

Revision/Independent Study Arrangements 2016

1. Background

Last year new GCSE courses were announced with the first exams taking place in summer 2017. These courses will be far more demanding on students in content and will be assessed mainly by examination rather than course assessment. The new exams have been designed to test what students know and understand. They also have far more written content than before.

It is essential that the Academy prepares its students for these new courses. One of the most important key skills required for students to fulfil their potential in these new style exams will be the retention of concepts learned in class. Students will need to be able to demonstrate they have grasped a much deeper learning at the heart of these subjects. Students will also need to develop a much wider body of “core knowledge”.

The Academy introduced a homework policy in September 2015 which was unpopular and was subsequently withdrawn. However, the Academy felt that it should continue to look for an alternative way forward to help students meet these new challenges and to ensure Academy students reach their full potential. It was agreed a wider consultation was required in order to seek views of all those concerned on the best way forward. In March 2016, the Academy asked parents, students and staff to complete a short survey regarding the issue of work to be set outside of school hours.

Having reviewed the survey responses, it was evident that whilst there was no overall consensus on this topic generally more respondents were in favour of some form of work to be set.

2. What the surveys said (% of those who responded to survey questions¹):

Reading:

- Overall parents had a favourable approach to reading with 75% of parents agreeing Reading should be set Daily/Weekly at both KS3 and KS4. 24% of parents thought there should be no reading at all for KS3 compared to 19% in KS4.
- Overall students had a favourable approach to reading with 70% - 75% of students agreeing reading should be set Daily/Weekly in both KS3 and KS4.
- Overall Staff were in favour of Reading for both KS3/KS4. 100% of thought there should be reading at KS3 reduced down to 71% for KS4.

Revision/Preparation for Tests:

- Parents were more favourable to Revision/Preparation for Tests Weekly/Fortnightly for KS4 students (52%) than KS3 (42%). 26% parents thought there should be no Revision/Preparation for Tests for KS4 students compared to 33% for KS3 students.
- Overall students had a favourable approach to Revision/Preparation for Tests with between 70% and 75% of KS3/KS4 pupils agreeing it should be weekly/fortnightly. Between 20% - 25% of KS3/KS4 pupils agreed it should be once a term. Only 6% of KS3/KS4 pupils thought there should be no Revision/Preparation for Tests at all.
- Overall Staff were in favour of Revision/Preparation for Tests for both KS3/KS4, particularly for KS4. For KS3 students 71% of staff agreed it should be set Weekly/Fortnightly, 24% Once a Term and 5% not at all compared to 95% Weekly/Fortnightly, 5% once a term and 0% not at all for KS4.

Research:

- Research was least favoured by parents with only 36% and 49% of parents agreeing Research should be set Weekly/Fortnightly for KS3 and KS4 respectively. 41% and 33% of parents thought there should be no Research at all for KS3 and KS4 students.
- Overall students favoured Research less than Reading or Revision although they were slightly more positive to research at KS3. 12% of pupils thought there should be no KS3 Research compared to 25% at KS4.
- Overall staff were in favour of Research particularly at KS4 with 81% agreeing this should be set Weekly/Fortnightly. Very few staff said there should be no Research at either Key Stage (5% at KS3 and 0% at KS4)

¹ Respondents: 129 parents, Staff Senior Leadership Team (21 staff) and Student Leadership Council (80 students representing all Yr Groups 7 - 11)

Revision/Independent Study Arrangements 2016

How should work be delivered?

- Parents and students were mainly in favour of work being delivered either by student books or paper copies with Staff preferring the Student Learning Gateway.

What should work be called?

- Parents had no overall preference although the majority of pupils (52%) were in favour of "Revision".

3. Consideration of Comments

In developing the new arrangements, the Academy Management considered parents' comments collated from the surveys and 1:1 meetings with the Head Teacher. A good number of parental comments received concerned the effect of any additional work outside of school may have on students and home life after a long school day.

The Academy felt that it was important for students to have the required reflective time to commit to memory what they have learnt in class and so increase their chances of retaining valuable knowledge required for the new exams. Using lessons for this was not considered an effective use of teaching time.

Some parents asked whether extensions could be used for homework or the school day shortened, however, overall extensions and the length of the Academy school day are popular with the majority of the Academy community. Many parents and students see these as an important part of Academic life and would be reluctant to see the end of these.

Parents also asked for consideration for those students with no internet access outside of school and arrangements will be made for printed copies to be available where this is necessary. A few parents were concerned regarding support available to those students with special educational needs. The Academy will provide differentiated support for all students through curriculum time and tutor time for the new arrangements.

4. Conclusion

The arrangements devised for September 2016 are different to the homework model introduced in September 2015. The tasks set will be designed to help students reflect on what they have learnt and to revise for tests during school time. Students will also have the opportunity to use morning tutor time within the school day to revise or read if they so wish.

We hope that these new arrangements will be a valuable and beneficial to help our students meet the challenge of the new exam specifications going forward.

Revision/Independent Study Arrangements 2016

5. Summary of the Academy Approach for Revision/Independent Study going forward:

Both KS3 and KS4 students are allocated 2 ½ hours every week within the school timetable which can be used for independent study/revision. Work set will be either literacy based (Reading and/or Spellings) or revision to help students reflect on what they have learnt in preparation for tests which will be set in class. KS4 students also benefit from Study Skills delivered during tutor time to provide a framework to help students.

Key Stage 3

An average of approximately 3 hours a week of which over half is reading.

	Time	Recommended time /Frequency	How	Parental Communication
Literacy	Reading	30 mins x 3 times week	Reading books and reading texts taken home	Logged in students' reading record/book
	Weekly spelling tests (Differentiated)	30 mins per week preparation	Spellings in Reading book	Logged in students' reading record/book
Maths	Revision for retention test	30 mins every 3 weeks preparation	Revision pack on line or printed copies ²	Test scores reported to parents to inform progress.
Science	Revision for retention test	30 mins every 3 weeks preparation	Revision Pack on line or printed copies	Test scores reported to parents to inform progress.
Humanities	Revision for retention test	30 mins every 3 weeks preparation	Revision Pack on line or printed copies	Test scores reported to parents to inform progress.
French	Revision for retention test	30 mins every 3 weeks preparation	Revision Pack on line or printed copies	Test scores reported to parents to inform progress.

Approach going forward: Key Stage 4

On average just over 3 hours per week.

	Time	Recommended time /Frequency	How	Parental Communication
English	Reading set twice a week to support literature.	Approximately 30 minutes x 2 times a week	Plot 'quizzes' will follow to gauge comprehension.	Reading books
Maths	Revision for retention test every 3 weeks.	Approximately 1 hour for each test	Revision pack on line or printed copies	Test scores will be reported to parents to inform progress.
Science	Revision for retention test every 3 weeks.	Approximately 1 hour for each test	Revision pack on line or printed copies	Test scores will be reported to parents to inform progress.
Humanities option (History or Geography)	Revision for retention every 3 weeks for each test.	Recommended preparation time will be approximately 1 hour for each test	Revision pack on line or printed copies	Test scores will be reported to parents to inform progress.
Option subjects (x3)	<p>Homework allocation depends on chosen options.</p> <p>For French, revision for retention test every 3 weeks. Work pack available on-line to be viewed on electronic devices. Recommended preparation time will be approximately 1 hour for each test (1 hour every 3 weeks). Test scores will be reported to parents to inform progress.</p> <p>For examined element in BTEC Subjects (Business, ICT, Catering, etc.) revision for retention test every 3 weeks during the examined unit. Work pack available on-line to be viewed on electronic devices. Recommended time allocation will be approximately 1 hour for each test (1 hour every 3 weeks). Test scores will be reported to parents to inform progress. Additionally, some research tasks will be set as demanded during portfolio/coursework units.</p> <p>For Art, students will take sketchbooks home to complete unfinished work, as demanded.</p>			

² Printed copies will be available to those students with no access to internet outside of school