KEY

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| **THE RESEARCHED POSITIVE IMPACTS OF VERTICAL GROUPING FOR YEAR 9 PUPILS INVOLVED IN COLLABORATIVE HOUSE TASKS** |
| **Exposure to new perspectives** |
| **Providing leadership roles** |
| **Pro-social behaviour: increased civic values and social responsibility** |
| **Social confidence, and constructive and cooperative mixing** |
| **Enhanced motivation** |
| **Increased “self esteem” and “self acceptance”** |
| **Improved psychological health** |
| **Varied conversational styles support learning** |
| **Varied learning methods found across different ages are essential** |
| **Importance of establishing sense of community within schools** |
| **Individuals increase their expectations of themselves when exposed to wider communities** |
| **Positivity; more ‘resources’ are available to achieve a goal** |

Stage A Pupil Focus Group

P1: I think they [year nine] do benefit, because although it can be boring, they benefit because erm they get to learn with people that aren’t their age, so also then the school gets on better together overall, which has to be good for year nine and everyone else, and so so in future when you go to a job and there is someone like ten years older than you, you know how to work with them, you are not just working with people your year. **Plus it’s easier to finish tasks and do more if there are more people with more different ideas.**

P2: I think that too because erm, **you know other people’s point of view as well, so like if you go ask someone in year nine they are more likely to say the same thing as you, but like if you go ask someone in like year eleven like year seven, they might have a different answer**, you can have like er a good experience.

P3: I think they benefit from it but they don’t like it.

P4:Yeah, I don’t mind it, because it is better than sitting in your own class and erm you know it is something new and you can discuss with more people, **I think it is also very awkward, ‘cause the last one I went to, we were just sitting there, there wasn’t much communication amongst each other so it was pretty awkward.**

P1: Maybe they should it more often, and also, erm instead of having maybe like everyone in the same house you could do other houses like two people from Liberty, do you get what I mean?

P4: Yeah.

P1: I think they should try a whole year, but like do you know how we have in form P.S.H.E, but mix just our year forms up, just for a P.S.H.E lesson, because I think people find it really awkward like year sevens, year eights, year nines, I think **they might feel left out because they are younger. So they feel like they don’t have a bigger voice, they feel like they can’t talk over the others and they can’t get their point across with the older years.**

P5: Maybe if we got to change the groups every so often that would be a bit better.

P4: Yeah cos it’s always the same group yeah.

P1: But then also you are not exactly getting used to the people, if you carry on changing it then obviously there will be less communication.

P3: Don’t change it every single time, just change it like every three times.

P4: Yeah but how many times do we have vertical P.S.H.E?

P1, P2, P3: (inaudible)

P6: Maybe like, everyone complains about the P.S.H.E lessons being boring, every single time.

P3: Because it’s the same topics.

P6: Every single year we learn the same thing so why can’t we just do it all the time in P.S.H.E.

P4: Well maybe like more fun topics, to actually to cover

P6: Yeah but it’s not even that, it’s sometimes bonding, cos in my like, for example erm, in one P.S.H.E class they do stuff like singing and stuff, and you come to my P.S.H.E class and we are just sitting there reading. So why it’s not interactive?

P3: Copying from powerpoint.

P2: So you can either start talking about it or getting the work done.

P4: So does it depend on the teacher then?

P5: Yes **but if forms mixed up it would also be less awkward, ‘cause we’d know them a bit at least if they were in our year group** (.) Does anyone else want to make a point?

P1: I think we could have pupils suggesting better topics, you know more interesting new ones, ones we’ve never looked at at all, ever, not like bullying again we do that in year 9 already.

P5: We obviously learn something from it, but yea I see what you mean. But it’s different when we do the same topic in our house groups, I mean yea we look at the same thing, but differently maybe.

P1: But sometimes it’s worse than normal, it seems, erm, too forced or something.

P3: I think it benefits the younger years but not the older years at all. Because the older years can still talk to the younger years, but not the other way around. For example, I would still talk to friends if I was year eleven and they were year seven, but they’d not want to talk to me as I am older, it’s not the same, younger years are afraid to approach older ones. **So younger years like year nines need more leadership too to get confident. They think “yea these lot are older, they’ll not listen and I can’t get what I want across anyway, plus, yea, they’ll not even listen to me”.** **----** Which is why I think it should not be older years and younger together.

P2: I disagree though because the older years have nothing to learn from the older years, but the younger ones should be able to talk to older students because they can learn from them.

P4: **It’s harder for year sevens ‘cause they’ve just got used to this school then they get dumped in a room with you know all the older ones, when they don’t even know half the people in their own year (laughs)** at least people seem to enjoy the lessons.

P1: maybe we should have just years seven and eight together, and then years nine and ten you know, like mix two years up in P.S.H.E. But then we need to think as well about house assemblies. Miss, do all house assemblies happen at the same time?

Myself: No, because there’s not enough room. Half the houses have P.S.H.E first then assembly, and the other houses do it the other way around. So, no.

P1: Oh, so that wouldn’t work as we have to have assembly as a House. Unless there’s a way assemblies can go on at the same time.

P2: Yea

Stage A Staff Focus Group

S1: I think urm **for year nine it is quite interesting because they are obviously the middle year group, because they can benefit from having leadership experience with the younger years**. So I think it is quite good for them actually to have something to aspire to, but also **to gain leadership experience with younger year groups**.

S2: Do you think at year nine, because I think year nine is probably in terms of history is always the biggest behaviour year in terms of problems (word unintelligible) hormones. Do you think as a year nine, maybe possibly some of the more mature ones, but **I think the vast majority of them are that age where they are kind of thinking “I’m not old enough to be a leader, because these guys are doing it, and I’m not young enough to be following orders, so therefore I’m stuck in the middle and don’t have to lead the younger ones because there is year ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen to do it”**?-----

S1: So would it be, yea, beneficial to have mini leadership roles for students of different year groups including the younger ones? The P.S.H.E, the mixed age group of P.S.H.E, they might have certain roles and sometimes actually give the leadership responsibility to younger pupils, that might be helpful, and why not? The older lot need to respect and nurture the younger lot, this could nurture that! Because I agree that they are a tricky year group to manage and engage in things, if they get involved more in P.S.H.E they will get more involved around school in general too maybe, and that would be great for the school community to see them being more included and pro-active.

S2:Yeah, I mean. I think um the benefits do outweigh the negatives, and I agree with what you said. I do think that roles would be very good.

S3: I think actually, **because we are doing it with year sevens and eights, by the time they get into year nine, I think it will be a lot better than probably how it has been this year, because they will be used to being in mixed age house groups**. Whereas this year nine cohort, it is a very new thing. As with every other year group, but like you said they are more prone to being a bit hormonal.

S3,S4,S5: (laughs)

S5: Sure!

S4: **I think it has changed now because of the three year key stage four now, because no longer year nines are like “Oh we are top of key stage three, we know best”. They are now at the bottom of the chain for key stage four, and they are thinking that they don’t know it all, I think their mood has changed a little bit. When they are put into those groups they realise tens and elevens know a little bit more than they do.**

S5: **I think a little bit that year nine don’t really know their place, and I think they are a little bit unsure about where they fit in. Because they are not quite key stage three, and they are not quite key stage four. So perhaps being able to see all of them, all the above and below in a vertical group, could kind of, is the bridge for them maybe.**

S2: Why do you think, what are the benefits of you know like you were saying, about the year ten and eleven knowing more than they do, what are the benefits for year nine then for that.

S3: I think erm, **with year nines, probably not the best word to use but some of them can get a bit arrogant thinking at this point “we know it all”, and by being with the year tens and year elevens it’s perhaps a reminder that you don’t, there’s still people above us.**

S1: I think as well that they need to have those people to aspire to. So as much as it can be a shock to the system, to be like “oh, yeah maybe we are not as clever as we think, but that is what I want to aspire to”. I’ve noticed it not necessarily with year nine but with other year groups when we have gone on trips and it has been a reward trip and there have been mixed groups, it has been really nice to see them all interacting, and then you see them later on interacting in the playground a bit more. And it is like “oh ok, that is because you have got to know each other” and there is something in common in performing arts, and that carries through then and it is nice for them to have someone supportive that they know throughout the year group, and I think…

S3: Socially as well as academically.

S1: Yeah. And I think it is really good, I think it benefits different groups of students differently, and some people take more out of it than others, but I think there is (sic) definitely some students in year nine that I can identify as having someone that they can go to in year ten, that they have got to know through a vertical lesson, who they could maybe see in the playground if they were bothered about something. That would be quite good for them to have that, as sort of like an unofficial mentor or something, who is a good influence on them rather than someone who could maybe get them into a bit of trouble. But I guess that is the flip side, of it isn’t it, thinking about the groups put together, and making sure there is a real mix of students rather than people who are just going to lead off other people in the wrong direction.

S2: I think year nine are very susceptible to kind of like what goes on above all of them, which they don’t fully understand yet, and you know, from the P.S.H.E lessons that I have been delivering, **I often find that the year nines are the quietest.**

S5: I would agree.

S2: But I think that is because **they are socially aware, they are at that point, out of everybody they are the most socially aware**. Year seven and eight are there for, they are young they are the babies. Year nine are slightly, that transition period with year ten, and I think year eleven to twelve and thirteen are kind of like more, that is where they will have the most influence on year nine. Certainly sixth formers, the mixture in my group in P.S.H.E, I found that the lower years I have got some really tricky ones, certainly in year nine. There is a year nine boy in there. But then I think what really helps is that there are some very calm and very sophisticated and socially very intelligent year twelve thirteen pupils, and I think subconsciously they will mimic that. Maybe not straightaway, but I think eventually they will go, “oh gosh I remember when I was in year thirteen”.

S4: **I have the exact opposite in my group though, because I have got some quite challenging tens, and twelves and thirteens that clearly didn’t want to be there. And the year nines actually, and the lower year groups really were leading it, they were the ones telling year elevens to shut up. It was completely different.**

S5: **I’ve got a boy in my year nine vertical P.S.H.E who I also teach in my English class, and the difference in him, between the two different environments that I have seen him in is unbelievable. I would agree with you when you say he is mimicking the behaviour of the older students, and not anyone, I think he almost fears that if he says something silly in his year group everyone will laugh with him, but I think he thinks if he was to say something with older students, they might laugh at him and he is not willing to take that risk.**

S3: I agree with that. **I have got a student same issue in my English class, and he is less cheeky and more serious when we are doing the vertical P.S.H.E lessons, and I definitely think the second time round he has felt a bit more comfortable, but again he has been more serious.**

S5: **Not willing to take the risk is it, to be, they don’t want to be the subject of humiliation.**

S1: **They don’t want to get picked on for anything, they don’t want to do anything that will make them stand out.**

Stage D Pupil Focus Group

P1: **we need new perspectives 'cause we need to hear like older ones like sixth formers** and  
  
P2: yea  
  
P3: and **it helps you become confident because you're around people you like don't know that much**  
  
P4: **in some ways it does improve your social behaviour because in some ways it is helping your social confidence 'cause you're mixing together ------**  
  
P2: yea **I agree you grow confident**  
  
P5: but in some ways it isn't helping because you you won't grow confident if teachers are going to be changing the people you're going to be working with  
  
P1, P2, P3: no, no  
  
P2: we're not going to be changing though  
  
P2: yea the house groups stay the same all year  
  
P4: yea  
  
P6: we've been in the same group like three times now so we get used to it  
  
P4: they should rechange the groups maybe  
  
P5: but **it does help get new perspectives 'cause they have different ideas on things**  
  
P6: yea like last time in P.S.H.E we uh  
  
P4: **yea like last time we had the aspirations and careers day lessons, and the sixth formers got up and talked about their experiences and things, so erm that gave a whole new perspective on what we could do**  
P3: as we'll they were there to support us  
  
P3: but at the same time **the sixth formers there and that teacher they were the only ones talking so, yea, the year eights, nines, and tens, oh and sevens, had no input whatsoever ------**  
  
P1, P4, P6: nah (unintelligible)  
  
P4: **that's not really true because in our group everyone joined in**, **------** and there was this guy in year seven who was going on about how he wants to be a pilot and so the older ones helped him work out what he needed to do to get to be that  
  
P1: yea it's just 'cause ones in your class wouldn't talk, that is their fault  
  
P3: yea but some groups are different then so they, the teachers, should do the same with every group so it is fair  
  
P2: yea like in my group year eleven and sixth formers only spoke, and then obviously the teacher  
  
P4: the thing is **our teacher told us, like, go off in your mixed groups and all about what you wanna be, so we just chatter to like a lesson, it was fun**  
  
P3: **oh our teacher didn't we had to talk as a class, all together, so no one joined in**  
P5: yea all groups are different so, our group was just talking like 'so yea what do you want to be when your older?'  
  
P6: yea ours did and it just rolled from there **and we thought we could achieve more than we thought after chatting to older kids even**  
  
P3: **so I guess it basically just lies in the teaching? Because in ours the older ones just told us about what they did and if they failed or not but in other groups like yours you all got to chat about yourselves and stuff, not just the other older students**  
  
P6: yea  
  
P1: **some groups are more compatible though isn't it, they get on but some won't, so that's sometimes why groups talk or not, not just the teachers**  
  
P6, P3, P2: yea, yea  
  
P4: but what your saying was your teacher was talking, **but in ours we were in sub groups to chat so the teacher wasn’t like taking a class, we were just chatting, that's better because its laid back so we could talk more freely, like a casual conversation** ------ -----  
  
All: (unintelligible)  
  
P1: that's fine but some people didn't get it like that  
  
P3: yea if they're not going to swap around the groups at least swap around the teachers so everyone gets a chance to chat and get to know each other properly  
  
P4: so **what we are all chatting about now goes under pro social behaviour then doesn't it, because we think house groups help the way we talk to each other, get the younger ones to talk, and how the sixth formers help us**  
  
P1, P2, P3, P5, P6: yea  
  
P4: 'cause **for me there was always a sense of socialising well because our class were talking well -----** -----  
  
P3: so there needs to be more consistency from groups or teachers  
  
P2: yea so it's not awkward, it can be awkward  
  
P3: (laughs) yea sure!  
  
P1: but does it really matter about which teacher as all lessons are the same for P.S.H.E  
  
P2: but that's what we're saying, yea it matters a lot, the teacher makes it more fun so were less afraid of talking in front of the others, the older pupils probably I reckon, like we all know which teachers we’d rather have  
  
P1, P3, P4, P5,P6: yea (laughs)  
  
P4: ok then but it is the lessons being the same or the teacher needing to be the same, 'cause there's a difference  
  
P3: yea I guess if the teachers all did the same thing it wouldn't matter which teacher it was, so  
  
P5: yep I agree  
  
P4: **so the pro social behaviour for years seven, eight, and nine could be better 'cause they were a bit shy, but maybe then the pro social behaviour of the older lot should be better then to help them, the younger ones, get over being shy in the first place.**P3: sure, totally, but then this is why I think that **year seven and eight should be in a group together as they all have lunch together, year nine and ten should be in the PSHE groups together as they have lunch times together in school, and the older years should go together as they're all going in the same direction, like going to be leaving school soon. Then we'd all mix with other years but be less shy.**  
P2: yea and me, I think so too  
  
P4, P6: yea  
  
P1: **but if you were to do [makes groups only mix with one other year] then it wouldn't really promote social behaviour across years 'cause then no ones really mixing with anyone new or different to them really**  
  
P4: yea but **we could have it like that, only missing with groups we have lunch with, then each have one or two older students to lead then it would be more mixed but still work when we had to chat?**  
P1, P2, P3, P5, P6: yea, yea

Stage D Staff Focus Group

S1: **I agree with new perspectives as I can see how pupils gain new perspectives from others but only if it's facilitated in the right way, I think I noticed that in the first PSHE lesson I took because older students were sharing experiences with younger students about their experiences of bullying.** That was the topic for the first lesson yea?  
  
S2: yea  
  
S1: good, **yea other opinions helped sort of open their eyes a little more**

S4: **I think they can learn from experience, there is a lot for the year tens and elevens to tell the year nines, and the year nines can pass on what they have learned from seven and eight and all the way through, they can tell all the other age groups how it is, because they have lived through it, seven and eight.**

S2: yea **plus seeing some pupils who don’t normally lead, like some of the year elevens who are shy in their own years or older pupils renowned for poor behaviour, so some of the year nines were watching intently, maybe thinking yea “I could do that too, it’s not just for the ‘best’ kids in each class to lead”. -----**  
S3: hmm  
  
S2: **yea I agree, with the whole "cool" image thing of the older pupils wanting to appear "cool" it's nice that when a younger student speaks they get reminded of what an honest answer really is, not lame thing that is said to further a reputation. The younger years are less filtered, less image conscious, they're more honest, and the older years have a lot to learn from that I think. ------**   
  
S1: yea, hmm  
  
S2: **it's healthy, and from the younger kids perspectives when the older kids are speaking its like "oh I would never have said or known that" or "why is he saying it like that I'd never have said it that way" and it makes then consider others and themselves in more depth. They think about what happens when they're older.**  
S3: **I agree, and sometimes they think of the more obvious things to say but try to make it sound clever if they're older, but the younger perspectives and utterances make them realise its not necessary to over complicate things all the time, it takes the, back to basics and actually they appreciate the topic studied more if you start with the basics.** As teacher we often forget to teach from the basics with older years, when we perhaps should be doing so.  
  
S2: sure, sure. So for the pro social behaviour bullet point I've seen both positives and negatives to vertical groups, in the class in P.S.H.E it can work quite well, also  in a drama trip with fifteen year ten, eleven, and twelve students and that was really good because they'd all been chatting about their different things, they all like chatted about the past student learning conference and their difference thoughts and experiences, so **there was a lot of mixing, sharing and support. Very pro social. They were able to chat and that sort of thing. By we were just talking in our TLR seven meeting today about the vertical detention, as its for years sevens, eights, and nines, and the year sevens are seeing behaviour displayed by year nines which is dreadful, and they're**  
S1: learning it, yea  
  
S2: yea **learning that sort of negative, anti social behaviour and I think if vertical groups are in good environments, and if the behaviour management is good, then it can be great for pro social behaviour, but if its not it has the opposite effect. The younger ones aspire to the anti social behaviour they see from those above them.**  
S1: it's true  
  
S3: yes, different contents create two extremes when the groups are vertical, it works or it doesn't work at all!  
  
S2: yea, yea.  
  
S1: So , ok, now self acceptance, hmm, I'm not sure if there is that whole situation yet where they're feeling comfortable with each other in vertical all P.S.H.E, in terms of the whole "my role is valid in this class because I'm different", I think a lot of them, question their sense of belonging **and feel slightly on the edge of their comfort zone. They're wont sure how valid their contributions are in a mixed age class, they might feel they're being judged by others not supported. There's a weak ability boy in year eleven who came and said to me at the start of the lesson, knowing he's not a confident reader or speaker, "sir I've got a sore throat, please can I or talk today?" You know he doesn't want to be put on the spot with others younger there, and older. It undermined  his own self confidence. Especially when you've got a bright year seven who can speak big words.**   
  
S1, S2: mmm, yea  
  
S1: yea I have some that are the same, but **for my class that was more an issue at the beginning as now they're getting more familiar with one another. They're increasingly comfortable. You know the younger or older years aren't "the other", a feared unknown creature, they're more like them than they thought which is comforting to them, I think! ----**  
S2: sure, that's good, yea  
  
S1: they're willing to take a few more risks, and its not sudden or massive but its happening slowly, and they're now more accepting of the vertical situation and therefore they're more sure of the,selves in and around school. They're more accepting of themselves in they're group, and their role, and more secure.  
  
S1: mmm, yea most are, just some not so much  
  
S3: yea  
  
S1: **you know because its established now, and its less new and risky, and they realise its still a classroom and its still a learning environment, and its just slightly different as there's more different views in the room.**  
  
S3: and I think in terms of self acceptance, one of the things we spoke about in the student learning conference and at gifted and talented working parties was that pupils hate being labelled as anything, like "gifted", or whatever, but they hate it, but the student learning conference was vertical and so they saw others from above years or below them who were also "gifted and talented" and they realised it wasn't such an isolating label, actually in other years there are many like them and they had a community there which made them flourish! It makes it something not to be ashamed of which is a great thing to have available in a school! And there we had year sevens chatting to year twelves about how they'd achieved their grades and their university offers and it promoted a sense of value to learning and helping one another get there from year seven onwards.  
  
S2: **in terms lastly then of improved psychological health, I think if everyone has contributed and feels a sense of worth, that they've done something positive, then vertical P.S.H.E can be great!** If students leave a room thinking "wow yes I contributed something to other year groups today" then that's a huge achievement and would provide mental and social stability. And if a year eleven leaves thinking "yes I modelled something hard for younger years today and they understood it, great" then that would have the same effect on them I am sure.  
  
S1, S3: yea

*NB. When a separate colour key appears after transcribed text, this previous data fits both colour themes shown.*