

# Hele's School

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



Friday, 12 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Today, we have all 1300 children are back in the building for the first time since January and what a feeling that is. Smiley faces – albeit behind face masks - the sound of laughter and chatter, and teachers delivering their lessons to actual young people and not a PC screen in an empty classroom! Yesterday, whilst waking the corridors during lessons, I heard the melodic sounds of a piano drifting out of the Music room and I don't mind admitting I welled up! We're back in business, on site, safely, doing what we do best...and it feels good!

We have been delighted with the response of our students to the lateral flow testing in school. Student behaviour has been impeccable, they have turned up on time for appointments and take up has been around 95% across the school, which really is quite something – thank you so much for your support in this endeavour, we couldn't have done it without you.

**Home testing arrangements:** now that students have been offered three lateral flow tests in school, we move to the next phase of testing which will take place in the home. Students will then continue taking twice-weekly tests using a home test kit provided by school. From today, we are rolling out distribution of those home testing kits to children to bring home. This will be done by year group.

Students will be issued with two lateral flow self-testing kits for to use at home, each box containing 3 tests. This will cover home testing for the next 3 weeks (two tests a week for the named child, spaced 3 to 5 days apart). An additional instruction booklet will also be supplied which should replace the one inside the kits.

Kits will be given out towards the end of period 5 on an allocated day, and boxes will be clearly labelled with the child's and parent/carer's name. Whilst there is no obligation to use these testing kits, we are strongly encouraging parents and carers to support this national initiative to help identify children who may be asymptomatic and therefore prevent spread of COVID-19 through a period of self-isolation at home. I recognise that there is a minority of families who did not consent to on-site testing, some of whom said they would home test when the time came and some who may still choose not to use the tests at home; families will make that decision individually, but in line with the government's ambition, all children in school have been supplied with a kit as a first step.

The order of distribution of home testing kits (determined by when the third test in school has been done) is as below:

Friday 12 March – Year 11 and Year 10 (we emailed parents and carers yesterday to flag this)

Monday 15 March – Year 8 and Year 13

Tuesday 16 March – Year 7 and Year 12

Wednesday 17 March – Year 9

Parents and carers are obliged to report all results to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone, as set out in the home test kit instructions. In addition, schools have been asked to collect and track testing of the school community. With that in mind, I'd be grateful if the following online form could be used after each test to post results to the school as NHS Test and Trace does not share the data with school. The link for reporting results to school is [here](#).

The tests are very easy to operate and children who have tested on-site will be familiar with the process having taken three tests by the time of receiving their home testing kit. If you do have any questions, however, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to support you with this.

**Household/Bubble testing:** the government announced a few days ago that some households can access rapid Lateral Flow Testing kits through community collection points. You can only use this service if someone in your household, childcare or support bubble attends a primary school, a secondary school, a sixth form, a college, or works at one, and you cannot get tests from your work.

In Plymouth, there are 3 new local collection sites that have been set up: at the former **Seaton Barracks in Crownhill**, at **Marjons in Derriford** and at the **Guildhall in the City Centre**. All three facilities are **open 1pm – 8pm every day of the week**. Further details can be found [here](#). You can check online if the location is open or busy before you go. You do not need to make an appointment. Anyone 18 or over can collect 2 packs of home test kits at a local collection point, with each pack containing 7 tests.

If you cannot get tested at your workplace, or are unable to go to a test site or collect test kits, you can order a home test kit online via [this link](#). However, please do not order online if you can get a test through other methods as this frees up home delivery for those who need it most.

**Y10 Exams:** in light of the National Lockdown from January and the period of remote learning through terms 3 and most of 4, we have taken the decision to postpone the Year 10 exams scheduled for April 2021. Logistically, these exams, which ordinarily take place in the Sports Hall to provide a first experience of formal conditions, cannot happen under current restrictions. However, we believe these tests would now be better run more as diagnostic assessments rather than exams later in the academic year when young people are more settled, and students will be prepared for these accordingly when appropriate. Further arrangements will be shared with parents/carers in due course and in line with the public health guidance for schools at that time.

**Y11 and 13 Leavers' events:** as Year 11 and Year 13 fly the Hele's nest each year, we look to celebrate these milestones with a series of events, including a Prom, a Leavers' Assembly, and other occasions to mark the end of an era. Sadly, last year's leavers missed out on these events due to restrictions in place around public health and unfortunately this is looking to be the case for this year too. This is beyond the control of the school.

The government's road map out of the pandemic provides anticipated dates for reopening society, but as we are repeatedly told, these remain under constant review and decisions will be made around the scientific evidence and data, and not fixed dates. The initial date *proposed* for when large-scale events, such as proms and assemblies, *may* be allowed to happen is the very end of June and with this likely to be pushed back if there is a third wave, it is simply not possible to commit to running our usual events this year given the significant level of uncertainty and the months of planning that has to precede such events.

We know this will be a huge disappointment to all, but we must all follow public health guidance to keep each other, our families and our community safe. In order to manage the expectations for both students and parents/carers, we want to be completely transparent about this at this stage and ensure no family or individual begins making plans or paying for services which cannot be used. We remain committed to looking for other ways to celebrate the achievements of our young people and will communicate this further in the weeks and months ahead.

**Extra-curricular provision:** for the remaining three weeks of term, our focus will be on re-establishing routines and ensuring students are settled, happy and making good progress in lessons. WE will also carefully start to reintroduce our extra-curricular programme. Year 11 Study Café will start again after-school from next week and some subjects are already organising their extra-curricular offer for immediately after Easter, if not just before. We are also planning for the Learn and Grow after-school provision for Years 7 – 10 to resume after Easter. Further details will follow of all activities beyond the school day in due course.

**Uniform expectations:** thank you for ensuring your child has returned to school in full uniform – it has been delightful to see the black and gold around the site once again. Can I please ask you remind children that Hele's PE kit may only be worn on the days they should have PE – sadly, we have a small number who appear to be abusing this arrangement and infringements will be sanctioned accordingly from now on.

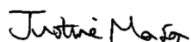
**Parking and vehicular access:** with the return of the whole school this week, exacerbated by some dreadful weather at times, there has been a significant increase in the number of cars around the entrance points to school to drop off/collect children. Whilst the school return days were staggered this week, Seymour Road has been particularly congested, causing frustration to residents and drivers alike, and posing a danger to our children. Unfortunately, a resident of Seymour Road had her grey Ford Transit van hit by another vehicle travelling from Larkham Lane this morning between 08:15 and 08:30, causing substantial damage to the bumper. The vehicle didn't stop, and she is now

appealing for witnesses. Whilst there is no evidence to suggest this accident was associated with Hele's parents or staff beyond the vicinity and time of collision, it is hoped that someone may have witnessed the event and be able to share the details with the school to pass on to the appropriate person.

Disappointingly, I have also today received several complaints from residents around Plymbridge Road and surrounds of inconsiderate parking and driving over gardens or reversing into driveways to turn around when dropping children off. Please don't! It causes residents undue stress and inconvenience and school staff extra pressure when we have other priorities in getting children settled and ensuring a positive start back to school. As far as possible, please try to encourage your child to make their own way to school by bus, foot, or bicycle. There are a number of families who rely on car transport, of course, but if you are dropping your child off, please do so a little further from the school and allow them to walk the last part of the journey. It is important that the school gates are kept clear at all times – please do not pull in or stop directly outside the gates as this causes significant disruption to other road users and upset to all. Your support in this is appreciated.

**Good news:** it's an anxious but exciting time for our Year 13 students as the offers start to roll in for those applying to Universities and Apprenticeships, and we are so pleased to see their efforts are being rewarded and that their aspirations haven't been dampened due to the pandemic we have been living through these over this past year. We are particularly thrilled to hear of Kelly Armstrong's offer to study Medicine at Bart's and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, knowing that he will be fulfilling a lifelong dream and has worked so hard to get to this point. Kelly is a familiar face around school from his years of playing starring roles in school productions, from being a proactive Mealtime Assistant and an important part of the Junior Leadership Team. The medical profession will continue to be in safe hands in years to come with the likes of Kelly joining our NHS, for sure!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason

**Principal**

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