

July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Given the challenges faced by all students during the Covid 19 response lockdown, it is clear that many students have missed varying amounts of school work and the whole education system is rightly focussed on ensuring that students catch up.

As you are aware from our weekly newsletter, alongside an adapted curriculum that we will deliver during our normal curriculum time, we have created 'Hub' sessions from 3pm - 4pm for students next year.

Using these Hub sessions will avoid the need for 'catch up schools' during holiday times or weekends, as may be considered by other providers.

The Hub sessions have two approaches:

The first is supportive for the students who need to catch up work that they were not able to complete during lockdown for whatever reason. We would like to consider them compulsory as the purpose is to catch up the students who have fallen behind so they can better reach their potential. For most students other than Year 11, the maximum number of Hub sessions will be 2 per week. Some students are only required for 1 per week.

The second is to extend those students who are thriving. A programme will be created in September following consultation with students and staff. The purpose of which is to extend the engaged, gifted and talented who achieved so much during lockdown.

Those students allocated to catch up Hub sessions will have them marked on their timetable. The FAQ flier will answer questions that you may have with the operation.

We would encourage all students who may have fallen behind to try to catch up so that they are in the Hubs for fewer weeks. Students may, therefore, continue to catch up themselves over the holidays by completing outstanding tasks in TEAMS. However, please note that the work in TEAMS will go off-line by week beginning 24 August 2020 to start setting up for the year ahead. From that point on, your child can still catch up by using the Knowledge Organisers and catch up material on our website. That means current Year 7-9 should use Knowledge Organisers and Year 10 Revision Guides for their examination classes.

Yours faithfully

Mr Kevin Ward
Vice Principal

Hub classes. Frequently Asked Questions

What are the Hub sessions for?

The Hub sessions are normally there to support students who need help with homework or study. They also support the Year 11 revision programme. However, due to the lockdown we have repurposed them. Year 11 will still have a great programme – in fact more teachers than ever have volunteered their time to support the students. For other Year groups, it is essential that students who fell behind for whatever reason are not left behind. They will need to catch up otherwise the new content in class may be too difficult and the students will find they may have gaps in their knowledge come examination time.

Why is my child in the Hub sessions?

Nationally, lots of students did not do much work, if any, during lockdown. The government has made it clear that these students need to catch up. We are proud that Open managed to get most students working well most of the time.

Most students were able to continue to work with their teachers in a mixture of online learning and live lessons over the lockdown. Some students kept up to date by using the Knowledge Organisers and sending work in.

Where work was not completed, and learning was not happening, then a gap opens up. It is not fair to the majority of students who did as much of the work as they could to be held back by the minority who did not. If a student did not complete sufficient work during lockdown, then the Hub sessions are there for them to catch up.

Not catching up may also mean there is a chance that there is not enough time to teach all of the content in Key Stage 3 or in the GCSE or A-level specifications. Therefore, we must help the students catch up.

Some students have more sessions than others. In order to catch up the missing work, it will take some students 2 hours per week for the year. For other students, it will be 1 hour per week. Some students only missed a little bit and they will be catch up quicker. The Year 11 programme is more comprehensive and reflects our usual approach to an extended day to support their examination preparation.

Where a student got sufficient work done during lockdown, they are not in Hub sessions. However, we will be offering some Engaged, Gifted and Talented after-school slots for those students. They did very well. This programme will be developed in September.

My child did not do any work in lockdown and were in Year 6. They did not go to school in the final weeks.

We will be finding out which students are ahead and those who are behind as we get to know the new students. Hub sessions will begin for Year 7 students with gaps in their knowledge in October. We will let them all settle in first. We have good information from most of the primary schools now, explaining who worked well during lockdown and who did not. Those who did not will be doing 2 extra hours per week for the rest of the year to catch up.

I could not get my child to work and they do not want to go to the Hub.

At the end of the day, we, as adults, recognise how important it is to have an education and be ready for life after school. The government has made it clear that they want schools to be fining for non-attendance in September. They have also made it clear that students need to catch up work that was not done during lockdown.

The Hub sessions will be part of the attendance register. As you know, we have to send the government attendance data regularly. This is why we have sent the timetables out now so that everyone is ready and prepared. We consider that the Hub sessions are compulsory and they will be followed up as we would with any non-attendance.

If your child has a dentist appointment or similar, then that of course would be fine. A note would be provided in the usual way.

Obviously, we cannot make someone stay to the Hub session as we have not formally consulted on changing the length of the school day. However, as I express above, we would like to consider them compulsory as this is such a crucial recovery action. Please do discuss with us any individual circumstances which might prove a barrier to your child attending and we will do all we can to work with you to find a solution.

On the day my child has a Hub session, I usually ask them to pick up a sibling.

The Hub sessions have been carefully managed to ensure that every student has a computer to work at. This means we will not easily be able to swap days around. However, if there is a big issue, please write an email to the Head of Year who will be able to consider requests in the week 1 to 5 September 2020. If accommodations can be made, they will be.

Can my child attend more than their allocated Hub sessions?

We know that for many, this represents a positive opportunity and some may want to extend the Hub sessions beyond the maximum of 2 per week. Unfortunately, we are not able to do this at this time as we will not have the staffing or equipment to cater for more students in any of the sessions. If further funding is available later in the year, we will review our provision accordingly.

My child is worried about getting a detention.

Most students do not get a detention, ever. We usually have less than 1% of the student population in a detention over a week. Therefore, very few students would be involved. We cannot stop great initiatives for such a minority at this time. It would be better if we had no students needing to have a detention.

At the moment, the proposal is that the detention would not be cancelled. It may be deferred to their next non-Hub day, but if they have more than 3 detentions in one week – which would be very rare - we will work with you individually to work out the best response.

I heard the government were promising catch-up money.

They have been very generous with ideas and support. At the moment, the Department for Education has been really keen to promote a catch-up curriculum. However, as yet, how it will be financed in schools is not clear. We have allocated a significant amount of money to make this work on the assumption that we will be reimbursed as promised in the future.

This is a big commitment by the Academy to those who were not able to work well during lockdown for whatever reason. We are therefore keen that parents work in partnership with us by giving this programme their wholehearted support.