

Information update regarding Sixth Form provision

Firstly, thank you to all students and parents for embracing the return to College and new measures put in place for our Sixth Form provision. We would like to thank those of you who have provided feedback and given their time to communicate with us on such important matters. As a result of your feedback and valued points made, we would like to share further rationale and useful information in support of the College's current approach. We hope that students and parents find this update helpful.

1. Working strategy/model adopted by Ivybridge Community College this term:

Across the summer break and in the lead up to September, all WeST schools have been using a carefully crafted toolkit and thorough Risk Assessment as shared on the College's website. This was localised in order to meet each individual school's requirements and ratified at governance level within the Trust. This model and toolkit has been shared and adopted as best practice by other Trusts across the country. There have been several iterations to the toolkit during this time. This has ensured it remains up-to-date, accurate and relevant following changes to government guidance and as we gain greater information and intelligence in minimising the impact of Covid-19 within our educational settings.

During the summer break, we have continued to assess our provision. Fundamentally we have highlighted the need for our working strategy to be proactive, providing continuity in teaching and learning across all year groups, thus promoting the longevity of our face to face contact with our students. As a result, the model that we adopted seeks to achieve this whilst ensuring we have done all we can to keep students and staff safe throughout the academic year. We appreciate that other schools may have taken a different approach in responding to the on-going threat of Covid-19 but please be reassured that our children and young adults are at the centre and core of all decision making undertaken by our Leadership Team.

It is important to note that all schools must make decisions in support of the context of their own establishments. Ivybridge Community College is proud to be a fully comprehensive 11-18 provision, with notably one of the largest thriving Sixth Forms. Therefore, it was necessary to seek supplementary Covid guidance provided to Further Education (FE) Colleges to ensure our older students are considered appropriately alongside the Ofqual Schools and College Covid guidance.

2. Teaching and learning strategy:

As mentioned above, it is our belief that by being proactive, constructing our curriculum in a way that achieves continuity in the event a local outbreak affects the College, we have reduced the impact on our students given they will be familiar with the way the timetable has been designed. Further this will reduce disruption to their education and minimise any negative impact on individuals' health and mental wellbeing should local lockdowns be imposed within our community.

Whilst a blended approach to teaching and learning that incorporates both face-to-face and online registered/timetabled 'live' lessons is new, and a direct result of Covid-19, the teaching hours delivered by way of face-to-face lessons is not new, nor a response to the pandemic. The amount of recommended hours for students to be taught by their subject specialists has not changed and for the many of our young adults remains as nine hours per fortnight per subject. As such, please be assured that full-time, face to face learning has not been halved and indeed, a blended approach is supported by the FE Covid guidance. What is different, however, is that pre-Covid, our young adults would utilise study areas within the College to undertake their supplementary independent learning whereas at present, much of this independent learning can take place within their home environment and we are actively encouraging students to do this at the current time. This again supports our working strategy and model to take a robust, proactive, preventative and sustainable approach to delivering our sixth form provision. This approach will reduce the impact of any future local outbreaks should they occur. Furthermore, our pastoral programme continues to run in accordance with the 'normal' pre-Covid timetable, made up of Tutor sessions every morning and a CPSHE lesson each fortnight. The pastoral calendar is carefully planned and delivered by a highly experienced Post 16 team who will support Year 13 with their UCAS personal statements, interview preparations and careers guidance in a timely fashion. All students, no matter what their future career pathways will be given the right support and guidance. Ivybridge Community College has a well-known reputation across the many Russell Group Universities for the professional delivery of student applications and this year group will receive the same quality provision. We do appreciate however, that sometimes there are inevitable technical or operational issues that can be associated with remote learning, and therefore our students are encouraged to report any issues to us so we can support as necessary.

In terms of any concerns raised about the wellbeing of students in respect of them undertaking increased on-line learning, we would highlight that whilst our guided learning hours are in-line with Government requirements for full time programmes of study, 40% of students' curriculum time is committed to independent study and reflection time. The way in which our timetable has been designed reflects this and seeks to offer the best possible balance between teaching and learning and promoting the social, emotional wellbeing of our young adults.

The Covid-19 guidelines have restricted our flexible study space provision across the campus which inevitably makes social distancing during non-teaching time more challenging. To address this, certain measures have already been implemented

and we have been exploring options over the summer break to increase available space for students to study on-site at the college;

- Conversion of the Ivybridge Community College staff room for the use of students during independent learning time;
- Liaison with our Local Authority partners to seek to identify additional provision within the local community to provide improved examination facilities;
- Proactive planning around use of existing college facilities. By way of example, to undertake flu vaccinations and facilitate Year 11 Trial examinations. We hope to be able to offer the flu vaccinations off-site and find alternative ways to accommodate the Year 11 Trial exams to protect the use of our study spaces that would ordinarily be occupied for a lengthy period of time in Autumn Term. Following feedback from our students, we know that this will be welcomed.

In the short time that we have implemented this new routine, we note that attendance has been exemplary. Our blended approach is also allowing students who are unable to come into the College to access their lessons with their teachers and peers. Over the past two days, we are already seeing more interaction within our on-line lessons with students becoming confident in participating virtually. We are extremely proud of how our students have adapted to these measures.

3. Future pathways:

During our partial opening in the summer term, we prioritised our resources to ensure that our Futures Week continued to take place for all our students in Year 12 in order to keep them on track. This week was the main introduction to applying to university and this included live input from two universities and further resources and remote support from Exeter University. Maintaining strong partnerships with Higher Education providers and professionals who are committed to supporting the 'virtual' delivery of workshops has been a key focus of our work. Launching our UCAS process in the summer term and providing students with mock interviews with our governing board members has provided an ideal platform for this term's programme. Our planned support and guidance for Year 13 students throughout their application process has not been compromised by the new routine. We are fortunate to have already established an extremely efficient and purpose-built online platform in "Unifrog" to support university applications.

4. Assessment updates for Year 13 students:

It is recognised that all schools and individuals would have experienced different challenges and therefore made different amounts of progress throughout the pandemic. As a result, consultation has been sort on a national level by Ofqual, the exams regulator, and following this consultation, exams boards have adjusted their curricula accordingly for all 2021 qualifications in recognition of feedback received. Whilst of course there are always lessons to be learnt, our decision to concentrate on consolidating Year 12 learning during the initial lockdown period was carefully

considered, leading up to the release of Diagnostic Assessments by way of identifying students' areas of strength and development and providing students with a crucial opportunity for self-reflection towards the end of Year 12.

Our dedication to quality first teaching of new content from the Seminar days in the summer, up until the October mock examinations, allows us to teach at pace in an informed and targeted way, knowing that the students have spent time securing their firm foundations in preparation for this. The planned mock examinations then mark the next formal assessment point from which we will identify any students who need additional support, or any focus areas of teaching for the remainder of the year.

5. Parent engagement updates:

Emphasis is placed on our duty of care to parents and in ensuring health and safety measures are put in place for, for example, during parents' evenings. You will have received a written academic report from each of your child's teacher at the end of the summer term providing feedback on Year 12. Our planned approach moving forward is to deliver virtual parents' evening events. The first of which will be a Tutors Evening on 4 November. This is an area of our work that we are keen to develop and improve over coming weeks.

6. Communication:

This update seeks to address some feedback received regarding the timing of our communication to students and parents regarding the measures that Ivybridge Community College put in place. We have taken on-board the views raised and decided that going forward, we will place emphasis on "pace over perfection", ensuring our communications are delivered in a frequent and timely manner wherever possible. Please accept our apologies for any negative impact caused due to the dissemination of our updated information being sent out on a Friday evening. As a result of this feedback and to further support our students and parents whilst we navigate our way through the pandemic, we have reviewed our Communications plan and would like to share the following:

- For everyday queries and support, this can be addressed through students' Tutors;
- For wider or specific academic questions or post sixth form support, please contact pnichols@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk.
- For any other queries, please refer to our updated parent communication flow chart on our website that can be accessed via:
<https://www.ivybridge.devon.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=3966&type=pdf>

7. Transport

For any students who travel to Ivybridge Community College via our own College buses, can I please reassure you that your payments will be adjusted to reflect the weeks that your child will not need to use the bus. If you have paid for a seat on a Devon County Council bus or have pre-paid for any other forms of public transport to travel into College, Tutors will be advising all Tutees how to claim their refund from the College.

We are committed to delivering the highest educational standards possible in these unprecedented times. We hope that the above information is helpful and provides some background and rationale in support of our on-going obligation to safeguard the health and safety of our students, staff, parents and local community. Can I also confirm that our decision to make updates to our Sixth Form provision was made in consultation with and supported by Michael Saltern, Chair of Governors and Rob Haring, WeST CEO.

We very much value your feedback and should you wish to get in touch over coming weeks please use the communication channels as outlined above.

Thank you again.

Rachel Hutchinson
Principal