



23 October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents and students of the Ivybridge Community College Sports Academies programme for their continued commitment and motivation within the current conditions of Covid-19 life. We appreciate and share your frustration as we all also feel the pressure of not being able to train, perform and analyse. We recognise that Sport and Physical Activity changes young people's lives, and that the current context can be a particular challenge for some of our Academy Sports students as for them Academy Sport acts as the 'glue' that holds their schooling together. Since the initial Covid-19 lockdown, we have, as a College, worked hard to produce as much safe activity as possible, and have managed to do this in both a virtual and physical space. We continue to work hard on developing and adjusting a graduated phased return programme for the training and (hopefully) playing of Academy Sport which is in line with the Government's 'tiered' approach to the pandemic, whilst continuing to support guidance provided by the Department for Education.

We have been fortunate enough to receive additional advice from a medically trained professional who is currently working with us as a Covid-19 Sports Officer. This has enabled the College to ensure that all preventative measures are in place and will help to support all future plans and ongoing guidance from the Department for Education, Public Health England, Public Health Devon, the national Association for Physical Education (AfPE), Sport England, as well as the wide range of national sporting governing bodies that Ivybridge Community College engages with.

More recently, and as part of the planned graduated phased return programme, the College has completed a small number of 'test' events. We have played two National Finals at Lillishall where our U15 Ladies' Team won the National Schools Cup, whilst the Boys' Team lost on penalties as late drama unfolded. Part of these 'test' events involved the development of comprehensive event specific Risk Assessments with the aid of the Covid-19 Sports Officer who also travelled with the squads to support the safety of our students and staff. Many congratulations must go to all students and staff involved in these two fixtures for the diligence, behaviour and values that were on display that day. Whilst, the Year Group itself should be celebrated for reaching National Finals in three categories, Men's Football, Women's Football and Rugby Union. These events are very much a culmination of the hard work of both students and staff, and represent five years of investment in a process.

I am now writing to you to outline the current plans for the Sports Academy provision when College re-commences after half term. We continue to monitor and assess the position of the various national sporting governing bodies and their respective guidelines regarding Covid-19, and how these and wider government restrictions and guidance aligns with our position and prioritises all sport and physical activity provision at the College. At the

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moment this guidance is nebulous and changes frequently and is set against the backdrop of a deteriorating national picture in certain pockets of the country. It is difficult to provide surety, but currently we are going to remain in the situation where Academy students will access their sports predominately within curriculum time. At present, and for the immediate future, we are still unable to run lunchtime clubs, owing to the split breaks to ensure the Year Group Hubs remain discrete and therefore, facilities and staff not being available as a result of curriculum lessons being run during these times.

Since the start of the academic year, we have been providing the opportunity for all Academy students to get involved in an alternative range of activities that can still continue to enhance their learning. We have put together a Virtual Programme to keep students motivated and develop their characters beyond the classroom. Please ask your children to check the daily bulletin and liaise with their Academy coaches to identify where and when those opportunities exist. Support has always and continues to be available with regular online sessions and communications from Academy Leads, alongside Strength and Conditioning with Mr Taylor.

Guidance within the field of education continues to enforce tight and limiting restrictions on outdoor and indoor physical and sports activity. AfPE (Oct 2020) state "that it is the responsibility of every school to minimise risks and therefore avoid any activities/sports that increase the risk. Parents have every right to expect their children to be as safe as possible whilst in school." We are continuing to organise curriculum PE and Academy Sessions, but our provision will continue to be different for the foreseeable future. As soon as possible, we have prepared to modify and adjust plans/risk assessments as the current guidelines change, but must do so in the context of the College's mission and vision for all students not just Academy students. We do have a plan which sets out structured phases to enable a 'return to normality', and as soon as guidelines ease we will work through these phases as quickly as possible towards a full return of our high functioning Academy provision.

As a College, we are desperate to return to all forms of physical activity, but only when we can safely minimise the safety and risk for all children and staff. As part of our steps towards the next phase, we are writing to Community Sports hirers to inform them of the intention to open outside sporting facilities, provided significant sport specific risk assessments are formulated and followed, and our conditions of hire are adhered to. This will then enable us to also consider, as part of the planned phased return programme, facilitating appropriate extra-curricular activities and as such some additional after College Sports Academy provision.

We will try our best to improve communication at all levels during the coming months and we would recommend that you encourage your child to maintain regular communication with their PE teachers and Academy coaches to support this process. Please note, that the use of personal phone numbers with the text messaging to individual staff is not an effective form of communication into the College and has caused, at times, some unnecessary additional workload for staff. Staff are working incredible hard to support the wider education and welfare of all students. Please use the following contact details for all Academy correspondence.

Contact details:

Contact	Position	Email
Mr C Brown	Director of 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	ccrugby@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk

In summary, the national picture has not changed enough for us to move towards a full Academy Sports provision, but it is still 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.

We will endeavour to communicate effectively with you and keep you updated on changes to the Academy provision at every significant turn. 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' but must do so when the interests of everyone are safely met.

Yours sincerely
Chris Brown
Director of Academies