

Hele's School

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



Friday, 1 October 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

It has been a busy week of tours for Year 6 students and their families who are considering an application to join Hele's School in September 2022 - we have been delighted with the positive response and feedback we received! It always gives me such pleasure to see and hear our young people and staff so engaged in their learning as I walk the corridors and drop into lessons, and this week it was even more special to share that experience with our visitors.

We are only too aware that there will be a number of families in Year 7 who may never have set foot in Hele's and had to make a choice of school without being able to visit due to the disruption caused by Covid; we'd like to rectify this and details of a forthcoming morning tour have been emailed to Year 7 parents and carers just this morning.

Summer exams announcement: Yesterday, Ofqual confirmed that GCSE and A Level exams will happen in May and June 2022, as normal. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) will confirm the summer exam dates shortly.

Recognising the impact that Covid has had on schooling over the last 18 months, a range of adaptations are being made to GCSE, AS and A level exams in England – these adaptations will help young people reach their potential following the disruption they've faced. They include:

- A choice of topics or content on which students will be assessed in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history and geography.
- Providing advance information on the focus of exams to support students' revision in subjects where there is not a choice of topics.
- Giving students formulae sheets in GCSE maths and revised equation sheets in GCSE combined science and physics.
- Changing requirements for practical science work and practical art and design assessments to ensure fairness.

While it is the Government's firm intention for exams to go ahead next year, it is right for contingency plans to be in place in the event they cannot. Ofqual and the Department for Education plan for Teacher Assessed Grades to be used in the event that exams cannot happen and are today launching a consultation on how this might work in 2022, building on the 2021 process - we will keep you updated on developments.

Ms Clapham, Assistant Principal, has this morning delivered an assembly to Year 11 to offer assurances and outline the wide range of support and resource available to them throughout this important final year. Detailed information has this morning also been emailed to parents and carers of Year 11, so do please look out for this in your inbox. Mr Stone is following a similar approach with Year 13.

ClassCharts: Over the last year, we have used an increasing number of digital platforms to support home learning and remote learning - Sparx, Doodle, Educake, Seneca and MS Teams are used by teachers, and students receive notifications of work set. We have asked teachers to ensure all Year 7-11 homework is recorded on ClassCharts so that parents and carers are also able to see all work set - this could be a simple "Please see Teams" or "Please complete Sparx home learning task", but it will better signpost the work that has been set and where to find it.

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Year 8 annual exams: Year 8 students will sit annual exams in all subjects during the week before and after October half-term; these will happen in normal lesson time with their usual classroom teacher and are nothing to worry about. These exams have two main functions:

- Firstly, cognitive science shows us that testing is one of the most efficient and effective ways of transferring core knowledge into the long-term memory
- Secondly, they provide an opportunity for students to practise the 5 core revision strategies that we recommend.

Students will have an assembly next week to explain the purpose of these exams and how to prepare effectively using the five core Knowledge Organiser strategies - parents and carers will also receive a copy of these so that you can support your child at home.

Keeping our children and community safe: As the weather starts to turn colder and wetter and the mornings and evenings become darker, it is timely to reinforce some important safety messages for travel to and from school.

I have heard that a number of students catching the 21 or 21A (towards the City Centre) have been experiencing a much longer wait after school at the bus stop on Plymouth Road given the temporary reduction frequency of this CityBus service. Please reinforce with your child the importance of being properly equipped for all weather, and encourage them to wear a warm, waterproof coat to school, especially if reliant on public transport.

We have an increasing number of cyclists arriving at school, which is great to see, but it is vital that road safety is reinforced at home as well as in school. If your child cycles to school, please ensure they are properly dressed in warm and bright (preferably reflective) clothing, that they have working lights front and back, their brakes are in working order, and they adhere to the Highway Code and exercise extreme caution around other road users and pedestrians.

This time last year, one of our Year 7s was hit by a car on Larkham Lane - thankfully, the student made a full recovery but was clearly very lucky that the injuries sustained were not life-threatening. However, it could have been so different, and I was reminded of this just this week, having received concerns from residents of Seymour Road about speeding cars and/or cars mounting the pavement to avoid speed bumps. Of course, there are far more drivers on the road than just those doing the school drop off, but it is worth a reminder to all us road users to remain vigilant around the school site and surrounds given the large number of children and young people walking or cycling to school. Thanks for your support in helping to keep our community safe.

Music lessons: We are pleased to announce that the lifting of Covid restrictions has enabled School to consider reinstating lessons in woodwind, guitar, piano, keyboard, brass and singing. If you would like to register interest or find out more, please email Mr Cartwright, Head of Music, at cartwright@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Community Sports at Hele's: We are so pleased that updated Government guidance has allowed us to once more offer a wide range of facilities to students, staff and the general public through our Community Sports provision. Please do [have a look at our promotion video](#) - I'm confident you will be impressed with what you see!

Plymouth Parents Childcare Survey: The Partnership Support Team from Plymouth City Council would like to hear from parents/carers with children aged 0 – 14 years who access different types of childcare provision. The findings will be used to identify any barriers to childcare and work with both providers and parents to try and resolve these. The [survey](#) is now open and will stay open until Monday, 18 October, should you wish to contribute.

Staffing update: This week, we said a fond farewell to Miss Bensaid (English teacher), who has relocated to take up a teaching position in Jersey, and to Miss Ryder (Science Technician) who has left to explore pastures new beyond the realm of education. I'm sure you would want to join me in thanking them both and wishing them the best of luck for the next chapter in their careers. Miss Bensaid's classes have been taken over by Mrs Brookshaw, a very experienced English Teacher with significant prior English and school leadership experience, who has joined the English department today - a warm welcome to Team Hele's to Mrs Brookshaw!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason

Principal