

# Hele's School

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



Friday, 21 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

I start with a resounding vote of thanks and appreciation to our 50-strong group of hand-picked Year 9s who this week led a day of workshops for just short of 100 Year 5 children from Woodford Primary School - and what a sterling job they did too, they were fantastic ambassadors for the school and superb role models for our young visitors! Thank you also to Ms L Bennett and Ms Clapham for arranging and facilitating this project - a great Team Hele's effort all round!

**Face coverings:** You will have no doubt heard the Prime Minister's announcement of the removal of Plan B Covid-19 measures this week. The DfE emailed school leaders on Wednesday afternoon with the implications for schools, a summary of which is reflected below:

- Face coverings in secondary school **classrooms** are no longer advised as of **yesterday, 20 January**.
- Face coverings in secondary school **communal areas** continue to be advised until **27 January** (in line with the wider societal lifting of restrictions on that date).
- Local directors of public health are able to reverse this decision as a temporary measure in response to local health concerns.

As the DfE guidance states, "*... the virus is still with us, and continuing with proportionate protective measures remains vital to protect education*". This message was yesterday reiterated by Plymouth's Director of Public Health, who has advised that locally the situation regarding infection rates remains fragile and we should follow the government guidance but proceed with caution - the 0 - 15yrs age group in Plymouth is experiencing an increase in infection rates, having fallen quite significantly in December.

Given this local intelligence, it is prudent to encourage our community to continue to wear face coverings in school until we are clearer on how the local picture of infection changes, and that we all remain cautious over the coming weeks. Even though government guidance has changed, therefore, at Hele's we will continue to advise the wearing of face coverings in busy communal areas inside the building and in corridors for the next 2 weeks in the first instance. We will relax the request to wear face coverings in classrooms but will of course allow staff and students to continue to wear masks in lessons if they wish to. We will consider local infection rates on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to review this stance, and I will inform parents and carers of any recommendations we make thereafter in my weekly update on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Please be reassured that we will continue with other control measures in place in a bid to keep infection rates low in school, including sanitisation, good ventilation, and enhanced cleaning.

An important control measure remains the twice-weekly LFD testing done at home, which is expected of all staff and students. Thank you for your support in ensuring regular testing and reporting - identifying asymptomatic cases and isolating immediately reduces the number of positive cases coming into School, which in turn reduces the opportunity for the virus to spread, thus protecting the wider school community and limiting disruption to our students' education. Please keep this regular testing going, it really is making a difference!

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**Principal: Justine Mason**

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WESTCOUNTRY  
SCHOOLS TRUST

**Home/School partnership working:** A positive home/school partnership underpinned by timely, honest and constructive communication, is central to ensuring we get the very best experience of school for each child at Hele's, and a **significant** strength of our school is the support and active engagement of our parental body. On the rare occasion when an experience may fall short of expectations, please follow formal channels of communication with School so that we can establish facts and seek a positive resolution together to move a situation on. In such an instance, it is imperative that all parties involved respect the confidentiality of any conversation and agreed action - *do not* post information about school incidents or derogatory comments about members of staff on social media sites or WhatsApp groups (even if they are closed groups) - at best it is most unhelpful in addressing a situation and at worse it may be inflammatory, cause significant hurt and upset to individuals, or indeed be libellous. I'm sorry to have to be so direct in issuing this reminder, but I hope you understand and support the sentiment behind this message. Thank you for your support.

**Upcoming events:**

- Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January – PE enrichment day at Plymouth Marjon University for selected Year 10 GCSE PE students.
- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January - Virtual Careers Fair. An email will be sent to parents and carers on Tuesday afternoon detailing the login details to access the fair.
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January - Post 16 evening onsite at Hele's School, 5pm - 7.30pm. All Year 11s and their families welcome!

**Government Household Support Fund:** As a school, we are now able to refer families in need of support with energy bills for a government grant. The grant is worth up to £245 for families with children who meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.

ROUTE 1 – Household cannot afford to meet energy bills or essentials and has ELIGIBLE BENEFITS, as below:

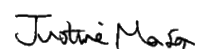
Means tested benefits	Disablement based benefits
Income based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)	Attendance Allowance
Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	Constant Attendance Allowance
Income Support	Carers Allowance
Pension Credit	Disability Living Allowance
Child Tax Credit	Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit
Working Tax Credit	Personal Independence Payment
Universal Credit	Severe Disablement Allowance
	Armed Forces Independence Payment
	War Pensions Mobility Supplement

ROUTE 2 - Household cannot afford to meet energy bills or essentials and has ELIGIBLE INCOME LEVEL, which means the household income of **all residents combined** is under £30,000 once housing and energy bills are removed.

If you feel your family meets these criteria and you wish to look at completing the referral with a member of our staff, please contact Emma Clapham, Assistant Principal: [clapham@heles.plymouth.sch.uk](mailto:clapham@heles.plymouth.sch.uk)

**Good news:** We are delighted to learn that Lauren Pengelly in Year 13 has received a firm offer from Oxford University to study English Language and English Literature after graduating from Hele's this summer. This is a wonderful achievement for Lauren and is richly deserved given her exceptional dedication to her studies and her admirable work ethic. As well as being a model student, Lauren also runs the Year 7 and Year 8 Book Club in a bid to share her passion for reading, and I've no doubt that there are many younger students who are inspired by her enthusiasm and would want to follow in her footsteps. Congratulations, Lauren, we are all very proud of you!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason  
Principal