

Returning to school

Secondary curriculum questions to consider

When the phased return begins, there will be no single curriculum model that works for all schools. School size and context will influence this, as well as the available resources that schools have to draw on. The questions below are aimed at helping leaders to consider the most suitable curriculum models for their school. The intention of this guidance is to help leaders in their consideration of the short-term aspects of curriculum modelling, as well as thinking about the adaptations needed in the longer-term.

The questions are based around an assumption that most schools will be operating for some time under a phased return model, with elements of social-distancing, and that a blend of in-school and home learning may need to be considered well into next academic year.

Managing 'face-to-face' contact with exam classes

- How will you manage the (current) requirement to provide, from 15th June, 'some face-to-face time' for students currently in Years 10 and 12, to supplement their remote education?
- Will your existing curriculum model mean you'll also need to consider the implications for Year 9 students who will be sitting exams next year but are unable to return to school on the 15th June?
- Will you be able to offer exam classes a full or a part-time return to school?
- Will it be appropriate and possible to provide small group tutorials or drop-in sessions?
- Will it be possible to set up virtual small groups or individual tutorials, using video conferencing technology?
- What will be the most effective use of this time in each subject, and how and when will subject teams plan for this?

Curriculum offer

- How will the school's ethos and values be reflected in your curriculum modelling? What will be your overriding goal during a phased return?
- What aspects of the curriculum will you be able to offer via a blend of home and school based activity? Will it be based on available staff, on which subjects are most suited to a blended learning approach, or on the prioritisation of subjects?
- Will your curriculum offer need to accommodate an increased focus on processing of emotions, relationship-building and adaptation back into academic learning? Will it be possible to offer 'assembly' time in a safe and effective way?
- How will students be supported in developing the skills and learning behaviours necessary to navigate a blended in-school/home-based curriculum? Will you need to teach this explicitly?
- How will your offer look different for different key stages or different year groups?
- How will you maintain your curriculum offer should lockdown be re-instated at short notice, through measures such as the local response function?

- What curriculum offer can you make for students who might need to be off school shielding for longer periods, or may not be able to participate in a blended model?
- Are there qualifications/courses that can be used to support shielding students, that are more suited to home learning that can be offered (e.g. EPQ level 3 qualifications, online GCSE courses)? If so, will this have additional costs?

Curriculum timetable and staffing

- What staffing are you likely to have, taking shielding into account at different key stages? How will this impact on the curriculum that you are able to offer?
- How will you staff a curriculum offer which blends online or home learning with classroom practice? How will this impact on staff workload? Will you re-assign teachers away from their normal classes e.g. to a year group model?
- Will your chosen model lead to any new developmental needs for staff? How can you support teachers, for example, if they are teaching outside of their normal curriculum area or need support in working with technology?
- How might social distancing measures affect your timetabling and use of spaces? How will you minimise the movement of students from classroom to classroom, in order for them to remain in contained groups?
- What impact will keeping students in the same small, contained groups have on the curriculum offer that you will be able to offer, during any time students spend in school?
- Will students have specialist teachers or will they remain with the same teacher, who will manage their curriculum with support from 'virtual' colleagues?
- Will your timetabling include any tutor/PSHCE/study skills-type activities, in order to check on well-being and to ensure the remainder of time spent at home is well managed?
- Does your timetable allow flex, should any members of staff need to self-isolate during any time in the foreseeable future?
- What length of lesson will be most effective under these circumstances? Will you return to normal lesson sessions or move to a longer-block 'drop-down day' model? What will be most effective in managing social distancing and staff workload, if home learning is still being set at the same time?

Curriculum planning

- What changes to curriculum plans will be needed? What guidance will you offer to curriculum leaders around this?
- How will curriculum plans accommodate the varying access to home learning which students have had? How can the efforts that staff, parents and students have made to continue their education be acknowledged, without further disadvantaging those students who have not been able to continue so effectively?
- In each subject, how quickly should new conceptual material be introduced? What guidance might teachers need around the appropriate pace of new learning, given the period of time that students have been asked to learn at home? How do we ensure that new content is properly embedded?
- How can planning be informed by rigorous diagnostic assessment, to identify gaps and weaknesses in knowledge?
- What implications are there for exam classes in terms of coverage of the full curriculum for their qualifications in 2021? What core concepts in each subject are worth prioritising, until there is further guidance from Ofqual?
- How much opportunity will subject teams have to consider these questions, and to plan accordingly?

Some possible models for resuming the curriculum in a subject

Spacing
Interleaving
Attention to cognitive load

New content delayed until after a sustained period of revision



New content introduced gradually, during a sustained period of revision



New content begun straight away, with a sustained, parallel period of revision



New content introduced rapidly, during a short period of revision



New content begun straight away, with a brief, parallel period of revision



Lesson delivery models

- What approaches to teaching can be delivered most effectively at home? What type of lesson approaches are most challenging to plan for at home? Can these be prioritised during in-school time?
- How does this vary per subject? What implications does this have for subject leaders, in leading their department?
- What kind of feedback is reasonable? What differences in feedback might be expected when students are at home, as opposed to in-school? What are the implications for teachers' workload if they are required to do both? Will feedback approaches during any in-school time need to be adapted from normal practice to minimise the transfer of materials and resources from students to teacher?
- Will lessons need to be modified to allow extra time to assess variations in what has been learned during lockdown? Is there a place for some responsive grouping of students, based on diagnostic assessments? Can this be done safely?

- What are the implications for assigning teaching assistants? What aspects of their role can they continue to offer students remotely or whilst socially distancing? What aspects of their role will not be possible during this time?
- Will some lessons be more like small-group tutorials, setting and feeding back on the work students are doing at home?

Interventions and 'catch-up'

- How might intervention and catch-up be integrated into a curriculum model? When will be the appropriate time to consider this? What aspects should be prioritised in any interventions and catch-up sessions?
- How can diagnostic assessment be used to ensure that any interventions or catch-up programmes are properly targeted?
- If you are planning to provide any extra curriculum time or summer schooling for intervention and/or catch-up, what will be the balance between academic intervention and the prioritising of SEMH and well-being? What impact will this have on teacher workload?
- How can as much continuity as possible in staffing be provided for vulnerable groups, who may be disproportionately impacted by staffing inconsistency?
- Is there a strong enough catch-up reading programme in place to support foundational literacy in lower Key Stage 3?

Transitions

- What kind of transition arrangements can realistically be offered to Year 7? How might you need to compensate for anything that can't be offered in the summer term?
- What kind of transition will you be able to offer Year 12 students? Will the offer be different for your own students transferring to those who might join you from other schools?
- How long after students return will it be appropriate to base-line? Will we need to consider a longer 'settling in' time than normal first?
- How will you work with partner primary/secondary schools to establish the most appropriate starting points for students?
- If students are usually set early in Year 7, will this be delayed pending a secure assessment of potential?
- Will any usual provision for a Year 7 'nurture group' go ahead as usual?
- How can you plan appropriate induction periods to Sixth Form study, which acknowledge and compensate for curriculum time missed, while making the start to higher study both challenging and exciting?