

Strategic Announcement: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why have you chosen a Year 7-13 composite model, rather than expanding the Middle School to encompass Year 7-10?

Providing a dedicated homeroom for Year 7, and Vertical Tutor Groups from Years 8-13, is a unique combination and creates an environment where young women from Years 7-13 will make lifelong friendships and have the right level of support at each developmental stage to reach their potential.

Moving to a Year 7-13 composite model better meets the needs of our girls, emotionally, socially and academically. Importantly, it reduces the number of transition points as girls move through the school, which supports their emotional development. It also deepens the special sisterhood at St Cuthbert's by providing more opportunities across the year groups for girls to work together.

The House (or Vertical) Tutor Groups, which will include girls from Years 8-13, enable more senior students to become role models and mentors, as the groups meet several times a week and girls work together on a range of annual Inter-House competitions and other school events. This intimate structure is integral to the strong sisterhood culture at St Cuthbert's, and enables the school's youngest students to form strong connections with girls in older year groups whilst also maintaining deep bonds within their own cohort.

The girls will also have the advantage of the same tutor teacher over a six-year period. This enables the teacher to really get to know each girl and notice what is going on in her life. Senior School girls have deeply appreciated the continuity of tutor teacher during their St. Cuthbert's journey.

St Cuthbert's has, for several years, operated some aspects of the curriculum from Years 7-13, with oversight from senior faculty heads. The move to a composite model formalises that academic strategy and further deepens the curriculum oversight from the faculty heads for Years 7 and 8 under our framework of Knowledge-Rich school.

Q: What is the rationale for a Year 7 Homeroom Model?

Developmentally, girls need the emotional security and pastoral support provided by a homeroom teacher to enable them to successfully transition from primary school.

Our Year 7 teachers are outstanding, and will continue to teach English and Social Studies in the homeroom. Our girls at this level are also taught by specialist teachers in subjects such as Technology, Languages, PE and Health, Maths, Science, Music, and Drama.

The move to a Year 7-13 Senior School will provide opportunities for Year 7 girls to be mentored by Year 9 girls, and to work with, and learn from, older students on projects across the school. It will also provide leadership and mentoring opportunities for Year 7 girls to work with girls in the Junior School.

Q: What is a House (or Vertical) Tutor Group?

School Houses are a vital part of St Cuthbert's and are designed to foster girls' friendships, develop leadership skills, and create a sense of belonging to the wider school community. At the start of her journey with St Cuthbert's, every girl is placed into one of eight Houses, and this structure allows for social activities and leadership opportunities across all year levels.

A House (or Vertical) Tutor Group currently consists of a group of girls from Year 9-13 from the same House, with a dedicated tutor teacher that meets several times a week.

Under the new model each House Tutor Group will be expanded from Term One 2020 to include girls from Year 8. There will be approximately 21 girls in each tutor group beginning next year, which will be an increase of around three girls per tutor group. This number means that there are fewer girls in a House Tutor Group than there are in an existing Year 8 homeroom. The girls form close bonds with one another across the year groups, with older girls mentoring the younger girls, and offering study tips, advice, and counsel on a range of topics.

Q: What are the benefits of the House (or Vertical) Tutor Group model?

Our House Tutor Groups meet several times a week to work on activities and projects, and the girls sit together in assemblies and other events. Under the new model, girls from Year 8-13 will have the same tutor teacher for six years. The tutor teacher works closely with the Deans and subject teachers, to ensure that the girls are happy and have the right level of support they need to develop their self-confidence and reach their potential.

In our experience, House (or Vertical) Tutor Groups are the best model to support the development of friendships and connections across the levels, supporting girls' emotional wellbeing and learning. Older girls benefit from relaxing with younger girls, and develop their mentoring and leadership skills, and our younger girls benefit from the support and advice from more senior girls. Vertical Tutor Groups at St Cuthbert's help foster the strong sense of sisterhood and belonging, that our girls have throughout their life.

For more information on the benefits of vertical tutoring, and our House model in particular, please refer to: <https://educationcentral.co.nz/mental-health-gains-for-schools-with-family-style-pastoral-care/> .

Q: What is the Senior Academy?

The Senior Academy recognises the differences between early to late adolescence, and the girls growing maturity and independence. Girls receive increased privileges when they enter the Senior Academy, such as common rooms and opportunities to participate in exchanges. With these privileges, our Senior Academy girls have increased responsibilities including leadership opportunities, and they can apply to become part of our academic mentoring and peer support programmes.

Q: What does the change mean for Year 8 girls?

Research shows that girls are reaching adolescence earlier and moving Year 8 into House Tutor Groups recognises the emotional and learning needs of girls at this stage of adolescence. The move will support their growing independence, provide more opportunities for mentoring and working together with older girls, and offer a broader range of learning experiences to support subject specialisation as your daughter progresses through the school.

Tutor Group teachers are skilled in the needs of adolescence and relish the opportunity to get to know girls well and work with parents to support their daughters as they navigate the teenage years.

Year 8 girls will have additional specialist teachers, and access to an array of exciting opportunities for development, with participation in their tutor group activities, and options to join their older peers

at events such as Polyfest. Year 8 girls will join their House Sunday Chapel Services and Senior School Prize Giving. We will also be offering increased subject choices for Year 8 and will advise parents of those choices as details are finalised.

There will also be opportunities for the Year 8 girls to socialise and develop strong bonds with their own cohort, through the Year 8 camp, and Year 7-8 sports and cultural activities.

Q: What does the change mean for Year 11 girls?

By Year 11, girls are beginning to separate a little from their peers, and see themselves as individuals, wanting more independence and responsibility. Expanding our Senior Academy to include Year 11 girls recognises the fact that they are reaching young adulthood, and through increased leadership responsibilities, and service opportunities, this move will support the development of their self-confidence and emotional wellbeing.

We will be providing a common room for our Year 11 girls to enable them to come together as a cohort. In addition, Year 11 will have representation on a Senior Academy Working Group and we will be encouraging greater involvement in service projects. We are creating new leadership opportunities to include service leaders in charge of specific programmes and academic mentoring of younger girls.

We are also opening our Paris Christmas Exchange, and UN Exchange Programme to France and Switzerland to Year 11 girls. In addition, the 'International Hospital' intern scheme, set up under the umbrella of John Hopkins University will be opened to Year 11 students seeking a career in science or medicine. This experience will be held in the Pacific Islands.

Q: What does this announcement mean for Middle School staff?

There are no job losses with the move to a Year 7-13 Senior School. Our dedicated staff in across Year 7-8 are outstanding. As a result of the move to an expanded Senior School, there are exciting opportunities for all our existing staff in the Middle School. We are currently working through a detailed implementation plan with our staff and will communicate further information with you once this is finalised.