



RECOVERY CURRICULUM

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Returning to school is, of course, going to involve recovery of many different types. There will be friendships to be recovered, after a long period of social distancing. Teachers will be working hard to nurture positive working relationships with students after a long period of remote learning. Year 11 and Year 13 students will remember how strange it felt, at first, to be in the classroom again in June and July. For some students, recovering the physical stamina to get through a long and busy day at school will be their first priority. For others, getting used to the hustle and bustle of the place, after the peace and quiet of home, will be a challenge. Some children will feel understandably anxious about being back at school. Young people's experiences over the past few months have varied hugely, and so will their path to recovering a normal – or close to normal – school life once again.

Our first aim, as staff, is to help all of our young people to feel safe, secure and listened to. It is incredibly important that our young people are able to express any worries or issues that they may have, and know that we will support them through the process of returning to school. Students are young people first, and 'students' second.

As well as all of the other factors that students may be anxious about, many will probably be worried about their learning itself. *What will the impact of 'missing' so much school be? Will we ever be able to 'catch up'? How are the teachers going to make sure that we 'cover everything'? What if we 'waste time' going over stuff I already know?*

At King James's, we aren't going to be using any of that 'language of lost learning'. This is partly because its negative tone leads to more worry for the students. But, much more importantly, it is because it doesn't reflect the intentional, evaluative and responsive approach that we take towards our students' journey through our curriculum.

As you may know, our curricula are built around ensuring that each student systematically builds up a comprehensive and inter-connected web of the key ideas, facts and vocabulary that they need to be able to succeed in each subject. As staff, we are used to working with and developing these on detailed 'maps' – documents which show how the students encounter this key knowledge in a logical order over the years. You and your child will be more accustomed to seeing this broken down into Learning Journeys, and you will be able to find one of these in their exercise books at the start of each Learning Cycle. Some of the knowledge that is on our curriculum is vital to the understanding of and participation in that subject. This is called disciplinary knowledge. The rest is known as substantive knowledge – this is the knowledge that teachers, exam boards and governments choose to include as a way of engaging with the disciplinary knowledge.

At all Key Stages, the main focus is on making sure that all students learn the disciplinary knowledge in each subject. Of course, there are always students who 'miss' bits of this. They might have been at the dentist that lesson, or just not paying attention because they were having a bad day. This is entirely normal. After remote learning for several months, we would expect that more students will be missing more elements of this disciplinary knowledge. Some students might have engaged with certain subjects but not others. Some might have done nothing at all. And there will also be students who have diligently done every single piece of work set, and have learned every one of those pieces of disciplinary knowledge. How, then, are teachers going to know who knows what?

One of the really vital messages that we must communicate to our young people is that we are all going to be starting new topics in September. No student should be worrying that they won't understand the lesson because they didn't do some of the lessons during lockdown. Just as importantly, no student should be concerned that they are going to spend time doing the same work twice. This is why we are going to start new topics, just as we would at the beginning of any Learning Cycle. However, this still allows plenty of scope for students to encounter and learn those key pieces of disciplinary knowledge.

If you can imagine a spiral, like a coiled spring, that is a good way to envisage the curriculum. Each coil of the spring represents another school year. What's interesting, though, is that the curriculum doesn't move away from its starting point in a straight line. Instead, it circles back round again, so that it is back where it started, only a little bit higher up. Now I'd like to you to imagine that you are looking at the spring from directly overhead, so that it looks like a circle. Every tiny point on that circle represents a different piece of disciplinary knowledge. Turn the spring on its side again, and you can see that your child encounters the same disciplinary knowledge multiple times throughout their secondary education. They will encounter it in different contexts, but they will encounter it again.

For example in Year 7 English your child learns to plan a piece of non-fiction writing and present new ideas in a logical order, through the medium of travel writing. In Year 8 they build on this, by linking their paragraphs to form a more cohesive text, and using extended metaphors, for example, to unify their various ideas about contentious issues. In Year 9 they return to this, using a still wider range of devices to help them to conceptualise more abstract ideas.

This spiralling around the curriculum reflects the way that people learn, but also gives students and teachers the opportunity to learn for the first time a piece of disciplinary knowledge that, for whatever reason, has been forgotten or was never learned at all. Our recovery curriculum is built around this principle: that students will (re)encounter disciplinary knowledge through the teaching of new topics.

This eliminates the need to test the students in order to find out 'what they've missed' – which is an impossible task, anyway. Instead, evaluating the students' responses to the lessons and tasks within them will tell us something much more important: have they learned it *now*? If they have, then that's wonderful. If not, then this sort of teaching, known as *responsive teaching*, means that the teacher will spend some more time on that piece of disciplinary knowledge, or return to it shortly.

Of course, at Key Stages Four and Five, the students do also need to learn the substantive knowledge that the exam boards require of them, and all departments have planned how this will be achieved while preventing our young people from feeling extra strain and pressure as far as possible. Ways of doing this might include spreading revision out over the year, starting with very short five minute tasks. It may involve getting them used to moving from task to task, the way they would typically do in an exam. It will potentially involve a process called distributed practice, where they work on 'old' topics alongside 'new' ones, to keep them fresh in their minds. These are all practices that the school has communicated to exam year students and parents in recent years, through letters and assemblies. This year it is more important than ever that the exam students are helped to organise and make wise use of their time, so that they don't end up being panicked, overworked or overwhelmed, and different departments will do this in the way which best serves the study of their subject.

I hope that this has helped you to understand the aims, delivery of and rationale behind our Recovery Curriculum. More importantly, I hope that it has gone some way towards reassuring you and your child about what their experience of learning will be like from September. We are very much looking forward to it.