

Hele's School

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



Wednesday, 1 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have managed to enjoy a summer break and you have been able to cautiously take advantage of the freedoms we have begun to enjoy again.

I am writing to remind you about the arrangements for the start of term and also to provide an update in relation to COVID-19 measures in schools in light of several government communications over the summer regarding the stages of the road map to take the country out of lockdown.

The details about the phased return of students and testing process were already shared with you before the summer break, but is worth a reminder at this point:

Year Group	First test date – by appointment in the Sports Hall, then leave the school site immediately afterwards	First day back at school for learning in full uniform and ready for the normal school day, 8.40am – 3pm	Second test date – students leave lessons for their appointment then return to the classroom (subject to LFT result)
Year 7	Monday 6 th	Tuesday 7 th	Thursday 9 th
Year 8	Wednesday 8 th	Thursday 9 th	Monday 13 th
Year 9	Wednesday 8 th	Thursday 9 th	Monday 13 th
Year 10	Tuesday 7 th Mentors: Monday 6 th	Thursday 9 th Mentors: Tuesday 7 th	Friday 10 th Mentors: Thursday 9 th
Year 11	Tuesday 7 th	Thursday 9 th	Friday 10 th
Year 12	Monday 6 th	Tuesday 7 th	Thursday 9 th
Year 13	Tuesday 7 th	Thursday 9 th	Friday 10 th

All students in the school will have been sent an appointment time as part of the blanket administrative process. A reminder that only those students for whom we have consent will be tested, however. If consent has not been given, then please be assured that there is no need to turn up to your appointment.

If you have previously given consent via the link sent to all parents and carers in July but have not yet received your appointment time, please check your junk mail or contact smithlj@heles.plymouth.sch.uk. If you haven't yet done so and want to give consent for testing, here is a link to the form to complete online: [CV-19 Consent Form](#).

Initial testing *must* take place in school, not at home, and the venue is the Sports Hall. Students should go directly to the Sports Hall and not access any other part of the building please. There is no need to wear school uniform or bring anything to the appointment. **Face coverings should be worn by students and visitors accessing the Sports Hall.** Parents/carers are welcome to accompany their child to the appointments, but this is not necessary.

Please note that there is no on-site parking available; all staff are back from Monday and we will have many students walking through the site to access their test, so we need to limit vehicular access for everyone's safety.

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South West Highways is currently constructing a new pedestrian crossing on Larkham Lane and this was due to be completed before the start of the new academic year. Plymouth Highways have advised that the scheme will now overrun for approximately 2 weeks into the new term, so please be aware that there is likely to be some disruption to your journey to and from school upon return. Please ask your child/children to be extra vigilant for the next few weeks when crossing the road on Larkham Lane as there is likely to be significant congestion.

COVID-19 control measures in school update: As you are already aware, several measures that were in place to control the spread of the virus have now been lifted and our students will experience a greater degree of normality from September. The guidance schools are now following can be found [here](#).

We are very pleased that school will be able to operate much more closely to normal from the start of term, but we will still need to remain very vigilant and do all that we can to contain the spread of the virus as we all return.

There are key measures that are no longer in place:

- We will **not** be operating consistent groups/bubbles as a control measure as this is no longer required; social distancing requirements have been removed (though our year group zones and social areas at break/lunch remain in place for pastoral and school management reasons).
- We will **not be conducting contact tracing**, close contacts will be identified through NHS Track and Trace, and schools will only be asked to support contact tracing in exceptional circumstances.
- Children under 18 years and 6 months will **not be required to isolate** if they are identified as a close contact through NHS Track and Trace.
- Face coverings will **no longer be mandatory** though may be directed by Public Health England in response to local/regional infection levels – please see an update on the South West picture below and what that means for schools.

Key control measures that we will continue to use are:

- Continuing with the **good hygiene routines** supported by using the sanitiser stations in place around the school (including in every classroom).
- Maintaining the **extra cleaning of high touch points** we already have in place.
- Keeping occupied spaces **well ventilated**, including purging of air in rooms when not being used.
- **Following any PHE advice** on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Maintaining the facility to immediately **isolate an individual with symptoms**.
- Asking all students and staff to complete a **twice weekly lateral flow test** (this will be reviewed by the government at the end of September).
- The **one-way system** we already have in place to help manage footfall safely and efficiently.
- Requesting **visitors and contractors continue to wear a face covering** if accessing the school building.

Tutors will remind pupils about these control measures when they return to school, and messages will be reinforced via assemblies.

Temporary control measures in the South West: You may be aware that on Friday 27 August, Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay and the Isles of Scilly were designated an 'Enhanced Response Area' (ERA) due to the rising infection rate. This will be in force across the region for 5 weeks in the first instance. The impact on schools in the South West is minor and we can continue with onsite meetings and events, assemblies, trips, fixtures and extra-curricular clubs, etc. as planned, but **it is now recommended by Public Health England that all secondary students and staff in our region wear face coverings in communal school areas during September**. At Hele's School this will apply to:

- Corridors
- Assemblies
- The queue for the dining facilities

This recommendation does not currently apply to classrooms, during lessons, when eating or when outside, or indeed to any exempt staff/students.

Please note that this is a temporary recommendation for face coverings in line with local guidance to help manage coronavirus in our region – it is not compulsory. No student at Hele's School will be denied an education or put under

pressure/coercion if they choose not to wear a face covering, though we would urge parents and students to support this temporary measure as an extra measure to keep everyone fit and well.

I fully appreciate and understand that there are contrasting, and sometimes emotive views around COVID-19 measures and restrictions. As a school, we are required to adhere to the most up to date published guidance and recommendations for schools provided by Public Health England and the Department for Education. Our aim is simply to strike an appropriate balance between providing our students with a high-quality educational experience, along with lots of opportunities to personally develop, with maintaining appropriate health measures.

Last year, students were in very good habits of bringing their own face covering as part of their daily equipment and I'd strongly request students continue to do this to ensure their maximum comfort and hygiene. We will, however, have disposable masks available should any student forget or mislay their own, and these will be provided free of charge.

What we will do if there are increasing numbers of positive cases in the school: We will record any individual positive cases in school and monitor for any emerging patterns following the government guidance. Schools are no longer required to inform parents and carers where there are positive cases in school, but if we think that the number of cases we are recording poses a risk that we have transmission in school, we will escalate our concerns to Public Health, inform our school community and plan the actions that we need to take to control this - this will include considering measures such as reintroducing the use of face coverings in classrooms for a short time, restricting visitors to site and as a very last resort, moving to remote learning for some students. We have plans in place that mean we can respond quickly to an outbreak and we will always follow the advice of Public Health officials. You will receive a communication immediately if we have a concerning number of cases in school and there is a need to take further action.

Vaccinations for young people: All 16 and 17-year-olds in England are now eligible for their first COVID-19 vaccine dose. Anyone in this age group can now find their nearest centre through the 'grab a jab' [NHS online walk-in finder](#). The NHS will also contact 12 to 15-year-olds to receive the vaccine if they were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable, have an underlying health condition or may live with an individual who is immunosuppressed.

I know there has been much talk in the news over the summer about a future possibility of vaccinating all 12–15-year olds. I am aware that this is an emotive subject for some people, but I can tell you that so far there has been no communication with schools at all about this, including whether schools are expected to have any role in the process, such as hosting vaccinations administered by NHS staff on the school site. Of course, should there be any developments in this area then I will inform you immediately and share the wider implications for our families.

How you can help: Please support us by ensuring that you are taking any actions you can to help to minimise spread of the virus. The most important advice we need you to follow continues to be to keep your child at home and get a PCR test straight away if they are experiencing any of these symptoms:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

You will be contacted by NHS Track and Trace if your child has been identified as a close contact of a positive case. If your child is asked to take a PCR test and the result is negative, they are under 18 years and 6 months old and they do not have symptoms, then they will no longer be required to self-isolate and will be able to return to school as normal.

Please continue to inform school of any confirmed positive case via the online form in the 'Contact Us' section of the Hele's School website, [here](#).

Over the last eighteen months, we have all worked together to keep our school and wider community as safe as possible. I know I can rely on this continuing as we enter this new phase and, hopefully, the final stages of the pandemic. I very much look forward to welcoming all our students back for the autumn term and hope this school year can offer all our young people a much greater degree of normality.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal