

Hele's School

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



Friday, 11 June 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome back to the new term and the countdown to the end of an academic year like no other!

I have been delighted with the manner in which our students have returned this week and embraced the reset around standards of uniform, use of mobile phones, punctuality, etc. Thank you for working with the school to ensure those standards are adhered to – it is very much appreciated. I have led assemblies every morning this week to remind students of key expectations and to ensure they are aware how and why the bar has been raised around expectations after two terms of settling back into routines. These assemblies have been the first time I have been able to address whole year groups in person since March 2020 due to Covid, which is quite remarkable. It was wonderful to see every child in the school and be able to relay my sincere thanks and congratulations to the student body for the manner in which they have adapted and embraced new routines and coped with disruption through lockdown throughout this academic year – they have, quite simply, been amazing. Whilst we are not out of the woods yet in relation to coronavirus and we must still adhere to a number of important control measures, we are moving forward towards some semblance of normality. We have lived through periods of hoping, coping and surviving, and now we are entering a phase where we ensure the conditions are reset to allow every child to thrive and to soar.

Extra-curricular, sport and fitness: we are delighted to announce that our fitness suite is back open for use in term 6 to the pupils of years 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 within our school community. This further extends the existing term 6 programme, which currently includes netball, athletics, rounders and badminton.

The fitness suite has proven to be one of our most popular extra-curricular clubs in the past and we anticipate the demand to be high again across the age groups. Your child will have the opportunity to develop their physical fitness through the use of our cardio room and weights room. Before we can induct your child into the fitness suite, we require you to fill out a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ) on behalf of your child. Mr Cusack, Head of PE, emailed earlier in the week with fuller details of procedures, but please do contact him should you have any questions at Cusack@heles.plymouth.sch.uk

The reintroduction of Debating Society this week extends the array of clubs on offer, such as Book Club, Drama Club, CCF, Duke of Edinburgh, and Learn and Grow, amongst other subject-specific activity. Please do encourage your child to get involved in extra-curricular activity – we've had fantastic take up so far and we'd love to extend provision further.

Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS): as part of our broader Covid Catch up Plan, we have invested in a standardised psychometric assessment for all children that allows young people to express how they feel about themselves and school, giving teachers the ability to intervene and ensure all students have a healthy, positive attitude to themselves and learning.

PASS is a short self-evaluation digital survey which takes just 20 minutes. It is not a test and is nothing at all for anyone to worry about. Students are asked to respond to a series of statements about learning and school corresponding to 9 standardised factors proven to be linked to educational goals: feelings about school, perceived learning capability,

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self-regard, attitudes to teachers, general work ethic, attitudes to attendance, preparedness for learning, response to curriculum demands, confidence in learning. PASS was established by educational psychologists and standardised on 600,000 children nationally, so the results are statistically robust in measuring highly subjective and sensitive issues.

This tool is crucial in helping us to deliver fully rounded pastoral care, supporting student wellbeing and mental health on an individual as well as a cohort level. PASS surveys have started this week for some year groups and will continue into next week until all children in the school are screened. Should you be interested in finding out more information about PASS, then please contact Mrs Crawford, Deputy Principal, at crawfords@heles.plymouth.sch.uk

Alongside this important piece of work, senior staff are meeting with every child in Year 10 and Year 8 throughout this term. Whilst it is a significant investment of time to run 450 individual meetings, we believe the value for both students and staff in building relationships and gaining an understanding of students' experience of school is powerful and will help us in our planning for September onwards. Please assure your Year 8 or Year 10 child that this is nothing at all to worry about (especially if they are in my group and they are called to the Principal's office for a meeting!) – it's not an interview, there is nothing to prepare or bring and they can't say anything wrong. Their feedback will really help us to help the wider student body as we move forward.

Hele's School Staff Training Day, Monday 21st June: in my letter to parents and carers on the last day of term, I reported the forthcoming non-pupil day as running across all Westcountry Trust schools. As a point of clarification, the training day affects Hele's School only.

Good news: this week sees the launch of the National Theatre Connections Digital Festival 2021 at Theatre Royal Plymouth, and we are thrilled that Hele's students are taking centre stage in a production of 'Find a Partner' tomorrow (Saturday) night. To have FREE access to all the shows in this Digital Festival and tune in to see Team Hele's in action, follow these steps:

- Click on the link: <https://theatreroyal.com/nt-connections-2021/>
- Put a Festival Season Ticket in your basket
- Go to Check Out
- Log in or create a TRP Account
- Complete the booking process – tickets are FREE!
- To access each show, go into Account, then Digital Content, and select the show you'd like to watch
- All shows will be available for one week from the initial performance time
- You may access the shows as many times as you like during that time frame – the Hele's performance is on Saturday 12th June at 7pm

On a related note, congratulations to all our young people who have been working hard on their Arts Leaders Award this year. We heard over half term that every child involved has produced work of an exceptional standard and has passed the award with flying colours! Well done to all involved and I look forward to watching those Arts Leaders supporting and leading events to keep a passion for the Arts firmly at the heart of Hele's School.

Kindest regards,

Justine Mason

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Principal

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