

Vertical Homerooms

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Vertical homeroom overview and FAQ's

Why do we have house based pastoral groups?

MC's house structure is founded in research highlighting the significance of developing a positive sense of belonging within a school community, the importance of developing positive student identity, psychosocial skills and relationship development. Research states that a sense of belonging to school is positively linked to higher levels of student emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as better academic performance and achievement.

The house based system holds at its centre, a 'school within a school' model – where house 'families' become the central point of connection for students. The model allows for the unique development of house identity and culture, which subsequently facilitates an increased sense of belonging within the student cohort. The foundation of the individual student's experience within their house group is linked to the intentional creation of much smaller, house aligned, vertical homeroom groups. These homeroom groups are intentionally small, with approximately 15 -18 students, and are vertically aligned, so that a diverse range of age groups across Yrs 7-12 are represented in each group. This method of grouping allows for intentional peer mentoring of students academically and relationally, as well the development of a peer-based leadership structure within the student body.

Some additional benefits for students include coaching and goal setting, the extension of house competitions to include many domains of excellence, fun and competition, and the unique forming of house cultures.



What is a vertical homeroom?

Vertical homerooms are intentionally small groupings of approximately 15 -18 students. These homeroom groups are grouped vertically, so that a diverse range of age groups across Yrs 7-12 are represented in each group, allowing for intentional peer mentoring of students both academically and relationally, as well the development of a coaching-based leadership structure within the student body.

This intentionally small homeroom size allows groups to become more like a family, with the homeroom group itself then part of a larger house family. The intentionally small, vertical homeroom system allows all students to be known as individuals and to receive a supportive and nurturing environment for personal growth and discovery.

The students in each of these homerooms are also able to build strong relationships with each other across a wider age-range, allowing students to broaden horizons between year groups which makes room for peer leadership, mentoring, advice and support between students. Peer mentoring, academic tutoring and coaching will be encouraged between students in the same homeroom group. This improved learning experience mirrors life in further education settings and the workplace, and has been shown to reduce bullying and improve student behaviour within educational settings. Each vertical homeroom group focuses on providing a safe and caring environment, where students are equipped to be resilient and inclusive, demonstrate leadership qualities and a growth mindset, as well as a heart for serving others.



How many house groups are there and how many students are in each house?

There are three house groups which will continue into 2023 unchanged. These groups are Charlton, Dobell and Shortland. There will be approximately 180 students in each house next year.

How many vertical homerooms will there be in each house and how many students will be in each vertical homeroom?

There will be approximately 11 homeroom groups in each house. The homeroom groups will have approximately 18 students per group.

As the school continues to grow, and in order to keep house groups at a size that is beneficial to a relational approach, the growth of houses may occur in the near future.



What is the role of the house leader?

The Senior School house leader role is responsible for the day-to-day leadership of their student house across all aspects of MC's Senior School programs, and the strategic development of future student house-related programs and initiatives at MC. They oversee the day-to-day pastoral care and nurture of all young people in their house, support homeroom teachers, develop a distinctive house culture through the implementation of regular house based community activities, support the implementation of MC's camps program and Invictus memory events, as well as a focus on supporting the academic development of students in their house.



Charlton house leader
Mr William Bennett



Shortland house leader
Ms Amber Ozols



Dobell house leader
Mr Jonathon Roennfeldt

What is the role of the homeroom teacher?

The role of the homeroom teacher is to know each student relationally and to understand the individual needs of each student in their homeroom. They are the first connection point for student pastoral and academic needs. Their role is essential in ensuring that all students feel known and know others, as well as supporting the positive development of each individual through spending time with each student daily.

What impact do house and vertical homerooms have on teaching and learning?

The house and homeroom system is designed to have a positive impact on a student's learning experience at MC. Teaching across year groups will continue; however, students will gain a lot through the experience of other students who have already been through subjects and exams before them. Younger students can gain insight into how to prepare for exams, strategies for managing classwork and assignments, and benefit from the experiences of older students. Older students gain leadership and mentoring experience and the confidence that develops through the intentional supporting of younger students. All students will benefit from in-depth discussions with their homeroom teachers.

Are year groups ever together as a single year group?

Year groups will be able to meet by negotiation during homeroom times and as required by Senior School Leaders for the effective running of the College. Year based camps will continue to be the norm for MC students.

How often do the vertical homeroom groups and the larger house groups meet?

Homeroom groups will meet 4 times a week for 20 minutes. Each house group will have a gathering (assembly) weekly.

Are siblings put together in the same vertical homeroom groups?

Generally, no, but there may be occasions where a family may request that siblings are in the same homeroom group. These requests will be discussed with the house leader and rest with their discretion on an individual basis.

How are students allocated their vertical homeroom groups?

Students are allocated very carefully. We know our students well. Our Junior School Wellbeing leaders and Senior School leaders work together to ensure that there is a suitable balance, considering gender, academic, extracurricular and social factors, including individual personalities.

It is important to remember that students will remain in year-based teaching groups, so will have plenty of opportunities to maintain their current friendships during classes, recess, lunch, extracurricular activities, sports and other school-based activities. We are keen to see students develop a strong sense of belonging through vertical homerooms. A positive experience towards that focus will ensure that all students develop additional friendships across the current barriers of year groups. It is important to also be aware that in the establishment of these groups, unless under extreme circumstances, all new teams go through a well-established process of forming, storming, norming and performing. It is the intention of the Senior School to allow homeroom groups time to settle into their new teams for at least a term before any changes occur to groupings and that any changes would only be facilitated under extreme circumstances by the head of house in consultation with the Assistant Principal (Student Wellbeing). The intention of homeroom groups is to encourage long-term and supportive relationships for students through their Senior School experience.



What happens in vertical homeroom times?

This is an area which will continually be refined and developed in line with best practice and current research. The current plan for 2023 includes:

Day 1: Connection - Connection and belonging activities to build community in the homeroom and explore an overview of the week ahead.

Day 2: Peer and teacher based mentoring - The focus is on peer academic based mentoring and the coaching of students on a rotation system using the SMART goal system.

Day 3: Worship - Homeroom teachers will deliver a faith-based time of learning, offering a uniquely Adventist faith development program.

Day 4: Gathering - A house-based gathering/assembly where the house can develop their identity, build a sense of belonging and interconnectedness and recognise individual student achievement.

How do we avoid the negative effects of younger students hearing inappropriate conversations between older students?

All parents would be conscious of the threat of negative influences on their children; however, the house and vertical homeroom system will not add to this concern. The homeroom group will be supervised at all times and the spread of ages in the group will mean that in many ways, untoward conversations are less likely to occur as there is not a concentrated group of similar ages.

MC takes pride in the fact that most of our students are excellent role models. All homeroom teachers are aware that the safety of every student in the homeroom is a fundamental requirement of a vertical house group at MC. The vertical homeroom system is designed to foster self-confidence, team spirit and to reduce the likelihood of these types of problems.

How do the house groups affect leadership opportunities for students?

The position of House Captain/Vice Captain is a significant student leadership role in the Senior School at Macquarie College. Students elected to these positions should display leadership qualities and be a role model for all members of the College community. The House Captains/Vice Captains need to have participated fully in the life of the College and demonstrated an ability to work successfully as part of a team. They will have direct input into leading the culture within their house and take a leading role in overseeing and planning house activities.

Students in Years 10 and 11 will be invited to apply for the position of House Captain/Vice Captain. A panel consisting of house leaders (staff and students) and Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) will review the applicants for suitability. Staff and students will then vote. The highest number of votes will be Captain and the second highest number of votes will be Vice Captain. Each House will have 4 student leaders.





Purpose Statement

Macquarie College is an aspirational, future-focused, learning community where the pursuit of excellence is nurtured in an inclusive Christ-centred environment.