West Lothian Virtual Academy

2024-25

What is the West Lothian Virtual Academy?

Purpose/Rationale

Digital technology is globally recognised as making a significant contribution to current and future learning, teaching and assessment strategies in schools, further and higher education and an essential for component of 21st Century employment. It is a key feature of national thinking and the foundation of recent policy drivers in society.

West Lothian Academy is designed for the following key reasons:

1. Provide a range of Advanced Higher courses (and some Higher courses) to support young people to access subjects at these levels that they may otherwise, not be able to access/study.
2. Provide high quality online/digital learning experiences for young people, as appropriate, across West Lothian Council, providing further opportunities to attain qualifications whilst also further developing required future employability skills in a rapidly evolving 21st Century context.
3. To further enhance the breadth of the curriculum, offer for young people in the senior phase across West Lothian Council and provide equity of access to as many courses and experiences as possible.

Each secondary school is likely to offer a range of Advanced Higher courses in their own school to meet the needs of their young people and curriculum as part of their school timetable.

The West Lothian Virtual Academy is separate and different to this and applies a different operating model. It is important to recognise this prior to expressing interest in studying a course in the West Lothian Virtual Academy. It is not comparable to 'in-school offers' are therefore schools will work closely with young people to ensure that students are in the most appropriate and suitable courses for them. This will be ensured during schools' usual course options programmes.

The West Lothian Virtual Academy is an extended/additional online (digital) programme offered to support schools and young people to access courses and qualifications that may otherwise not be available to them, therefore, widening their access to further experiences and outcomes.

Young people are required to be able to work independently during more distant learning strategies and be adaptable to take responsibility to engage fully in online learning supported by teachers from across West Lothian who are unlikely to have taught them previously or even be from their own school.

West Lothian Academy Operating Model

As has been the case in the past, young people will engage in extensive conversations with staff from their own school about their options and pathways. This usually happens in each school between January and March in preparation for the new session. Once young people have completed their course choices, their new timetable would normally begin prior to the summer holidays (June). If they have chosen to study a course offered in the West Lothian Academy, a relevant allocation of periods of the subject will appear on their Timetable. It is the responsibility of each individual school to course young people appropriately into the West Lothian Academy, as they know their young people best and are fully responsible for providing them with and supporting them on the pathways that are most suitable for them.

Students

The operating model for the West Lothian Academy in 2023-24 will consist of the following:

1. **Two periods per week of 'live learning' via Microsoft Teams** (either Tuesday or Thursday afternoon depending on course – this will be reflected in your individual timetable as allocated by your school. During these 'live learning' classes, students must keep their **cameras turned on** and are expected to fully engage in and contribute positively to the class otherwise, attendance will not be registered.
2. All other allocated periods will be self-directed study/learning as set out in communication with the class teacher. Via **Microsoft Teams and Class Notebook**, students will be able to access class assignments, course notes, revision/consolidation tasks, relevant web/video links and feedback from the class teacher.
3. At least once per term, students will attend an **in-person taught tutorial with the class teacher** at a central location – transport is arranged/provided
4. One **Parent/Carer online feedback evening/appointment** for the class teacher to meet with and update (February)
5. Students receive **regular tracking updates** (3 occasions throughout the session) completed by the class teacher, distributed via email to the student's main contact.
6. Students have one **point of contact in their own school** as identified by their Depute Head Teacher, this may be a Digital Lead Teacher or the DHT (this is the student's point of contact for any support or to raise any queries/concerns about their course/class/learning experience).
7. Any **ASN requirements** are communicated with and supported by the class teacher.
8. Surveys and other **opportunities to provide feedback** about the West Lothian Virtual Academy will be provided termly within the school session.
9. Staff absence sometimes cannot be avoided. If the absence is planned, the teacher will agree in advance with classes what should be done during that time. If the absence is unplanned, classes cannot be covered so students will be expected to continue with any work that has been set for their "non-live" periods unless otherwise instructed by the staff member via Teams.

Staff (Class Teachers)

1. Provided with **4 allocated periods** on the Timetable.
2. **Two of the allocated periods are planned and delivered 'live' via Microsoft Teams** (either a Tuesday afternoon or a Thursday afternoon, 2pm – 3.30pm).
3. A further two periods are **allocated to further support students' learning** (uploading resources, providing feedback and communicating with students).
4. **Approximately once per term**, teachers will plan and lead an 'in-person' tutorial at a central venue as arranged by the central West Lothian Virtual Academy staff team – all students in the class are expected to attend.
5. There is a parent-carer online Parent Evening designed to **feedback to parents**, this will take place in February.
6. Class teacher will **complete regular tracking updates for young people** (3 occasions per session).
7. Staff have one point of contact in their school for support (Digital Lead or DHT). This is the contact for the class teacher for any queries, concerns and the school Digital Lead/DHT will liaise with partner schools and/or West Lothian Virtual Academy staff as appropriate.
8. Class teachers will be aware of and **support ASN requirements of students in their class**.
9. Staff absence sometimes cannot be avoided and if the absence is planned, there is an expectation that staff will have agreed in advance what the students should do at that time I.e. a recorded lesson or set tasks etc. If the absence is unplanned, classes cannot be covered so students will be expected to continue with any work that has been set for their "non-live" periods unless otherwise instructed by the staff member via Teams.
10. Individual schools where the student is based will provide an appropriate environment and required resources for them to engage fully in their West Lothian Virtual Academy classes.

Parents/Carers

1. **Regular progress tracking updates (3 occasions)** will be made available to parents/carers throughout the school session.
2. An **online Parent Evening** will be arranged for class teachers to meet parents/carers to provide progress updates in February.
3. A West Lothian Virtual Academy staff member in each **base school** will be identified and this is the point of contact for any questions, queries or concerns (this may be a Digital Lead or DHT, depending on the school).
4. All ASN arrangements and support will be provided in discussion with parents, students, own school and West Lothian Academy class teacher.
5. Surveys and other opportunities to provide feedback about the West Lothian Virtual Academy will be provided for parents/carers at certain points of the school session.

Summary Information Leaflet
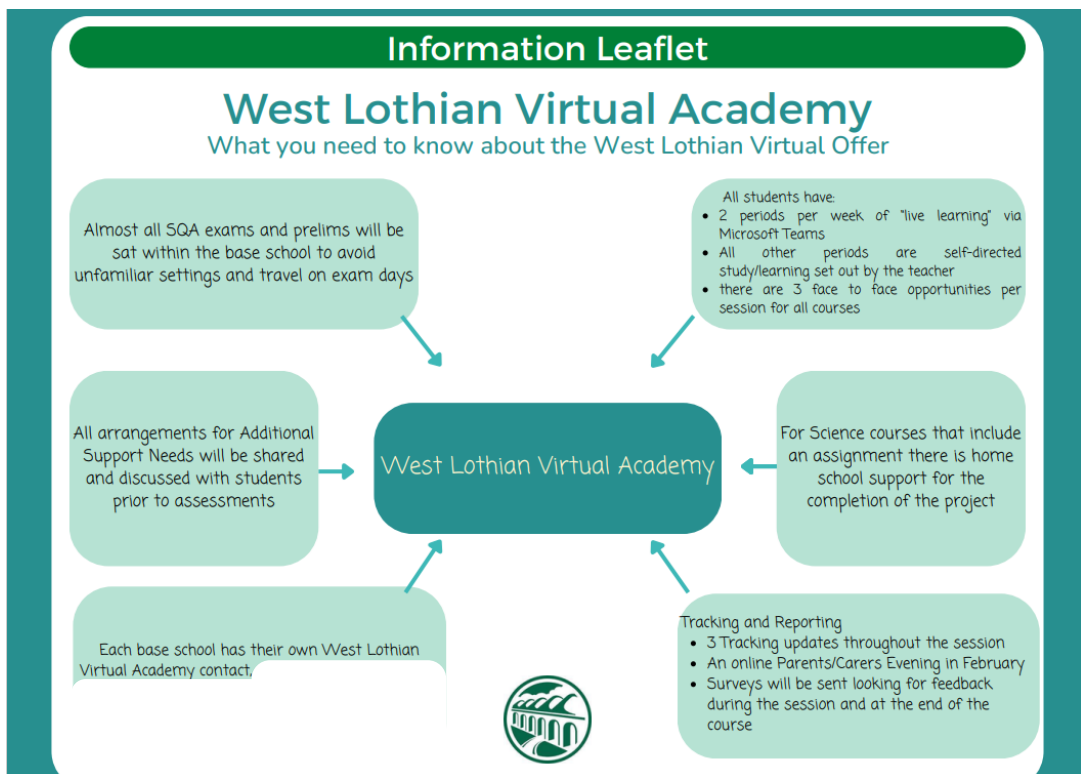
Flowchart for West Lothian Virtual Academy Support
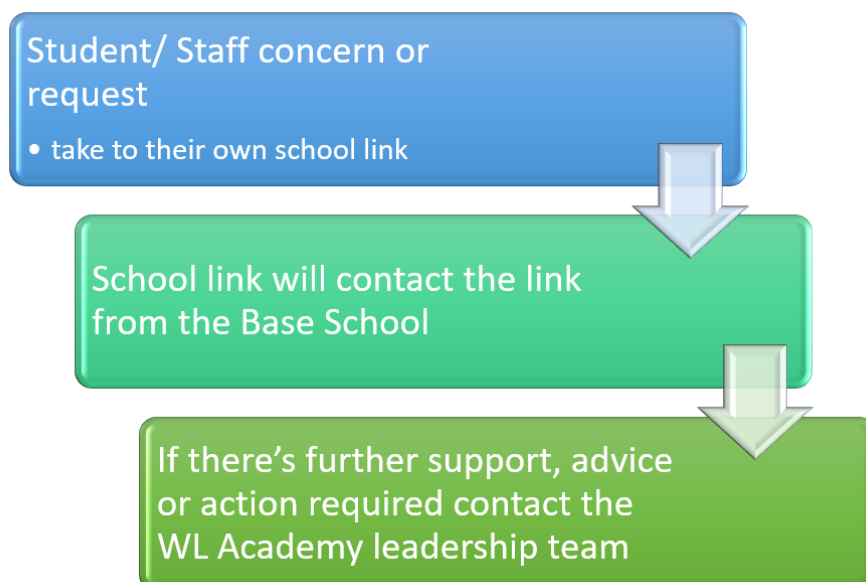
West Lothian Virtual Academy

Course Offer & Presentation Centres
2024-25

Courses	SCQF Level
Biology	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Business	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Chemistry	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Computing	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
English	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Graphics	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
History	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Maths	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Modern Studies	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Music	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
PE	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Physics	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)
Philosophy	Higher (SCQF 6)
RMPS	Advanced Higher (SCQF 7)