



5th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: The curriculum, assessment and catch-up provision on return to school, and centre-assessed grades for Key Stage 4

I speak for all the staff at Axe Valley Academy when I say that we are delighted and excited that our students will be returning to our classrooms, sports venues, rehearsal spaces, social areas and playgrounds in the near future.

You'll find lots of important information in this letter about your child's return to full time school, with a particular focus on the curriculum and teaching they'll receive. Please read it and complete the survey; the link for the survey is in the email accompanying this letter as well as at the end of the letter. Please also read the communication from Mrs Jenkins regarding return dates, testing, hygiene measures and other important information.

Contents of this letter:

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Behaviour and Routines

Our Ready to Learn behaviour system has already transformed the school for your child, increasing focus on learning and time on task in lessons. This allows your child to learn without disruption or distraction. Even in the best of times, students don't have a moment to waste in lessons; on return to school, rest assured that we will maintain these high standards of behaviour and focus in all lessons and around school.

We will also continue our high expectations of uniform; please see our uniform code here: <https://axevalley.devon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Uniform-Code-2018.pdf> if you need to. Please remember that, for the time being, we will avoid using changing rooms by asking, when your child has PE, they should attend school in their PE kit (only on the days they have PE). For use of the AGP, only certain footwear is permitted: plastic moulded studs, not trainers, metal studs or Astroturf shoes.

Chard Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EA
Tel: 01297 32146 Email: admin@axevalley.devon.sch.uk Web: www.axevalley.devon.sch.uk



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In their first lessons on return, we will clearly explain any new routines and expectations to your child to make sure they understand how they can play their part in keeping our community safe while continuing to receive a tremendous education.

There have been a handful of changes to children's timetables in some cases, due to new teachers starting with us (as you'll have seen in the newsletter). We will be issuing new timetables to all students when they come in for their testing slot with the rest of their tutor group (see previous communication). When Year 11s come in for testing, they'll be able to collect their leaver's hoodies, which is exciting.

Assessment of your child

Remote learning is challenging for students and their families, for sure. For us teachers, it is also challenging, particularly when it comes to assessing our students' developing knowledge and understanding and intervening to reteach when they haven't understood the subject matter. As a result, we plan to assess students on what they've learned remotely when they return to school. These won't be graded assessments and aren't about your child proving their performance. They won't affect the set your child is in. However, these will be assessments taken in silent, exam conditions so we can see what your child knows and can do in their own terms. They won't be needed in all subjects, such as mainly practical subjects.

Teachers will use these assessments to help them understand any gaps in knowledge and understanding that have arisen in recent weeks, so they can target teaching to the most critical subject content.

In summary, please don't worry if your child tells you they've had tests in school: these are not formal, graded tests but assessments to inform our teaching over the remainder of the term.

Remote learning for students who are self-isolating

As you'll know from the guidance from Mrs Jenkins, we will provide remote learning for any students who need to self-isolate (due to close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19).

If and when you are in touch with the attendance officer, Mrs Jackson, to explain that your child needs to self-isolate, she will be in touch with all teachers. Teachers will try to set work on the day they hear that one of their students is self-isolating, but please appreciate that this may appear the following day. In such a situation, please navigate to our Curriculum page on the website and you can find topic guides and, crucially, supporting resources for each topic: links to relevant resources your child can use to learn at home.

Remote learning lessons will be set by their teachers via your child's school email, so if your child is self-isolating, please check their school email account with them. The teacher will give your child instructions for their remote learning. Teachers will usually email a link or resources to replace, as far as possible, the in-school lesson. This might be a video lesson, reading, questions or other resources. Teachers may ask your child to catch up on any remote learning tasks they didn't complete during lockdown. If this situation arises for your family, please encourage your child to keep in touch with their teachers via email and to submit any work that their teachers have asked for.

Arrangements for catching up on missed learning

The top priority is having our students back in lessons with their teachers, learning the rich curriculum we offer them.

However, lockdown and remote learning has led to some students finding themselves with gaps in their knowledge and understanding of their school subjects. Our first principle to help them are the assessments mentioned above, to find out what our students know and can do, and teaching to help them close such knowledge gaps.

I'm pleased to say that we are offering much more than this, though.

- For year 11 students, period 6 (our after school additional lessons) will start up again from the week beginning 15th March. We will have the same timetable as we had last term, so students are used to it. This will continue for five weeks, and after this, students will take part in a mock exam series (see below for more detail on this).
- Year 10 students will receive period 6 provision from Tuesday 4th May onwards. 'Period 6' refers to after-school sessions with their own subject teachers on a fortnightly timetable. This timetable will follow in good time, along with further details of the arrangements for parents/carers of Year 10 students. Last term, this was an incredibly helpful system for Year 11 students and we hope to replicate this with our Year 10s.
- Selected Year 7 and 8 students will be invited to literacy and numeracy support after school: lots of reading practice, times table competitions and this sort of thing to make sure all our students have mastered the basics in these two crucial aspects of their education. If your child is invited to this, we will be in touch in the next week or so with the arrangements and what the programme is like.
- Students in all year groups: for various reasons, some of our students in each year group have not submitted all of the work requested during lockdown. In many cases, students have done the work, but perhaps it is on paper at home. We are having a "submission amnesty" next week. Please can you have your child bring in any work on paper that they didn't submit via email or on Google Classroom by Thursday 11th March. They don't need to bring in work that's already been submitted; this is just a chance for teachers to see work that didn't get to them due to technical difficulties or any other reasons. After this date, we will analyse the submission rate for all students. Any students with a significant amount of outstanding work will go onto our catch up programme; we'll be in touch with you separately if this affects your child.
- Students on the catch up programme will be aiming to complete their missing 'top tasks' for each subject they study. Remember, this will only apply to students who missed large amounts of remote learning during lockdown. The expectation is that they will complete an additional 3 hours of homework each week in Year 7/8, and an additional 4 hours of homework each week in Years 9-11 to catch up on vital lessons missed during lockdown. Their teachers will re-assign the most important remote learning lessons to students on this programme, labelling these clearly to distinguish them from normal homework. They'll appear on ClassCharts like this: CATCH UP: SUBJECT NAME: TASK NUMBER. The deadlines will be set in such a way to keep your child organised, so Year 7/8 students have three catch-up tasks due each week and Year 9-11 students have four due each week. Your child, if they are on this catch up programme, can complete the remote learning at home or, on Mondays to Thursdays they can come to homework club. Year 7/8 students have homework club in room IT3 and Year 9/10 students have homework club in room IT8. (Year 11 students have their period 6 provision on these days.) We will gladly allow your child, if they are on this

catch up programme, to attend extracurricular clubs after school rather than homework club: it is not compulsory; it is there to provide a quiet, supported and focused place for them to work on missed learning.

Centre-Assessed Grades for Key Stage 4 Qualifications this Summer

As you'll know, external examinations are cancelled for all GCSEs and other qualifications this summer. Students will still receive a grade for each subject they study, however. This section aims to explain the system for awarding grades to be followed at Axe Valley. This will apply for all Year 11 students for all their qualifications, and for Year 10s for their English Literature course (for which they were due to complete external exams this summer).

It is important to realise that we don't yet know the full details of this process, because although we have some guidance from the regulator of exams, we don't yet have specific exam board guidance, and it is exam boards who award qualifications. What follows is what we do know.

- The school will determine the grades for all Year 11 courses this year, and for Year 10 English Literature.
- We will use evidence of your child's performance throughout their courses. If, due to school closures, they didn't finish learning the subject content (the specification), they won't be judged on content they didn't cover.
- We will consider your child's performance on all learning in school and remote learning.
- We have had one set of mock exams; there will be another set of mock exams starting on May 4th for Year 11. These will be formal assessments in the hall, like their last set of mocks exams.
- Although we will consider performance in lessons, on remote learning tasks and homework, mock exams will provide us with very strong data to make fair and accurate judgements of your child's grades. As a result, the forthcoming mock exams are an important time for students as they will have a strong influence on their final grade. As noted above, they won't be tested or judged on material they haven't covered but will be tested on anything they've learned in each subject since the start of Year 9, when their Key Stage 4 courses began.
- Speaking endorsements in English Language, French and German go ahead as already planned.
- Subjects that use non-exam assessment (coursework) will judge student grades based on their coursework, or portfolios in Art and Photography. Where coursework hasn't been completed due to no fault of the student, they will be graded based on what they have done.
- Our deadline for submitting grades to your child's exam boards is June 18th; the work they do up to that date can influence the grade we assign.
- Results day will be 12th August.

Summary

- Our high expectations of behaviour and uniform continue as we reopen fully. Please check that your child has the right uniform and footwear for coming back to school.

- Routines for hygiene and social distancing will be explained to your child in their first lesson back in school.
- Your child's understanding of the remote learning will be assessed as they return. This will mean tests in many lessons, but they aren't graded or scored – they are just to show their teachers what they know so we can plan properly for your child.
- We will email work directly to your child if they need to self-isolate.
- Please make sure your child submits any missed work online, or brings paper-based work in, by 11th March.
- To support students in catching up missed learning, we have, starting from 15th March: period 6 for Year 11 then for Year 10; more homework club provision; targeted extra homework for students who are behind; and extra literacy and numeracy support for targeted students.
- Year 11 students (and Year 10s for English Literature) will have their grades for all subjects determined by the school, based on mock exam performance, their coursework and their performance on all work since their courses began. These will be determined by the deadline of June 18th; students can influence their grades up to then through their hard work.
- A reminder that, when your child comes in for testing next week, they need to come in through the Flamingo Pool entrance and should collect a new copy of their timetable while they are here. When they are back in school, please ensure they have a spare face covering each day.
- Please complete the survey at this address:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HXTUB6p570WZ4rf-xO0rISDv5sStlpVNTavoUBZBJANUQlJJQldNU05IMUZPSU9ITVNBWDdWTVFYQS4u>

Yours faithfully,



Mr P Wilson
Deputy Headteacher