



17 July 2020

Rachel Hutchinson
Principal

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Sports Academies

Firstly, thank you to all our amazing students, the hard working staff and our supportive parents for showing such resilience and team spirit through such unprecedented times. I am proud of how well the team has pulled together, offering such a diverse and enriching range of online opportunities across our Academy disciplines. The participation and enthusiasm for these sessions has been really impressive and I would like to thank you all for that.

Primarily, I am writing to you to outline the plans for the Sports Academy provision when College re-commences at the beginning of September. We have been monitoring and assessing the position of the various national sporting governing bodies and their respective guidelines regarding COVID-19. We have also looked at how these, and wider government restrictions and guidance aligns with the Trust, and our position and priorities as a College. The challenge has then been to subsequently consider all of this in the context of the full provision for sport and physical activity at the College.

You will, no doubt, appreciate the main priority for the College is overcoming the various challenges of ensuring a safe return for all students in September, and the additional demands on staffing and facilities that this brings. As you would expect, there are a number of Health and Safety protocols and subsequent risk assessments to consider, across the Trust, which will have to be followed and also factored into the decision-making process.

Government guidance currently continues to enforce tight and limiting restrictions on outdoor and indoor activities where, "Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups, and contact sports avoided." This means that we will have to adapt to a new normal, hence the provision that we have previously experienced will, for the foreseeable future, be very different. We are fully aware that the situation remains fluid and dynamic, and are ready and prepared to modify and adjust plans/risk assessments as the current guidelines change, but must do so in the context of the College and Trust as a whole.

At present, as we build towards the new normal in a safe, phased and assured manner, our key priority at the forefront of our decision making is to keep both students and staff safe. As a result, our eventual phased return will include, but will not be exclusive to considerations such as: safe changing areas, safe spaces and ratio numbers, regular sanitising of working areas/equipment and associated processes. The detail and organisation behind these considerations will change accordingly, based on updated government, Sport's Governing Bodies and WeST Academy Trust guidelines as restrictions ease or tighten. However, even within the current context we find ourselves in, we fully recognise the physical, social and emotional benefits of regular physical activity, which can positively support the health and wellbeing of our student population. We believe that even with the current restrictions and limitations this would be an appropriate time to support students in developing their

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self-organisational skills and positive attitude towards lifelong participation which underpins a healthy and happy life.

Whilst we fully understand the importance of Academy Sports to the student's involved, in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, as well as a vehicle for inspiring hard work. Please also understand that we must, at times, make difficult, but necessary decisions, based on key factors involved in prioritising the needs of everyone. Therefore, staff will prioritise core curriculum and look to safeguard social mixing to ensure that we follow the protocols set to protect individuals, groups and the broader community.

Even with the current restrictions, we will continue to play our part in supporting each of the Sports Academies through regularly available online sessions, regular communications from Academy leads and guidance from our Strength and Conditioning lead Mr Taylor. We will endeavour to provide as much virtual content as possible to supplement the phased return of activity.

In summary, it is our aim to return students to activity and their respective sports, in the context of the new normal, as quickly as possible, but not at the expense of health and safety, or activity for the majority. As staff, we too are keen to return to full engagement and its associated benefits for all of our students. However, we have to ensure that student safety and risk advice issued through the plethora of national guidelines are at the forefront of our decision-making process.

We will endeavour to communicate effectively with you and keep you updated on changes to the Academy provision early in the new academic year. Presently, guidelines and outlooks have a different skew almost every day, so we will wait until a full picture has emerged before we communicate with clarity and accuracy. We are hoping that you will work with us during these difficult times and accept that we are doing our best to return to normal in a structured, progressive and logical fashion.

One thing that has changed for next academic year is that we have had to move some of the Year 7 Sports Academies students' populations to accommodate their subjects and Academy commitments. This is not unusual and not an issue to be concerned about: I will be touch later in the summer with more detail.

Finally, staff have, and will continue to work incredibly hard to support students in and often beyond College hours. However, it is also important to remember that staff have commitments, often personal or family in nature, beyond their professional lives and we must establish clear boundaries to respect this. Ivybridge Community College, like all schools, have policies and procedures in place to ensure that despite the increased contact and communication that accompanies participation with the Sports Academies, it is important for all parties (staff, students and parents/carers alike) to ensure that these boundaries are not blurred. For example, **the use of staff member's personal contact details to communicate with individual teachers and coaches through text messaging, email or telephone is neither an effective nor an acceptable form of communication with College.** Staff have found, at times, these forms of contact intrusive and in some cases the persistence and tone of some communications inappropriate. I must therefore insist that in future you please refrain from communicating in this way with staff and use the following contact details for all Sports Academy correspondence. We have, as a College, advised our staff not to respond to any communication that is received through their personal devices or contact details. Staff will

endeavour to respond within a timely manner to any correspondence that has been received using the appropriate channel of communication listed overleaf.

Academy Leads contact details:

Contact	Position	Email
Mr C Brown	Director of Sports Academies	cdbrown@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk
Mrs H Reddy	Head of Gymnastics Academy	GymnasticsAcademy@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk Facebook Page: Ivybridge Gymnastics Academy
Mr A Taylor	Head of Strength and Conditioning	ataylor@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk
Mr D Leonard	Head of Football	dleonard@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk
Miss L Dent	Head of Netball	ldent@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk
Mr M Shepherd	Head of Rugby	iccrugby@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, but in the meantime please may I wish you all a restful and safe summer break.

Yours sincerely

Chris Brown
Director of Sports Academies