

# Hele's School

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



Friday, 14 October 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

As the temperature drops and the weather changes, do spare a thought for our hardy Post-16 students who are 2 days and nights into their 4-day Duke of Edinburgh Gold assessed expedition and camp on Exmoor; every indication is that our intrepid explorers are doing incredibly well, and long may it continue!

**Extra-Curricular provision:** Duke of Edinburgh is just one of the many enrichment activities that are open to our young people at Hele's, and our staff work hard to offer a rich programme of events and activities beyond the school day. Along with DoE, CCF, regular Drama/Music/Dance rehearsals for the school show 'Fame' and learning clubs such as Learn and Grow and Homework Club, our menu of extra-curricular opportunities provides for a wide variety of interests and are free, inclusive and very well attended. For instance, it is fantastic to hear that Gardening Club is staying true to its remit and quite literally 'growing and blossoming' as it attracts more and more interested students from all year groups; such is the demand that the club now meets twice a week - on a Tuesday after school as well as during Break 2 each Thursday! The SEND garden is looking fantastic too, and we are incredibly grateful to Barclays Bank for their recent £500 sponsorship to invest in flower beds and equipment, along with the time from volunteers that was donated.

If you use Twitter as a social media platform, please do follow @HelesEnrichment for any updates on our provision. [A copy of the latest timetable can be found on the Hele's School website](#). Please do encourage your child/ren to engage as fully as they can with this provision.

**Cold and flu season:** you may have seen reports in the media over the past fortnight about the rise in respiratory infections across Plymouth. This includes a higher rate than the national level of those testing positive for COVID-19. Please support our messaging to young people about good hand hygiene through regular and thorough washing, the 'catch it, kill it, bin it' approach to coughs and sneezes to ensure use of tissues where required and appropriate disposal of used tissues, and so on. A reminder that students may bring their own hand sanitizer to school for personal use, and we have units across the school site for student and staff use.

**Attendance:** at Hele's School we expect high levels of attendance and punctuality from all of our students. We believe that regular attendance promotes positive social development, develops self-discipline and improves student progress. There is a clear link between attendance and attainment and, as a school, we expect all students to aim to achieve at least 97% attendance. Outstanding attendance is regularly recognised and rewarded throughout the year.

Poor attendance can have a detrimental effect on progress. A student who has 90% attendance misses almost 4 weeks of the school year, which equates to over 100 hours of learning!

We will be providing individual termly updates to parents and carers of students in years 7-11 and would encourage you to discuss the importance of regular attendance with your child. Please could you be mindful of the following points:

- Please try to avoid, as far as possible, organising medical appointments during school hours. If this is unavoidable, students should attend school prior to the appointment, as well as returning to school after their

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appointment to and minimise lost learning time and ensure they get their morning and afternoon mark.

- If your child is ill, please send them back to school as soon as they are well enough – please avoid keeping them off for the entire week if it is not necessary to prolong the absence.
- Lessons taking place on a Monday or a Friday are of equal importance; our expectation is that all students complete a full 5-day week.
- In line with DfE guidance, we will only authorise absence for exceptional reasons and will not authorise holidays during term time. If parents take an unauthorised holiday, this decision will be discussed with our Educational Welfare Officer and will result in a £60 penalty fine per parent per child.
- Our Education Welfare Officer is Mel Yeoman. We hold regular meetings with her to discuss any student who falls below the threshold of 90%, which is classed as Persistent Absence by the DfE, and appropriate follow-up action is agreed.
- We have a dedicated team of staff who will work with you to try and improve attendance and have had success in improving school attendance for individual learners. We have added to that team this academic year. We remain resolute in working with families to ensure we can get young people into school safely and successfully, and we encourage parents and carers to contact the relevant pastoral team as soon as attendance to school becomes an issue. We will work with you to remove any barriers to school attendance and communicate together a strong message about school attendance being compulsory for young people.

**Polite request from local residents:** a number of frustrations have been reported through to school in recent weeks regarding illegal, dangerous or inconsiderate parking at the start/end of the school day. This includes contact from residents on Seymour Road as well as slightly further afield on Larkham Lane. Whilst there is an appreciation from residents that if they live near a school then it will be busy at peak times, they would appreciate greater consideration from some car users in not blocking access or not turning in driveways. Good relations with our neighbours are important to us, as well as the safety of our young people travelling to and from school. Your support in this matter is much appreciated.

**Term dates for 2023 – 2024:** Please be advised that the term dates for next academic year, 2023 - 2024 - have now been confirmed in line with all schools in the Westcountry Schools Trust. Dates are attached to this letter for ease of reference. The dates will also be posted on the Hele's School website, effective from Monday.

**Good news:** I am always so proud of the fantastic endeavours and achievements of Hele's students, whether they be inside or outside of school, and this week I was especially heartened to hear that Year 10 students Adam Maddick, Luke Patten and Joel Smith completed the Tour De Moor – a gruelling 32-mile cycle trail across Dartmoor – in aid of St Luke's Hospice. Having been around the Yelverton area last Sunday and seeing for myself the effort and grit it takes to navigate some really difficult terrain on two wheels, I am absolutely in awe of their achievement. A brilliant effort by the boys but I do hope they weren't 'two tired' after their marathon charity ride!

#### Looking ahead:

- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October: Year 7 European Day of Languages event
- Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October: Y10 GCSE Art trip to Exeter Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery  
Visit from the Centre for Excellence in Latin to officially launch Latin at Hele's
- Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> October: Last day of term
- Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October: Westcountry Schools Trust Staff Training Day. School closed to all pupils
- Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November: First day of term 2 for all students (Week B)
- Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November: Post-16 Subject Teacher and Parents' Evening via MS Teams, 4-7pm

Wishing you a restful weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason  
**Principal**