

Hele's School

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



Friday, 26 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

It was quite some reality check this morning when I was reminded by my excited children that Advent calendars need to be in place by this coming Wednesday, when we enter the month of December, and that in just 4 weeks from today it will be Christmas Eve!

Christmas kindness: Christmas is the time of giving and we are encouraging our school community to take part in the reverse Advent calendar that the RS department is coordinating in aid of the Salvation Army appeal. The idea is a simple one; instead of taking something out of the calendar each day in December, we put something in! Assemblies have been delivered to Year 7 and 9, but anyone from any year can contribute.

Students can collect a reverse Advent calendar from their RS teacher, and have it stamped for each day that they bring a donation in. Ideas are listed on the Advent calendar itself, but include:

- For the toy appeal - chocolate, sweets, colouring pens, pencils, crayons, colouring books, note pads, books, small cuddly toys, art and craft resources (especially for older teenagers), deodorants, toiletries, stocking filler ideas
- For the hostel - toothpaste, toothbrushes, shower gel, deodorants, razors, flannels, towels, pens, notebooks, travel mugs with a lid, chocolate, sweets
- For food parcels - tinned meat, Christmas treats, nappies, biscuits, crisps, tinned food (no pasta, rice, or long-life milk please, as there is a plentiful supply of these items already)

Please take your donations to Room 40, where they will be stored safely until The Salvation Army come to collect them on December 16th.

Year 7 Sustainable Gifts Fair: This term, Year 7 students have been working very hard on creating high quality sustainable Christmas gifts in tutor time and PD lessons. Students have created businesses, and everyone has taken on a specific role, with the school investing a start-up fund for each venture. All profits will go to a nominated charity.

A reminder to Year 7 families that the date of the fair is Thursday 2nd December, from 5 - 6.30pm in the Main Hall. A more detailed letter has already been sent to Year 7 parents and carers, along with information about the Covid-secure arrangements in place. Any further questions, please contact Mrs Crosley, Head of Year 7.

Mock Exams: I'd like to congratulate Year 11 and Year 13 for their fantastic conduct and commitment in the Mock exam series, which is currently underway. We have experienced a higher than usual absence rate in this period due to Covid. If you have a child in an exam year who has been off school sick with Covid, or for any other reason, then please do not worry; we have extended the exam series by a fortnight to ensure that every child is able to sit their missed papers when they return to school and are feeling better. Please reassure your child that they are not at a disadvantage and they will be well looked after and supported upon their return.

Post 16 Options: Year 11 had an assembly today to kick start the process around Post-16 choices. This will be followed up by an onsite Post-16 Options evening on Wednesday 8th December from 5.30pm. Please see our website or social media streams for further details.

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Parent/Carer Voice: Thank you to all those who completed the Annual Parent and Carer Survey, which closed on Wednesday this week. The final number of responses was 227, spanning all year groups.

We are in the process of analysing the detailed comments into broad themes for further discussion with the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. I will share the headlines with all families in the coming weeks, along with agreed next steps, but for now I thought you may be interested in the response rate to each statement.

Statement	% agree or strongly agree
My child is happy at Hele's School	95%
My child feels safe at Hele's School	96%
The school makes sure its students are well behaved	96%
The school deals with bullying quickly and effectively	90%
Communication from the school is effective and timely	95%
When I have raised concerns with the school, they have been dealt with effectively	91%
Hele's School has high expectations for my child	97%
The school makes me aware of what my child will learn during the year	78%
There is a good range of subjects available to my child at Hele's School	95%
My child does well at this Hele's School	97%
The school lets me know how my child is doing	87%
I understand how the school is helping my child in lessons and what support is available beyond lessons	78%
My child can take part in a wide range of clubs, activities and trips at this school	89%
Hele's School supports my child's wider personal development and wellbeing	89%
I would recommend Hele's School to another parent	96%

These are incredibly pleasing metrics at first glance, but there is always an opportunity to get better and we are committed to optimising our provision for every child and family. Your feedback has been incredibly helpful, thank you, and we will make further improvements to our service and provision wherever we can. Watch this space.

Student Voice: As part of our ambition to know every child in the school - all 1350 of them - my Leadership Team and I are continuing to hold our termly one-to-one meetings with students. During our 10-minute conversations, we want to hear first-hand what it is like to be a Hele's student and ensure we act on feedback to make every young person's experience of school the best that it can be.

Since September, we have met with Year 13, Year 12 and we have almost completed Year 8, and each year group has shared what they love about the school and what they think we could do better. We will pick up the remaining year groups in the New Year and into the Spring term to ensure that every child has their voice heard, and then later this academic year I will share the themes and follow-up action with the wider school community.

I just want to take this opportunity to say that it continues to be an absolute pleasure to spend quality time with our students. Without exception, the individuals I have met with since September have been articulate, interested and committed to working together as part of Team Hele's to ensure our school is a safe, happy, supportive yet challenging place for every child and adult within. Meeting Year 8 students over the past few days has been the highlight of my week!

Staffing update: We say a fond farewell to Kate Denkinson, Learning Support Assistant, who leaves us to pursue a new challenge in investigative journalism, for which she has a real passion and flair. We have already appointed to Kate's vacated role and I will write to introduce the new person when they start.

Good news: I was pleased to receive wonderful feedback about the conduct and engagement of our Post-16 students this week, following a Sixth Form day of Geography lectures at the University of Plymouth led by Professor Yarwood. Our geographers were described as 'polite, engaged, attentive and fun', amongst other things. Thank you to Mrs Froud for arranging this opportunity for our students, and to all those super ambassadors for Hele's School who were involved in the event.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal