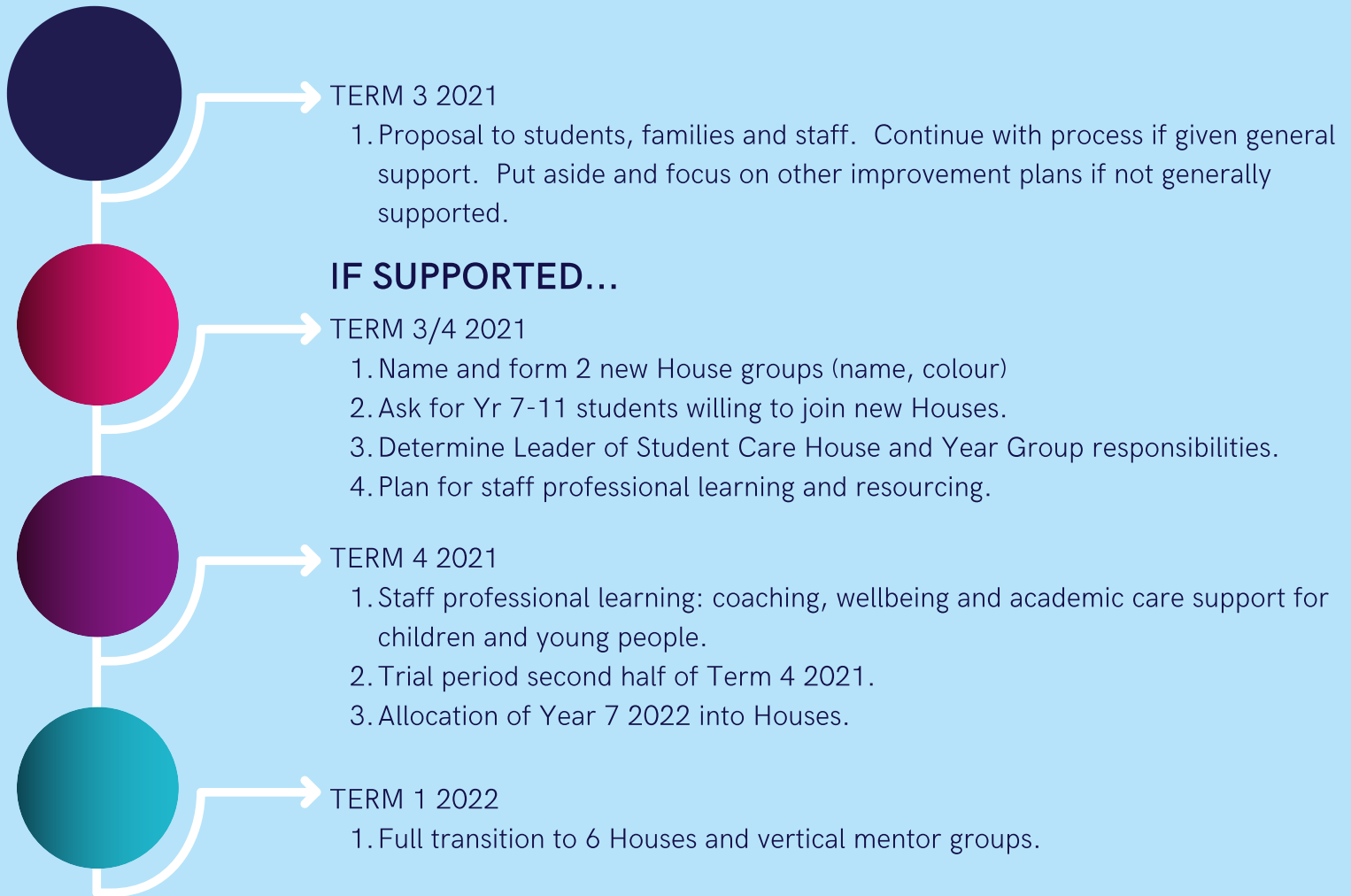
Form 8 vertical Mentor Groups in each House.

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

1. Experiences of similar re-structures in schools suggests that forming new Houses can be problematic, with connection to House experienced by students, families and staff being a significant barrier to change. This is understandable and to be expected, particularly for students who have an historical connection to a House. Students can be asked if they are interested in being members of a new House, rather than being 'restructured' into a new House.
2. Some schools with a more traditional pastoral/learning separation have experienced staff resistance to more involvement in wellbeing support. A coaching and readiness for learning approach requires a staff understanding of the inextricable connection between learning and wellbeing, the notion of collective responsibility for improving outcomes for all students and the clear research evidence of improved collective efficacy generated by strong teacher and support staff teams. In the Armidale Diocese, 'Living Well, Learning Well: A Student Support Framework for the Diocese of Armidale' provides a strong justification and framework for these foundational ideas.

3. Schools with a system where mentor teachers 'follow' a group of specific-year students through their school life may experience resistance from staff and students to the loss of this structure and connection. This is understandable and to be expected, particularly for groups who have been together for some years. A focus on the benefits older students can bring to vertical groups may encourage students to accept the opportunity for the good of the school community. Teachers will continue their ongoing support of students in a vertical grouping, albeit with a group that changes each year with Year 12 graduation and Year 7 enrolment.

TIMELINE:



STAFF AT MY SCHOOL HAVE:

- A collective responsibility for all students
- A positive, high regard for all students
- A commitment to increasing learning, well-being, faith development and life-opportunity outcomes for all students
- A commitment to being a skilled and helpful adult support for all students

ALL STUDENTS, ALL STAFF, ALL THE TIME:

- People have a better day because I am here as part of the school team!

