

Hele's School

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



Friday, 3 December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

It has been a week of creative and rapid thinking in response to updated Government guidance to schools in light of the Omicron variant of concern and the determination to keep families safe and healthy, particularly so Christmas plans ahead aren't scuppered through the need to self-isolate.

Currently, rates in Plymouth are high (compared to the England average) and are continuing to rise; locally, rates are particularly high amongst the 5-9-years and 10-14-years age groups. In having come so far in preserving our core business this term, we don't want to let this slip as we approach the last 9 teaching days before the Christmas break.

All WeST Primary and Secondary schools agreed to take sensible steps to prevent the further spread of the virus and to avoid taking unnecessary risks outside of our normal lessons. I appreciate this has been a disappointment to some, but I am grateful for the support and understanding shown with the late notice to cancel or postpone planned on-site events.

Post-16 evening: the rescheduled date for the postponed Post-16 evening is confirmed as Thursday 27th January. We would prefer to run this event on-site subject to a risk assessment nearer the time, but we are concurrently planning a virtual event should we need to switch at the last minute. More details to follow next term.

Sustainable gifts: The Year 7 team did a brilliant job in displaying, photographing and uploading an array of Christmas gifts to sell to an online audience with just 24 hours' notice of the cancellation of last night's planned event. We await the final total from their online sale but in the meantime, I am pleased to announce that those Year 7 businesses who chose to bake rather than make products today raised a whopping £105 from cake and biscuit sales alone! Amazing!

Reverse Advent calendar: The contributions are flooding in in aid of The Salvation Army's Christmas Appeal, so thank you so much for your generosity and kindness and do keep donations coming! A reminder that your child will have the list of toys, toiletries and foodstuffs being accepted, but if there any queries please contact Mrs Holmes in RS at holmes@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Year 8 and Year 9 Enrichment Week, July 2022 (previously known as Aspirations Week): We already have returns from lots of you regarding your choices for the exciting programme of activities on offer in our Enrichment Week at the end of the Summer Term. If you have not yet completed your application, please have a look at the offer [here](#), and complete the [APPLICATION FORM](#) by 9am on Thursday 16th December.

We do not require any money to be paid at this time, but we issue the menu of opportunities this side of Christmas at the request of parents and carers from past years as it can prompt ideas for Christmas presents in some cases!

A reminder that those families in receipt of Free Schools Meals or for whom we receive the Pupil Premium (not Services) are able to access an allowance towards trips, and any family not in receipt of Free School Meals but experiencing financial hardship is encouraged to contact the Finance Team in confidence on 337193, ext. 4035 or 4036 to discuss support available.

We are grateful to the Student Voice group who have helped to shape the offer and try to ensure there is something on offer for everyone in Years 8 - 9. A reminder that CCF Camp and Work Experience runs in this same week for Year 10 and Year 12 students, and Year 11 and Year 13 students will of course have already left school by then.

Please note, Year 7 have a separate programme for the week and details of this provision will be sent at a later date.

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WESTCOUNTRY
SCHOOLS TRUST

Trips, visits and expeditions in 2023: We are very excited to announce that we are looking to resume our international programme of opportunities in the academic year 2022-2023 and are working with travel agencies to broker guarantees should any trip not be able to run because of COVID-19. Experiences being *explored* for next academic year include:

- A Science-led STEM trip to Florida for 6 nights in February half term, 2023 (KS4 and KS5)
- A 4-week expedition to Kenya with Camps International, during the summer holiday of 2023 (KS4 and KS5)
- International trips will be factored into the Enrichment Week offer for July 2023, so students in Years 7-9 will have a menu available specifically for younger years. Ideas being explored include an MFL trip to a European country, a sports tour of a European country, a Drama trip to Paris, to name but a few.

Whilst 2023 seems a long way off, I wanted to alert you to the plans at this very early stage to give as much notice as possible of what lies ahead for next academic year.

Vaccination: All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged by the Government and Local Health Team to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters. To book a vaccine, please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination> or call 119. The vaccine centre locally is Home Park, Plymouth, PL2 3DQ. A few key facts to remember when booking your appointment:

- If your child has had a positive Covid test they should not receive the COVID-19 vaccination for 12 weeks (this advice changed on 18th November 2021).
- If your child is clinically vulnerable, they should have already been recommended to receive two vaccines with an eight-week gap. This group of children are still recommended to only have a 28-day gap between a positive Covid test and receiving the vaccine.
- If your child has received the first dose, they now will be eligible for a second dose however, it is currently recommended that there is a minimum of 12 weeks after the first dose and you will be unable to book until this time. Details of how the second doses for 12-15-year olds will be administered will be provided in the coming weeks.

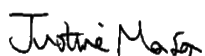
January return: It has been confirmed that schools will be required to LFT test young people once upon their return in January. We are awaiting further Government guidance to help us with the logistics of testing every consenting young person on-site before accessing school-based learning, but there will undoubtedly be a staggered start for year groups throughout the first week of term, the week beginning Tuesday 4th January 2022.

I will write to confirm the return to school testing schedule and the first day back arrangements for each year group as soon as possible after receiving the anticipated Government guidance. In the meantime, a link to an online consent form was emailed to everyone who previously said NO to testing to give them the opportunity to change their consent if they wish, and also to all new students who have joined since September. If you haven't received such an email, then it is because you have previously given consent to LFT testing onsite and no further action is required from you. If you wish to withdraw consent previously given, then please contact smithlj@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Staffing update: We are preparing to welcome three new members of staff to Team Hele's next week. Cathy Newby, who many will already know as she covered a maternity leave in Science last year and has been a regular Supply Teacher at Hele's since, starts her role as a Science Technician on Monday. Cathy is joined next week by Stanley Butt, who also joins the Science team in a part-time capacity as a Science Technician. The third new starter is Rachel Bramwell, who joins the SEND Team as a Learning Support Assistant. I'm sure you'll join me in extending a warm Hele's welcome to all three.

Good news: A few weeks ago, I shared news of Post-16 student Chloe Selvester being shortlisted for the Hugo Young Award 2021, the Guardian's national political opinion-writing competition. I am delighted to report that just yesterday, a press release and Twitter announcement declared Chloe a runner-up in this prestigious competition. Congratulations to Chloe for a wonderful achievement - we are very proud!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal