



Guildford Grammar School

FOUNDED 1896

Our Year 7 and 8 approach





Introduction

Transitioning from primary school to secondary school is a significant time in students' lives and can be challenging as young learners adjust to a new environment, new processes and a new community.

To help students during this transition period, we are building an age and stage appropriate community within the wider School for Year 7 and 8 students, to bridge the gap between these foundational years. By creating a nurturing and purposeful environment within our Senior School, this will provide a softer landing into secondary schooling and help our students stay younger for longer.

The focus will be on creating a positive and sustainable culture in the early years that will foster purpose and belonging throughout their time at Guildford Grammar School. Year 7 and 8 offers a safety net from which to build connectivity, relationships and cohesiveness with their peers.



The Vision

Our vision is to create a social and learning space from which Year 7 and Year 8 students will base their daily interactions. This purposeful, age-appropriate area will be situated in the Thwaites Centre and offer a space that our youngest senior students can build and develop friendships from, as well as use for social collaboration, study, quiet time or as a meeting place.

The Year 7 and 8 Hub will also include locker access, self-catering facilities and recreation facilities. Mentor classes and a number of curricular classes will also operate from this area.

This approach is student-centric, recognising the developmental stages of young adolescents and embracing the needs of students new to our community. We know students require additional support when entering this transitional phase, which can be one of the most challenging, yet rewarding periods in an adolescent's life. This approach will also value wellbeing and learning equally. Our Year 7-8 program develops students to be more engaged and confident with their learning, which they can build upon throughout their time at School.



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The benefits

The greatest protective factors to improve overall wellbeing for young people are feelings of connection and belonging to similar aged peers. This can be developed through the creation of a community, within a larger community, that enables students to be curious in their learning and a space to engage in age-appropriate activities in a safe and welcoming environment.

The Year 7 and 8 Hub will allow for easier collaboration with year-level meetings, variety of room choice and fit-for-purpose spaces within close proximity. This regular engagement with each other will improve student experience and optimise the delivery of information including processes, routines and notices for a smoother transition.

Having students in one area will also enable Mentors to meet more regularly, support one another better and address the specific needs of our students.

This new structure is appropriate for our setting at Guildford Grammar School and aims to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of students, so they are better prepared and supported for their first years of secondary school.

The period from childhood to adulthood is no longer marked by only childhood, adolescence and adulthood; it is now separated into smaller life stages. These stages provide us with an opportunity to develop more milestones in students' lives. The School will focus on acknowledging these markers through age-appropriate celebrations and experiential learning experiences that build culture and character.



The House system

We are proud of our House system and the important role it plays within a Guildford Grammar School education. Year 7 and 8 students are part of the House system and Mentor groups will be aligned with Houses.

We will continue to cultivate House spirit and our unique culture through House meetings, Peer Support activities and House-based activities, competitions and carnivals. The Thwaites Centre will include House zones; a meeting place for when House information needs to be shared.

Connection to School Strategy

This approach links to our Strategic Plan by addressing the following areas of focus

Wellbeing

- Promotes a sense of belonging with all Year 7 and 8 students in one place.
- Age and stage appropriate learning areas and equipment.
- Reduced movement around the school.
- Targeted care and guidance of students by a smaller pastoral care team.
- A softer landing into Senior School.

Learning

- Time optimised in class due to less movement between classes.
- Improves confidence and increases ownership of areas.
- Inclusive education to support student learning.
- A tailored and personalised timetable.
- Increased positive wellbeing encourages more positive learning experiences.

Community

- Increases connection to year level peers, whilst also offering support from Senior years.
- Encourages a community environment within the Year 7 and 8 Hub to help establish and build peer relationships.
- Nurtures a community within a community for greater cohesiveness.

Sustainability

- Investment in our biggest asset – our students.
- Leverages our natural surroundings and campus.

FAQs

1. Will students be part of the House system?

Yes. All students belong to a House and celebrate carnivals, competitions, school events and traditions with their House group and Head of House.

2. Will this new structure change the House system?

By nature, Year 7 and 8 students engage in school events competitively and enthusiastically. Regular events and activities will ensure that students still maintain strong connections to their Houses, and House zones within the Hub will maintain regular communication. The main change for this age group is that students will be based in the Year 7 and 8 Hub, not in the traditional Houses.

3. Who will support students for wellbeing and behaviour matters?

Student behaviour will be managed by the Deputy Head of Senior School, Year 7-8, with the support of Mentors. Higher level issues will be escalated to the appropriate members of the Senior Leadership Team.

4. As a parent, if I have concerns about my child, who do I go to?

The first port of call for all pastoral concerns is your child's Mentor. From there, the Mentor will support and liaise with the Deputy Head of Senior School, Year 7-8, or other staff as required. If the concern you have is academic, as per normal procedures, please contact the relevant subject teacher or the Head of Learning area.

5. When will this happen?

This will be a staggered process with Year 7 in 2024 and then Year 7 and 8 in 2025.

6. How will Year 7 and 8 access food in the School?

The location of the Food Truck will be re-evaluated, along with other available options that are closer to the Year 7 and 8 space. Students will be able to order their lunch via FlexiSchools and use the Tuck Shop as required. Students will also have access to self-catered kitchen facilities within the space.

7. Who will Year 7 and 8 students go to Chapel and Congo with?

They will attend with their House groups.

8. Will the Year 7 and 8 students be allowed in the Houses at recess and lunchtime?

Year 7 and 8 students will be able to access the Year 7 and 8 Hub at recess and lunch. They will gain access into the House at the end of Year 8. This will form part of a rite of passage around the same time that Year 12s leave the School.

9. Will my older child be able to visit my Year 7 child in the Year 7 and 8 Hub?

Yes – siblings will be encouraged to visit.

10. Where will the Year 7 and 8 students sit at assembly?

Students will sit with their Mentor in their Houses.

11. Where will their lockers be?

Year 7 and 8 lockers will be in the Thwaites Centre.

12. How often will Mentors meet with students?

Students meet with their Mentor each morning. This provides a consistent level of care and they are able to troubleshoot any issues early in the day, allowing for maximum student engagement throughout the day.

13. What will the Year 7 and 8 Hub look like?

The Year 7 and 8 space will be on the ground floor within the Thwaites Centre and will be designed as a multifunctional area for students.

14. Will Year 7-8 Mentors also teach Year 7-8?

Where possible, we aim to have Year 7-8 Mentors teaching Year 7 and 8 students.

15. Has the transition into Year 9 been considered?

Yes, students will have a rite of passage and transition into Year 9 that focuses on the movement into the House at the end of Year 8.

16. How will student leadership skills be developed?

Each Mentor will have a Mentor Captain; a semester-based rotating role aimed at supporting students developing leadership skills.



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