

# Hele's School

*A great place to learn. A great place to grow.*



Friday, 26 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I trust you had a well-earned rest during half term last week and a refreshing break from screens and devices!

Back to Earth with a bang I'm afraid though, and I'm sorry for having bombarded you with written communication over the past 48 hours; I appreciate there is a great deal to take in and that you may be feeling overwhelmed as the plans for school reopening evolve rapidly.

For fear of important information being lost in lengthy correspondence, later today we will send out a video briefing, which will make it really clear what you are being asked to do, why and by when. It won't contain information that hasn't been shared with you already by letter, but it is another medium of getting key messages across and may well suit some people better.

Below is a summary of our plans to reopen our (physical) doors to all children in all year groups from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

**Lateral Flow Testing for all students and staff:** the Government has given secondary schools discretion as to how to phase the return to school over the course of the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> March in order to support the initial testing programme that underpins the move back on site. I wrote earlier today with the testing plan and rationale, along with details of how we will test specific year groups each day prior to return and the logistics around ensuring this happens efficiently and safely.

It is vital that **all families** complete the brief online consent form for each child in years 7-11 (Post-16 students provide their own consent) as quickly as possible to support our planning, so I'd be grateful if you'd prioritise this and ensure **completion by Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March**. Please understand that this is an enormous logistical task that we need to deliver against in just a matter of days. As much as we'd like, we are not able to facilitate changes to allocated days/times around personal circumstances for the first test. Please support us with this by not contacting school to request changes.

Consent is voluntary and we cannot test your child without it, and nor can we preclude anyone not testing to return to the classroom. However, we are **strongly encouraging all students and staff to be tested as an extra control measure to safeguard our school community**.

After the first two weeks back at school, students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home. Parents and carers will be required to report results to NHS Test and Trace and to the school so the result can be recorded. We will confirm how this system will operate in due course.

**Parent/Carer volunteers:** our Hele's Support Staff continue to do a fantastic job in administering the testing process on site alongside their usual day job in providing an important function in supporting teaching and learning. Given that we are scaling our testing programme up from 2<sup>nd</sup> March, whilst at the same time preparing for full reopening the week after, we are looking to build some extra capacity though mobilising a handful of volunteers to support the testing process over the next 2 weeks. No clinical experience is necessary, and all training and PPE will be provided on site at Hele's School on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March. Any parent/carers who are available and willing to volunteer to support with shifts between 2<sup>nd</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> March (1 ½ hour shifts during the school day) should please contact Sandra Crawford, Deputy Principal, at [crawfords@heles.plymouth.sch.uk](mailto:crawfords@heles.plymouth.sch.uk). A great Team Hele's effort to get our children back safely and quickly to school, if ever there was one!

**Return dates for each year group:** we have planned carefully to ensure all children will be back and accessing their normal timetable by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March. We are staggering the first week back to enable us to be confident that students are returning to the classroom after receiving a negative test result. It is also a means to support our transition back by focusing on re-establishing routines and expectations and familiarising ourselves with the one-way system again; Year 7, in particular, will need plenty of time to acclimatise as their experience to date of Hele's School has been severely disrupted. There will undoubtedly be many others in different year groups who will benefit from careful transition, so please do alert us if your child has any worry or concern about returning.

**The return to school dates are as below:**

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March – Years 11, 12 and 13**

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March – Year 10 to join those already on site**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March – Year 7 to join those already on site**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> - Year 8 to join those already on site**

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> - Year 9 to join those already on site**

**Remote learning provision:** this will continue for those year groups accessing learning at home until their return date. All students will continue to follow their usual timetable, and our provision will move to a more blended delivery model where there may be more task-based work set by teachers alongside some live delivery. I'm sure you can appreciate the demands on staff throughout the next couple of weeks will be significant, so this is a means to support our teachers with the transition back to school without compromising the quality of provision for our learners. It also supports the inevitable disruption as students attend school for testing.

**Supervised Remote Learning:** those who have been attending our Supervised Remote Learning provision on site since January will continue to attend each day throughout the testing period, though the delivery model will change from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March to accommodate testing requirements. Parents/carers accessing this provision will be written to separately by Ms Clapham, Assistant Principal, with details of these changes.

**Face coverings:** the Government is now strongly recommending *'the use of face coverings is recommended in classrooms and other teaching spaces, unless wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons, or for those who are exempt from wearing a face covering as set out in Government guidance'*. We are therefore asking that all students and staff (unless exempt) wear face masks in lessons until further notice. The guidance states that this is a short-term measure and will be reviewed at Easter. Please do ensure that your child has an adequate supply of face masks so that they can change masks if they become damp from extended wearing or they break. School carries spare stock, if needed, however, your child taking responsibility for their own belongings is to be encouraged.

**Parent/Carer guidance booklet:** we issued a comprehensive guidance booklet at the end of the autumn term, which laid out the delivery model on site from January. Please note the routines and expectations within that booklet still apply, including the allocated egress point, the one-way system around the building, and all the existing control measures. We are in the process of amending the dates within and to strengthen routines in line with the latest Government guidance. This booklet will be reissued to families next week.

**Attendance:** the Government has been clear with schools that attendance, once the phased return is over, is not optional. The usual rules and duties around school attendance are in place from 8<sup>th</sup> March. We will continue to support your child in their return to school and welcome your support in ensuring your child attends on time every day.

In line with the latest government guidance, children who are clinically extremely vulnerable should not attend school. If your child is in this group, they should continue to learn from home until further notice.

**Uniform:** all students will be expected to return to school in full uniform, including appropriate footwear. Students must not return to school in trainers or wearing any non-uniform tops, such as sweatshirts or hoodies.

Students will continue to come to school in their PE kit on the days that they have PE - separate information about PE lessons will be emailed by the PE Department next week.

**Equipment:** please support us by checking that your child has their [Super 6](#) to start back to school, along with a face covering and a spare mask, wherever possible.

**Routines:** over the coming week, you can help to prepare your child for the return to school by regularising sleeping habits and morning routines. I've no doubt that some may need extra support to build up their stamina for the rigour of a school day!

**Remain alert:** whilst we welcome the Government's plans to get all children back to school and are cautiously optimistic about the Government's road map to reopening the country and roll out of the vaccination programme, I want to reiterate how alert we must all remain to the continued risk of COVID-19. Testing and face coverings in classrooms are extra control measures, but no risk can be eradicated completely. We must not be complacent but instead continue to adhere to stringent health and safety measures, now and when fully open. Your support in helping us be as safe as possible is much appreciated and will help ensure we stay open to all students, and keep your child, our staff, and you, safe.

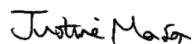
**Current guidance and information:** [information for parents and carers was published by the DfE this week](#). The main operational guidance for educational providers can be viewed [here](#) for those who would like to see the detailed guidance around which we are updating our risk assessment.

**Next steps:** Lockdown has been a challenging period for all of us, and we'd like to thank you for your continuing support during this difficult and uncertain time - especially in helping your child learn from home. I know many will have found the last two months extremely difficult and returning to school may seem overwhelming. I assure you that we will proceed with great care and caution over the coming weeks. If you or your child have any concerns about returning to school, or if you think your child might need extra support when they return, please get in touch with your child's Tutor or Pastoral Support Manager or SENDCo. A list of names and email addresses can be found on the school website [here](#). We ask that you are as thoughtful and communicative as you have always been, so that we can continue to support you and your child as we all return to something closer to 'normal'.

**Good news:** on top of the good news about soon having the school community back together in the same building doing what we do best, the sky is blue, the sun is shining, and there is a sense of hope and optimism in the air with spring just around the corner. To give an extra spring in my step, I was delighted to hear that Joe Ackerlay (13D) and Theo Davis (Hele's graduate) have recently organised and completed a charity bike ride for Anxious Minds. The boys cycled over 100 km and raised more than £1300 for the charity. Joe and Theo have kept their endeavours quiet up to this point, but having just found about their fantastic work, I'm going to shout it loud from the rooftops and share their dedication and achievement with the wider Hele's community! Really great effort, boys, well done for being so public-spirited and thinking of others - we're very proud of you!

Enjoy the sunshine this weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason

**Principal**

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