

Hele's School

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



Friday, 12 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

It has been a busy week in School, and I've felt it more than ever having returned to school on Monday following a bout of Covid I contracted during the half term holiday. Still, it's great to be back and in the mix again!

You will know from the letter sent to families via schools from Plymouth's Director of Health on Monday, that locally Covid has been prevalent over recent weeks. Indeed, there are various planned events that had to be cancelled or amended at the last minute because of high rates around Plymouth and the surrounds. Our Music and Drama students were planning to showcase their talent at the WeST Governor Conference in Saltash this week, but that was postponed at the eleventh hour. Hele's was asked to host a visit next Monday from Will Quince, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Children and Families) at the Department for Education, but again Covid stopped this from proceeding. Frustrating all round because of lost opportunities, but we understand these are necessary precautions at this time.

Looking ahead to other events planned for later in term, we have made an early decision to postpone the Christmas Concert and instead look to run a Spring Concert, where (weather permitting) we may be able to perform al fresco. The Post-16 Awards evening scheduled for the last week of term has also had to be reconsidered; it would be remiss of us to welcome our Year 13 Leavers back from Universities far and wide to socialise in close proximity just a few days before the Christmas holiday when we know these students are in the main transmission age bracket and the conditions for cross-contamination would be high. We want everyone to have a restful Christmas break with family and friends, so we are mitigating the spread of Coronavirus as far as possible. We will post home citations from teachers, along with awards and certificates so we still mark the occasion. We will also plan a garden party-style event in the summer term, when we can safely welcome our graduates back for an official rite of passage and celebrate together in the fresh air and sunshine.

Immunisation programme update: VirginCare, the Schools Immunisation Service, has confirmed that it will not be running another Covid vaccination session in School. Rather, all future vaccinations of Secondary-age children will now be undertaken at a mass vaccination centre (i.e. Home Park, Plymouth) to ensure all young people who consent to vaccination can be immunised before the end of December. Booking is ordinarily via the national booking service by calling 119 or [booking on line](#), so please do access either route to book if you are considering vaccination for your child. However, dates for walk-in at Home Park have just been released by Plymouth Health to share with families:

- Saturday 13th November 16:00-19:00
- Sunday 14th November 08:30-11:00
- Thursday 18th November 15:00-18:00
- Sunday 21st November 14:00-19:00

All children aged 12-15-years must be brought by either a parent or someone with Parental Responsibility.

VirginCare is, however, continuing to deliver the Flu programme in schools until the end of January. The next date for Hele's School is yet to be confirmed by the provider but I will alert parents as soon as arrangements are made.

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Lateral Flow Tests: in recent weeks, we have seen a small number of students attempt self-administer LFT tests in School when kits are distributed - I must stress that these kits are for home testing only and should not be used in School. I would appreciate your support in reinforcing this instruction to your child; students must take kits home when distributed, test twice weekly at home and continue to upload results to the NHS.

TikTok: you may be aware from reports in the media this week that there appears to be a ‘craze’ sweeping England where defamatory videos ridiculing teachers are being posted by students on TikTok as part of a so-called ‘challenge’. The scale is so significant that ASCL (the Headteacher Union) has written to TikTok and are in talks with the Department for Education, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and the Children’s Commissioner urging them to step up and demonstrate social responsibility and leadership.

Whilst I believe that the vast majority of our students either do not have a TikTok account or if they do, they certainly do not upload or comment on inappropriate images or videos, sadly there is a small number that do. I have been made aware in recent days of anonymous TikTok accounts that have posted offensive material targeting members of Hele’s School staff. Whilst much of this content is light-hearted and innocuous, some material is highly insulting and, in some cases, makes unfounded allegations of sexual inappropriateness by staff.

Our internal investigations have shown a very small number of students to be at the heart of these posts, and appropriate action has been taken to remove accounts and seriously sanction perpetrators. However, I have been concerned by some children ‘liking’ or commenting on posts or ‘following’ these people with little thought for the air of acceptability they are giving to such unkindness by doing so.

Please talk your child about appropriate and responsible social media use and the impact of a person’s digital footprint on future job opportunities or relationships. Yesterday morning I recorded an assembly that was beamed into every classroom so that all year groups got the same strong message from me personally at the same time - inflammatory and offensive material posted online about staff - or indeed other students - will not be tolerated and will always be treated seriously. I strongly advised all students that if they have made or are following TikTok accounts with malicious content, tagged a friend or commented on an image or video, they are to ‘unfollow’ these accounts and delete any comments. This will ensure that students are not dragged into any School or Police action that may follow.

A strength of Hele’s School is the quality of relationships between staff and students and the mutual respect that permeates our school community. We are Team Hele’s. We look out for each other. We work together with a smile on our face to get the best care, learning and experience for all – whether child or adult. There is no place for bullying, discrimination or nastiness at our school and I have urged our school community to ‘call it out’ and report it whenever and wherever they may see it, online or otherwise - I’m confident our students will do so. Your support in reinforcing these important messages is much appreciated.

Reports to Parents: during this academic year, parents and carers will receive two reports on their child’s progress. In response to each report, students work with their tutor to set subject-specific targets so that they are clear about their next steps in learning. The timing of reports to parents has been aligned with important events for the year group, for example internal exams and options processes for Year 8 and Year 11, as detailed below.

Year group	Report 1: Friday 7 th January	Report 2: Wednesday 23 rd March	Report 3: Thursday 30 th June
7	✓		✓
8	✓	✓	
9		✓	✓
10		✓	✓
11	✓	✓	
12	✓	✓	✓
13	✓	✓	

Ofqual Plan B: yesterday afternoon, Ofqual, the exams and qualifications regulator in England, published the contingency plan for summer exams 2022. Whilst there is every intention of running the summer exam series nationally, plans are afoot for a ‘plan B’ should it be required. Later this term, a detailed communication will be sent to students due to sit final exams this year and to parents/carers to share details of the Government’s contingency and what that means for school and for our exam cohort. In the meantime, the key messages for our Year 11 and Post 16 students is to continue to work hard in every lesson, attend revision sessions in line with the published schedule

and thoroughly prepare for the forthcoming mock exam series - there is nothing to be concerned about other than trying their best at all times and acting on teacher feedback to improve their work.

Term dates for 2022-2023: common term dates for next academic year have been agreed across all Westcountry Schools Trust providers. These dates can be found on the [Hele's School website](#), but I am also sharing them as an attachment to accompany this newsletter in case you want to print the dates for reference. The first day of the academic year 2022-23 for all students will be Monday 5th September 2022 (the new Year 7 from 8.30am and all other year groups from 11.30am), with staff starting back for training days on September 1st and 2nd.

Remembrance events: yesterday, our CCF Seniors and staff, students and Governors marked Armistice Day by observing a 2-minute silence, laying wreaths in honour the Old Plymptonians who lost their lives in battle, and performing the Last Post. As in previous years, this poignant event was streamed live into every classroom so that the whole school community could be involved in the occasion. If you are interested, the event can be watched on the [Hele's School YouTube](#) channel.

Our Cadets would ordinarily undertake poppy selling in local retail outlets this weekend, but the British Legion have cancelled the fundraising activity this year due to Covid restrictions. The CCF will, however, still take part in the Remembrance Sunday ceremony on the 14th at the War Memorial in Plympton St Maurice before marching through the surrounding streets to finish with Last Post at the Royal British Legion Club. I am grateful to staff and students for giving up their weekend to represent Hele's School and Hele's CCF in commemorating members of the Armed Forces who have died in the line of duty.

Good news: huge congratulations to Chloe Selvester in Year 13 who has been shortlisted for The Guardian's *Hugo Young Award* for political opinion writing. Chloe's article will be reviewed at the final panel of judges later in November. Whatever the outcome, this is a wonderful accolade for a talented young woman and she's most definitely a winner in our eyes. Well done, Chloe!

I was delighted to hear about the fundraising efforts of one of our students, Euan Train in 8E. This weekend, Euan is making the long journey to the Lake District with plans to climb Scafell Pike - the tallest mountain in England - in order to raise money for [REORGCharity](#). The charity offers Veterans the opportunity to learn Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu as part of their recovery pathway, and to combat the challenge of poor mental health and physical disabilities. Euan has taken his inspiration from fundraiser and charity lead Mark Ormerod, who he met recently and whose biography he is currently immersed in.

Euan climbed Snowdon earlier this year, is now onto Scafell Pike and then has Ben Nevis firmly in his sights as a challenge for next year. Accompanied by Mum and cheerleader Lyanne, the duo will be starting the long climb at 05:30 tomorrow morning whilst many of us will still be tucked up in bed! I'm sure you will join me in wishing Euan and his Mum the very best of luck for their climb - we hope that the weather is kind to them and they add to the fantastic £500 sponsorship fund already raised via [Euan's JustGiving page](#). I'll be sure to think of them both as I have a lazy Saturday morning and tuck into porridge whilst snuggled up in bed!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal